



PARTIAL RESUMPTION OF CLASSES

Schools, colleges asked to prepare

Govt sends guidelines to secondary educational institutions; preparations by Feb 4

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR and JAMIL MAHMUD

Only the 10th and 12th graders have to attend classes in person every day while other secondary school and college students may visit their classrooms once a week when their educational institutions reopen during the pandemic.

The government will decide when to reopen the schools after analysing the situation and consulting with the National Technical Advisory Committee on Covid-19, Education Minister Dipu Moni told parliament yesterday.

The Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) on Friday instructed all schools and colleges to complete their reopening preparations by February 4.

She said the government will bring students of classes 10 and 12 back to schools and colleges for the sake of their studies ahead of the SSC and HSC exams.

The minister said this while discussing the Bangladesh Technical Education Board (Amendment) Bill, 2021.

- Wearing facemask mandatory for all during class
- Maintaining at least 3 feet physical distance
- Daily health monitoring of students, teachers
- Ensuring safe water, sanitation arrangements

She said students of grades VI, VII, VIII, IX, and XI will come to educational institutions once a week and collect their tasks.

Many classes get crowded due to the number of students, she said, "It is not possible to maintain health directives properly... as a result, there will be no scope to bring all students at a time to the educational institutions."

On December 29, Dipu Moni told

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A nurse stands in a booth bearing the label "Covid-19 vaccination" at the capital's Mugda General Hospital yesterday. With 50 lakh doses arriving from India today, many such hospitals in the country will soon get busy administering the vaccines in the fight against the pandemic.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

COVID-INDUCED LOSS

It may take decade for the poor to recover

Says Oxfam report

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

It took the 1,000 richest people in the world less than a year to recoup their losses, but it may take at least a decade for billions of poor people to recover from the coronavirus-induced economic impacts, reveals an Oxfam report.

"The 1,000 richest people on the planet recouped their Covid-19 losses within just nine months, but it could take more than a decade for the world's poorest to recover from the economic impacts of the pandemic," said the

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KASHIMPUR JAIL INCIDENT

Jail super, jailer also withdrawn

They allowed an inmate to spend time with a woman at prison officer's room

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A senior jail superintendent and a jailer were withdrawn yesterday from Kashimpur Central Jail-1 for allowing an inmate to spend time with a woman at a prison officer's room.

Superintendent Ratna Roy and jailer Nur Mohammad Mridha are among five prison employees to be withdrawn after leaked security camera footage showed a woman meeting inmate Tushar Ahmed, general manager of Hallmark Group, on January 6.

Ratna and Nur were withdrawn for the sake of investigation, said Brig Gen Mominur Rahman Mamun, inspector general of prisons. "Further steps will be taken after [we] receive the investigation reports from the probe committees," he added.

Deputy jailer Golam Saqlain, sergeant instructor Abdul

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Antibody test for Covid-19 gets govt nod

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has approved rapid antibody tests for Covid-19, Health Minister Zahid Maleque said yesterday.

"There has long been a demand for the approval of antibody tests. We have now approved it, effective from today," he told reporters at his secretariat office.

The antibody tests can detect if a person had been infected with Covid-19 in the past and a possible immune response to the virus.

For months, there were strong recommendations from the National Technical Advisory Committee (NTAC) on Covid-19 to introduce

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OXFORD VACCINES FROM SERUM, INDIA

50 lakh shots arrive today

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

With all uncertainties over obtaining Covid vaccines removed, the main challenges for the government ahead are to run the mass inoculation campaign smoothly and involve people in the process, say experts.

Bangladesh has already received 20 lakh doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine as a gift from the Indian government. And the first consignment of 50 lakh doses of the same vaccine called Covishield arrives in Dhaka today from Serum Institute of India.

The country has so far purchased three crore doses from Serum through Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd, local agent of the Indian firm.

A special flight of Air India carrying the first consignment of vaccine shots is expected to land at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 11:30am today, Nazmul Hassan Papon, managing director of Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The vaccine shots will then be transported to Beximco warehouses in Tongi before being dispatched to the government-designated destinations.

Talking to this newspaper, a number of experts and government officials welcomed the news of arrival of vaccine shots after more than 10 months of detection of the first Covid case in the country.

Initially, there were doubts whether Bangladesh would get the

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Experts allay fear of major side effects

MOUJID AHMED SUJAN

As the government is preparing to vaccinate millions of people across the country, likely from February 8, with the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines, many people are indecisive due to fears of possible side effects.

Unlike any other vaccine in history, the Covid-19 vaccines were developed fast, causing people to question its safety.

According to experts, however, the Covid-19 vaccines approved so far are safe, or those would not be approved by the regulatory authorities like the US Food and Drug Administration, European Medicines Agency and the World Health Organization.

The Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) has also issued Emergency Use Authorisation for the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine on January 4.

"With the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, no serious side effect was reported so far.

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This portion of the Kohelia river in Moheshkhali's Matarbari union is in a sorry state after an under-construction four-lane highway began encroaching upon the once mighty river five years ago. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA YOUSUF

The killing of Kohelia

River integral to livelihoods of villagers in Matarbari being encroached upon to build a road with DoE clearance

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, back from Cox's Bazar

One fine morning in 2015, fisherman Mohon Jolodas woke up to the roar of dump trucks close to his home, adjacent to Kohelia river in Matarbari union of Moheshkhali.

To his utter surprise, the truck started dumping sand into the river -- the source of his community's livelihoods.

These last five years, Mohon has watched the once-vibrant river die in front of his very eyes.

The seasoned fisherman said the 12-kilometre-long river was his main source of income. He used to earn Tk 700-Tk 1,000 by fishing, a daily wage enough to maintain his four-member family.

"The dumping did not stop for a single day since 2015, encroaching around 2km of the water body to make a road so that the authorities could easily move with their vehicles to and from the power plant," Mohon told The Daily Star earlier this month.

He was referring to the 1.2-gigawatt coal-fired power plant being constructed by Coal Power Generation Company (CPGC) in Matarbari on 1,400 acres of land.

The under-construction 13km four-lane road starts from Rajhat bridge point of Kohelia and leads right up to the confluence of the river, where the power plant is being built.

On a visit to the Rajhat bridge area of Matarbari on January 11,

this correspondent saw dozens of dump trucks, excavators and cranes engaged in filling up the river under supervision of CPGC engineers.

Large geotextile bags filled with dredged sand are being put down and large iron sheets were seen being installed for the road.

Around 2km of the river have been engulfed completely. The mangrove forest along the river bank has also been destroyed for the road, locals said.

Interestingly, the sand used for filling up the water body itself comes from the river's east point. Large dredgers were seen extracting sand which was being carried by the truck to dump at the west side of the river

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BANGLADESH UPDATE



473

New cases in 24hrs



5,31,799

Total cases



8,023

Deaths



4,76,413

Recoveries



2,134,558

Deaths



99,548,883

Total cases

Bangladesh-US ties to reach new height

Momen says about days ahead under Biden admin; 25 journos get AmCham award for reports during pandemic

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said relationships between Bangladesh and the US will reach a new height under the Joe Biden administration.

"We are very happy with the Joe Biden administration," said Momen.

He said Bangladesh does not want to see any events that led to movements like Black Lives Matter that took place in the US a few months ago and also the uprooting of more than one million Rohingyas from Myanmar.

The foreign minister lamented that while Bangladesh has a lot of positive achievements, the media outlets are not portraying the country's positive image, but negative ones.

Bangladesh is no more a case of bottomless basket, now the country is a land of opportunities, although media does not showcase the country's positive sides, the minister said while addressing the AmCham Frontline Journalism Award ceremony.

He added that technologies and innovations have created opportunities in modern journalism.

The American Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Bangladesh in collaboration with Masthead PR awarded 25 journalists of print and

electronic media for their outstanding performance in journalism during the pandemic.

Earl Robert Miller, the US ambassador to Bangladesh, in the virtual award-giving ceremony highlighted the contribution of journalists when they covered the pandemic news putting their lives under threat of the deadly virus.

He said some 43 Bangladeshi journalists have died from Covid-19 so far. It took great courage and journalistic principles to put their lives under threat and go to report even during such a pandemic, Miller said.

The journalists give voice to the voiceless, he said, mentioning his country's support to the journalists.

Syed Ershad Ahmed, AmCham president, said the businesses are still reeling from the fallout of the pandemic.

It is great that the journalists came out from their homes and covered the reports defying the fears of virus, he said.

While moderating the event, Syed Mohammad Kamal, AmCham vice-president, said a jury board selected the best reports from published and aired reports called from journalists of the period between March 1 and August 31 last year.



Police look on as local administration demolishes a half-constructed building on vested property in Tangail's Akur Takur Para area that was illegally occupied by former minister Abdul Latif Siddique. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Experts allay fear of major side effects

FROM PAGE 1

So, there is no reason to hesitate to take this vaccine. As a frontline health worker, I will take this vaccine for sure," Prof Dr Mohammad Robed Amin, line director of the National Centre for Disease Control at the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) told The Daily Star on Thursday.

MILD SIDE EFFECTS

Like any other vaccine, the Covid-19 vaccines may have some side effects, which are signs that your body is building immunity against the virus, according to the US Center for Disease Control (US-CDC).

These side effects may affect one's ability to do daily activities, but they should go away in a few days. Common side effects may arise on the arm where the shot is injected and throughout the rest of the body.

The vaccine recipient may feel pain or swelling on the arm where the shot is given.

Throughout the rest of your body, the side effects may appear as fever, chills, fatigue and headaches, according to the US-CDC.

Accordingly, such typical vaccination reactions have also been reported after receiving the AstraZeneca, BioNTech-Pfizer, Moderna, Sinovac and the Russian Sputnik V vaccines, which are already in use.

"Serious allergic shock is the only severe side effect of any

vaccine, which, in case of the Oxford one, was not reported so far," Robed Amin said.

OXFORD-ASTRAZENECA

SIDE EFFECTS

On September 6, the company paused the trial to investigate a patient who developed transverse myelitis -- a dangerous inflammation of the spinal cord, reports MedShadow, an independent non-profit health news site.

Researchers determined that the incident was unrelated to the vaccine and quickly restarted the trial in most countries. It, however, remained paused in the US until October 26.

On October 21, scientists reported a patient in the trial had died.

The trial resumed after it was reported that the patient's death was caused due to other reasons.

In earlier trials, many patients reported mild adverse effects similar to those associated with other vaccines, including injection site pain, rash, headaches, muscle soreness, and fever.

Referring to the primary study result, Robed said, "Most vaccine recipients will not face any side effect. Only 5-10 percent so far had mild to moderate side effects."

The Oxford vaccine has been approved for use in the U.K., Argentina, India, and Mexico, and received emergency approval in Bangladesh.

HOW TO TACKLE SIDE EFFECTS

The DGHS has set up vaccination centers only in healthcare settings like upazila health complexes, district hospitals or diagnostic centers.

"Every vaccine recipient will be observed for 10-15 minutes after a shot is injected. If anybody faces any side effects even after that, treatment will be arranged in each centers. In that case, a vaccine recipient can call 16263 for DGHS telemedicine service," said Prof ABM Khurshid Alam, director general of the DGHS.

DGHS officials have advised pregnant women, people over

90 or under 18, and those with serious allergic reaction to any drug not to take the vaccine.

The US-CDC has advised taking the second shot timely, even if anyone has side effects after the first shot, unless a vaccination provider or doctor suggests otherwise.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Prof Sayedur Rahman, chairman of pharmacology at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, said, "Some 98 percent of those who will face side effects will be ok within 24 hours after taking the shot. In rare cases, a few might need drugs like paracetamol [to tackle the side effects]."

"The vaccine is the best weapon we have so far to fight Covid-19. So, we have to take the vaccine," he added.

50 lakh shots arrive today

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vaccine doses timely and whether it has the capacity to store and transport those properly.

Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday said there will be no crisis of vaccine in the country and everybody will get vaccines free-of-cost.

Dr Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services, said, "We are happy that we are going to get the vaccine in time. This is a real morale boost for us."

He also hoped the vaccination programme will run smoothly.

DGHS officials said the government plans to give the first dose of vaccine to 60 lakh people in the first month and another 50 lakh in the second month.

The COVAX programme, led by the World Health Organisation and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, offered Bangladesh around four lakh doses of Pfizer vaccine earlier this month. The alliance has committed to give Bangladesh a total of 6.8 crore vaccine shots.

Pilot vaccination in the country will start on January 27 while mass vaccination will begin on February 8.

The online registration for vaccination starts tomorrow. A press conference in this regard will be held at the Prime Minister's Office today.

Experts, however, said one of major challenges for the government now is to make people aware of the necessity of taking vaccines and to get them vaccinated.

Prof Sayedur Rahman, chairman of pharmacology department at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), said the vaccine's arrival in the country is indeed good news.

But before launching vaccination,

the government should make an immediate assessment to identify the most vulnerable groups and the areas with high infection rates, he said.

"There should be a vaccine trial to see whether the process runs smoothly or not. Besides, it is also important to vaccinate people efficiently without infecting others."

The registration process should be hassle-free and measures need to be put in place to ensure that vaccines are administered at every designated centre in an orderly fashion to prevent chaos, Sayedur observed.

"There should be a backup plan in case there is any unexpected disruption during transportation and storage of vaccine. Another point is that the government should take some remedial measures to raise confidence among people about vaccines."

Prof Be-Nazir Ahmed, former director (disease control) at the DGHS, said that now it's time to administer the vaccine to people efficiently and skillfully in an organised manner.

The aim of vaccination is to save lives and break the chain of virus transmission. And people have to be involved in the process to achieve that, he pointed out.

"There must be community mobilisation and also huge publicity. This will make people feel that they are very much part of this process. We got enough time for preparations but it seems that the government could not utilise the time properly."

Be-Nazir further said the listing of vaccine recipients could have been completed and more vaccination centres readied by this time to cover more people.

Covid has already claimed 8,023 lives and infected 531,799 people in the country. Besides, there are asymptomatic cases.

Antibody test for Covid-19

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setting some criteria for the approval of rapid antibody testing kits. It said antibody kits with a minimum 90 percent sensitivity and 95 percent specificity will be approved.

According to the government policy, the rapid antibody testing kit can be used for sero-surveillance, convulsant plasma therapy and research.

The kit will be permitted to be used only by the laboratories, according to the government policy.

This newspaper made phone calls to Md Salahuddin, director of the drug administration, to learn whether there any new antibody testing kits in the country that meet the standards, but he did not answer.

On September 17, the government permitted antigen-based rapid testing at public healthcare centres.

As of yesterday, a total of 56 government healthcare establishments had the rapid antigen testing facility, according to the DGHS.

Both antigen and antibody-based rapid testing for Covid-19.

However, there was no progress in this regard till yesterday.

Officials, however, said they have not finalised any plan on how the antibody kits will be used.

Prof Nasima Sultana, additional director general of the Directorate General of Health Services, told The Daily Star, "We are busy implementing the Covid-19 vaccine rollout. We have no plans regarding antibody tests right now. We will start working on it later."

On June 26 last year, the Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) disapproved a rapid antibody testing kit developed by Gonoshasthya Pharmaceuticals as it was found capable of detecting antibodies in only "40 percent Covid-19" cases.

On June 24 that year, the DGDA published a draft policy on its website

Venezuela's Maduro willing to establish 'new path' with US

AFP, Caracas

Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro said Saturday he was willing to "turn the page" with the US under President Joe Biden, calling for a "new path" after years of tension with Donald Trump's White House.

"We are willing to walk a new path in our relations with Joe Biden's government based on mutual respect, dialogue, communication and understanding," the leftist leader told supporters, adding that he "is willing to turn the page" with the new US administration.

Jail super, jailer also withdrawn

FROM PAGE 1

Bari and assistant chief prison guard Khalilur Rahman were withdrawn earlier.

Tushar, brother-in-law of Hallmark Managing Director Tanvir Mahmud, was allowed a visitor in violation of the coronavirus restrictions.

Two committees investigating the incident have identified some of those involved from security camera footage, officials said.

In the footage, Tushar was seen

walking around wearing black clothes in the area where jail officials' cabins are located shortly before a woman in purple clothes was seen entering from outside and going to the said area around 12:55pm.

The footage also showed Saqlain greeting the woman and leaving a room after the woman walked in. Saqlain came back with Tushar and after around 10 minutes, Ratna left her room and two minutes later Tushar went towards Ratna's room with the

woman. Two minutes later, Tushar and the woman returned to Saqlain's room where they spent about 45 minutes.

A committee headed by Additional Deputy Commissioner Abul Kalam was formed on January 12 to investigate the matter. Another committee headed by Additional Inspector General of Prisons Col Abrar Hossain was formed on January 21.

Abrar said officials would look into whether the prison officials gave Tushar the privileges in exchange for money.

Wild elephants trample two teens to death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

Two teenagers were trampled to death by a herd of wild elephants in Alikadom upazila of Bandarban early yesterday.

The dead are Mansur Alam, 19 and Humayan Kabir, 18, of Konapara area in the upazila, said Kazi Rokib Uddin, officer-in-charge of Alikadom Police Station.

According to the police official, locals blocked the movement of the wild elephants. As a result, the elephants attacked the humans, leaving the duo injured.

"Of them, Mansur died at Lama Upazila Health Complex whereas Humayan breathed his last on the way to a local clinic in Cox's Bazar.

SM Kaiser, divisional forest officer (DFO), Lama, said humans have been blocking the passage of these wild elephants for a long time.

"It became serious in 2018 with the construction of Dohazari-Cox's Bazar rail line through the Chunati and Fasiakhali wildlife sanctuaries and Medhkachapia National Park."

It will be difficult to stop the human-elephant conflict in the future as the elephants' passages are already blocked in the area, said the DFO, adding that it would also pose a serious threat to wildlife and biodiversity in the region.

It may take

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report, "The Inequality Virus", released today.

The increase in the wealth of the 10 richest billionaires since the start of the crisis is more than enough to prevent anyone on the earth from falling into poverty because of the virus and to pay for Covid-19 vaccines for all, it pointed out.

Oxfam is an international confederation of 20 NGOs working with partners in over 90 countries to end injustices that cause poverty.

"Covid-19 has the potential to increase economic inequality in almost every country at once, the first time this has happened since records began over a century ago," the report mentioned.

"Rising inequality means it could take at least 14 times longer for the number of people living in poverty to return to pre-pandemic levels than it took for the fortunes of the top 1,000 billionaires, mostly White male, to bounce back."

It also noted that 711 billionaires in Asia have seen their fortunes increase by \$1.5 trillion since March last year, enough to give all the 157 million people forced into poverty by Covid-19 in the region a cheque for \$9,000 each.

In South Asia, the poorest sub region, 101 billionaires have seen their fortunes rise by \$174 billion in the same period, enough to give the region's 93 million people, forced into poverty due to the pandemic, a cheque for \$1,800 each.

Besides, 610 billionaires in East Asia and the Pacific region have seen their fortunes increase by \$1.3 trillion since March, enough to give all 64 million people forced into poverty by Covid-19 in the region a cheque for \$20,000 each, the report said.

The world's 10 richest men have seen their combined wealth increase by half a trillion dollars since the pandemic began -- more than enough to pay for Covid vaccines for everyone and to ensure no one is pushed into poverty by the pandemic.

The pandemic has created the worst job crisis in over 90 years with hundreds of millions of people now underemployed or out of work, said the report, adding that women are hardest hit, yet again.

"Globally, women are overrepresented in the low-paid precarious professions that have been hardest hit by the pandemic. If women were represented at the same rate as men in these sectors, 112 million women would no longer be at high risk of losing their incomes or jobs. Women also make up roughly 70 percent of the global health and social care workforce -- essential but often poorly paid jobs that put them at greater risk from Covid-19," it added.

Czech trainers teach dogs to sniff out Covid

AFP, KLINNY

In a dog training centre built inside a shipping container located in a Czech mountain village, Renda, Cap and Laky are being put to the test.

They sniff at six vessels, each containing a piece of cloth with scent from patients with Covid-19, negative donors, or fake samples.

"Good boy!" exclaims Lenka Vlachova, a trainer working at Prague's fire brigade, as jagdterrier Renda sits down by one sample, wagging his tail.

The team of dog trainers are working in their own time and report a 95-percent success rate in Covid-19 detection in samples of human scent.

"The study is designed to verify dogs' ability to detect Covid-19 and generate a method enabling the use of trained dogs in combatting the pandemic," project head Gustav Hotovy told AFP.

City corporations take over 13 canals from Rajuk, BWDB

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Government yesterday decided to hand over 13 canals that are under the management of Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) and Rajdhani Unnayan Kartripakkha (Rajuk) to two city corporations of Dhaka.

This was disclosed by LGRD Minister Md Tazul Islam yesterday after a follow-up meeting on the city's canals and drainage system at a conference room of local government division.

Tazul said they handed over 26 canals of Dhaka and drainage lines to city corporations with a view to evicting all encroachers and constructing walkways, planting trees along the bank of the canals and beautifying all of them.

"We have found the existence of 39 canals in Dhaka city and we have asked DC office Dhaka to submit the area list of the canals to the city corporations in phases, based on CS and RS record within the next three months," said the minister.

He said people have occupied the canals and adjacent land by creating false documents and all illegal structures will be demolished.

Tazul said the two city corporations have already started cleaning and eviction work.

About the unplanned construction of culverts at different points, the minister said they have decided to identify the unplanned culverts and construct necessary culverts in a planned manner.

About the box culverts, the minister said the two city corporations have already started cleaning box culverts which were piled with garbage of almost 20-30 years.

The minister said they are trying to establish better

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



A worker of Dhaka Wasa braves the cold to get down into the water inside a pothole in the capital's Nazirabazar, Bongshal yesterday. While authorities responsible for maintaining the city's utility services often get flak for negligence in serving citizens, such commitment of field-level employees is certainly heartening. The photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

DIGITAL SECURITY ACT DU students demand release of Kishore, Mushtaq

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka University students yesterday stood in solidarity with incarcerated writer Mushtaq Ahmed and cartoonist Ahmed Kishore at the Central Shaheed Minar, demanding the release of the two.

Heralding poster printouts of the cartoons that got Kishore prosecuted, the students pressed home a clear message – nobody should be imprisoned for drawing cartoons.

By obstructing the voices of journalists, the state mechanism is being hostile to the exercise of intellect, said the protesters.

"We want freedom. The kind of freedom that would allow one to write and draw as they wish, and where the state or law enforcers will not intervene," said Kazi Rakib Hossain, a student of law at Dhaka University, and the organiser of the protest.

They called the Digital Security Act, a gagging law. "Is Bangladesh at such

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

'Neo JMB' man arrested in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Counter Terrorism officials claimed to have arrested a member of "Neo JMB", who attempted to go to Syria but returned home from Turkey recently, in Dhaka's Darussalam on Saturday.

Minhaz Hossain (38), an active member of the militant outfit, was captured around 6:30pm while meeting other operatives to plan for sabotage, said Walid Hossain, deputy commissioner (media) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

He had communicated with members of international militant group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), said Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CITC) unit.

Officials said they were on high alert after receiving information that a man attempted to go to Syria but returned from Turkey in December last year. Then Minhaz was identified and subsequently arrested.

As he failed to enter Syria, he returned home, went into hiding in Khulna and set up communication with "Neo JMB" in the country, the sources said.

According to law enforcers, Minhaz was born in Bangladesh but spent most of his childhood in Pakistan after their family shifted there. He later moved to USA, and visited some other countries including Malaysia and Brunei before returning to Bangladesh in 2017.

Act neutrally: CEC

Tells police, election officials; 410 of 723 polling stations in CCC risky; no holiday on polls day

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Ctg

Calling upon the law enforcement agencies to act neutrally, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) KM Nurul Huda has asked them not to harass innocent people ahead of Chattogram City Corporation election, scheduled to be held on Wednesday.

However, amid the ongoing tense situation over the growing violence among Awami League rebel candidates, the CEC said, "There is no risk and voters are secured. The election will be free and fair."

"If there is any allegation of criminal offense against anyone, I have told officials to bring them to book... but do not harass the innocent," he said while talking to the media after holding a views-exchange with election officials and law enforcement agencies yesterday.

The meeting was held at Chattogram Circuit House in port city.

Regarding BNP's allegations of raid, arrest and intimidation by police, the CEC said, "We do not have any such report. Police can raid houses of those accused in criminal cases with arrest warrants."

About BNP's demand for deploying army on the election day, he said there is no need to deploy army as they are satisfied with measures taken by the law enforcement agencies.

Earlier in the meeting, the CEC said, "The election should start with a contest but should not end with violence. Life is more valuable than election. Lives must not be lost in clashes and conflicts."

To CCC polls candidates, the CEC said, "Competition cannot get out of hand. Lives of some people have been lost centring election. This cannot continue."

He thanked the CCC mayor and councillor candidates for making the election "festive".

Urging election officials to treat candidates as just candidates rather than being influenced by the political party or community they belong to, the CEC said, "It is your duty to give legal assistance to all the candidates."

He also called upon the candidates to abide by the electoral code of conduct.

The CEC said around 35 complaints lodged with the commission centring the election have been disposed of.

Presided over by Chattogram Divisional Commissioner ABM Azad, EC senior secretary Md Alamgir was also present at the meeting as special guest.

NO GENERAL HOLIDAY ON POLLS DAY

There will be no general holiday on the day of the election

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Womens' issues neglected in candidates' pledges

RASHIDUL HASAN and DWAIPIYAN BARUA

Women make up 48.83 percent of the electorate in the Chattogram City Corporation polls, but they feel neglected in the pledges made by the two major candidates. Women voters of Chattogram feel that the candidates did not place enough importance in tackling gender-based issues.

Talking to The Daily Star, several women mentioned that the two major candidates -- Rezaul Karim Chowdhury and Dr Shahadat Hossain -- should have emphasised initiatives to make Chattogram a women-friendly city and ensure hassle-free movement and safety. Voters feel they did not pay enough attention to these issues in their campaigning activities and manifesto.

Both the candidates mentioned maximum four gender-based issues, which female voters find inadequate.

Out of 19,38,706 voters in the CCC polls, 9,46,673 are women.

On Saturday, Awami League-nominated mayoral candidate Rezaul Karim Chowdhury announced a 37-point manifesto while BNP candidate Shahadat Hossain announced his nine-point manifesto with 75 pledges.

The notable promises made in Rezaul's 37-point manifesto are: eliminating waterlogging, 100-day priority projects, resolving traffic congestion, restoring discipline on roads, evicting occupants of canals and rivers, managing waste, developing Chattogram as the country's tourism capital and ensuring 100% holding tax collection.

Shahadat made 75 promises on nine points that include water-logging, health care, education, holding tax and housing, cleanliness, safety, communal harmony, aesthetic and tourism, and IT.

Among his 37 points, Rezaul mentioned -- setting up public toilets for women in the busiest points of the city, introducing separate transport services, mandatory training for self-defence, aiding women entrepreneurs in each ward and developing modern maternity services.

On the other hand, Shahadat made

CCC POLLS

two promises including setting up modern public toilets for women and establishing special cells for female patients at the CCC-run health centres.

Earlier in the 2015 CCC polls, BNP-backed mayoral candidate M Manjur Alam in his manifesto had promised to set up separate swimming pools for women. He had also mentioned setting up two buses for women and children and a hostel for working women.

Manjur's rival, AL-backed candidate AJM Nasir Uddin had pledged separate bus services for women. He had also promised to allocate plots or flats for working women.

But those promises were not materialised. "Women want a safe and women friendly city free of walking and sexual harassment. These are major concerns for us. The candidates should have spoken on this vital issue," Arafat Ara, a student of Chattogram University, told The Daily Star on Saturday.

Echoing the same, noted writer Ferdous Ara Alim said, "Social security is now a major concern for women. Things are getting worse day by day as we see women are subjected to rape and torture in public vehicles in the city, just like other parts of the country."

This issue should have been addressed more widely for a modern city, as female-friendly services is still absent everywhere in society, she said.

Pointing out that separating transportation services for women would not be a good long-term solution, she said CCC should instead try to arrange adequate number of seats in public transport and train the operators so that women can use transportation without hassle.

Jannatul Ferdous Popy, a former CCC ward councillor under a reserved seat for women, said on safety issue, complaint centres need to be set up in every ward so women can get urgent assistance if needed.

The mayor needs to address the acute accommodation problem faced by huge number of working women and students coming from different districts, she added.

No achieving SDGs without changes to edu system: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Underscoring the need for technical education to reach sustainable development goal, speakers at a webinar yesterday asked the government to build necessary infrastructure to attract students.

The virtual event, "EduSummit 2021" was jointly organised by The Daily Star and Asia Foundation. Speakers emphasised the need for change in the education system and making it more career-oriented to solve unemployment problems.

Former governor of Bangladesh Bank Dr Atiur Rahman said the existing curriculum is producing clerks. "If we fail to give good education, it would not be possible to reach the SDGs," he said.

He said due to the unprecedented crisis presented by the pandemic, the government introduced online class system. "Teaching methods have to be blended in the post-pandemic period and the government needs to build necessary infrastructure," he said.

Atiur said the whole world is facing the drastic impact of climate change. "But it seems our students are not much aware of climate change issues. How would they cope with the world in the coming days if they have no knowledge of climate change," he questioned.

Dr Khondaker Golam Moazzem, research director at Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) said the limitations in the country's education system must be addressed to produce effective human resources who can aid in Bangladesh's transition to a middle-income country.

He said one-third of educated people are not getting jobs as the current education system fails to create skilled human resources.

Nazneen Ahmed, senior research fellow at Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, feared many girls will drop out of schools during the pandemic.

She suggested building necessary internet infrastructure so that students from remote places of the country could get education.

Korvi Rakshand, founder of JAAGO, opined that three different mediums is creating obstacles to proper education.

"Students in Dhaka can avail a different type of education at English medium schools... whereas students in remote place don't even get the chance to go to a good Bangla-medium school. This disparity needs to be resolved," he said.

Seven sessions were held in the day to mark International Day of Education, observed with the theme "Recover and Revitalise Education for the Covid-19 Generation."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

2 women awarded for addressing climate crisis

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two grassroots women leaders have been awarded for their contributions to addressing the climate crisis.

ActionAid Bangladesh virtually announced the awards at the closing ceremony of a seven-day annual "Gobeshona Global Conference" yesterday, hosted by International Centre for Climate Change and Development (ICCAD).

Of the two awardees, Lake Begum has been practising climate-resilient agriculture for over a decade and inspired many women farmers to understand the agroecology approach and scale-up.

On the other hand, Jannatul Mouwa has set an example of "Courage of Conviction" by challenging the social norms in leading a group of young women to engage in social transformation.

The awardees were given Tk 25,000 each.

While announcing the winners' names, ActionAid Bangladesh Country Director Farah Kabir urged to invest further in women leadership to address reliance on climate change and disasters.

She also stressed bringing women's voices, especially young women's, to policy level for gender-responsive policy formulation, financing and implementation in all aspects of policies in all levels.

Gobeshona Global conference aims to stimulate actions amongst the participants, inspire people to start their own initiatives through research or practice and encourage collaborations.



Roads and Highways Department has been demolishing illegal structures on Khulna city's Sher-e-Bangla Road for a week, to turn the two-lane road into a four-lane one. Till yesterday, around 70 buildings were demolished during the ongoing eviction drive. The photo was taken from Amtola intersection yesterday.

PHOTO: DIPANKAR ROY

DIPAN MURDER

Verdict on Feb 10

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday set February 10 for delivery of judgment against eight members of banned militant outfit Ansar Al Islam in a case filed over the murder of publisher Faisal Arefin Dipan in November in 2015.

Judge Majibur Rahman of the Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunal set the date after conclusion of arguments from both sides.

The accused are: Ansar Al Islam's top commander Sayed Ziaul Haque alias Maj (sacked) Zia, killing squad leader Moinul Hasan Shamim alias Samir alias Imran, trainer Abdus Sabur alias Samad alias Sujon alias Raju, and top operatives Khairul Islam alias Fahim alias Jishan, Sheikh Abdullah, Abu Siddiq Sohel, Mozammel Hossain alias Saimon and Akram Hossein alias Hasib.

Of them, Zia and Akram are still at large while the rest are behind bars.

The tribunal recorded statements of 23 prosecution witnesses including the case's complainant.

On October 13, 2019, the tribunal framed charges against Zia and the seven others in the case.

Dipan (43), publisher of Jagriti Prokashani, was hacked to death at his office in Dhaka's Shahbagh on October 31, 2015.

Later, his wife filed the case with Shahbagh Police Station accusing unknown persons.

On November 15 of 2018, Assistant Commissioner of Detective Branch Fazlur Rahman submitted the charge sheet to the chief metropolitan magistrate of Dhaka.

Vulnerable families in Sundarbans receive aid

CITY DESK

Households dependent on natural resources of the Sundarbans have been significantly affected by the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. This is mainly due to reduced income as a result of limited access, restricted movement, less demand of harvested products and more.

In light of this, some 7,000 households neighbouring Chandpai and Sarankhola Range of the Sundarbans are receiving cash grants and aid packages, said a press release.

The support comes as part of a special emergency project "COVID 19 Mitigation Measures in the Sundarbans" -- jointly implemented by Bangladesh Forest Department (BFD) and Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH.

The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) is funding the initiative, while Centre for Natural Resources Studies (CNRS) supported the rollout of this effort, the press document said.

Begum Habibun Nahar, Deputy Minister, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, inaugurated the programme on Thursday at the Chandpai Range Office premise.

During her speech, the Deputy Minister urged everyone to join hands with BFD to conserve the Sundarbans, which she termed "Our pride and our lifeline," said the press release. She also thanked the German Government for their support and expected continued cooperation in conservation and enrichment of Bangladesh's vital forest resources, as well as climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts.

In the inauguration event, senior BFD officials, Divisional Forest Officers of Sundarbans East Forest Division, Upazilla Chairman of Mongla, GIZ Bangladesh and CNRS representatives, Chandpai Co-Management Committee members were present among others, the press release said.

DU students

FROM PAGE 3

a place where humour has no place? Cartoons are very effective at relaying important information. Cartoonist Kishore showed the kind of courage that is non-existent in the pens and paintbrushes of many. But this courage is not allowed in Bangladesh," said Jahid Jamil, a student cartoonist and organising secretary of Bangladesh Student Union's DU unit.

Writer Mushtaq Ahmed and cartoonist Ahmed Kishore were arrested on May 6 after being prosecuted under Digital Security Act for their writings and their art. They have been denied bail multiple times.

Act neutrally

FROM PAGE 3

on January 27, according to the Election Commission.

The EC issued a circular in this regard on Saturday, said Mohammad Hasanuzzaman, returning officer of CCC polls. He said there will be no restriction on public transport movement.

When asked about the reason, Hasanuzzaman said if general holiday is announced, many voters may go out of the city. "If voters stay in the city, turnout will increase," he said.

Moreover, if it is declared, traders and businesspeople will suffer too, he said.

410 POLLING STATIONS "RISKY"

According to police, 410 polling stations out of 723 are "risky". Of the polling stations, 12 stations are situated in Hathazari upazila, which is out of Chattogram Metropolitan Police's jurisdiction.

CMP sources said the risky polling stations are situated under 20 wards of CCC where police are on high alert to avoid any kind of untoward situation. Besides, law enforcers have chalked out four-tier security measures for the election, they said.

Marking the risky centers "important", CMP Deputy Commissioner Abdul Warish said, "A team of six armed police personnel and 12 Ansar members will be deployed at important centres while four police and 12 Ansar members at regular centers."

Around 8,000 police personnel will be deployed across the city and around 1,500 are on stand by for any emergency during the polls, he said.

Pledges are beyond their

FROM PAGE 12

Architect Iqbal Habib, also joint secretary of the Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, said that among other jobs, city corporations collect revenue and take care of vital civic amenities like waste collection and management, mosquito control, maintenance and repair of roads and footpaths, surface drains, street lightings and fighting food adulteration.

Both Rezaul and Shahadat, in their manifestos, gave priority to ending waterlogging and overcoming traffic congestion in the port city and promised to resolve the issues, if elected.

However, these vital issues remain under the jurisdiction of the Chattogram Development Authority and the Chattogram Metropolitan Police traffic department.

On Saturday, Rezaul announced his 37-point manifesto while Shahadat announced his 9-point one on the same day.

Some of the pledges in Rezaul's manifesto are: eliminating waterlogging, 100-day priority projects, resolving traffic congestion, restoring discipline on roads, evicting occupants of canals and rivers, managing waste, developing Chattogram as the country's tourism capital, restoring the lost natural diversity and environment of the port city, harnessing the importance of Chattogram in the Blue Economy, building a mosquito-free city, and discouraging the construction of unplanned facilities.

But most of the pledges he made are under the jurisdictions of other authorities. Shahadat also gave eradicating the waterlogging problem the highest priority.

He said, if elected, he will recover the city's canals to build a waterlogging-free Chattogram and build dams to protect both sides of the canals, taking effective measures to prevent the slicing away of hills in the city.

The BNP candidate also said fertiliser and electricity will also be generated through waste recycling.

Experts said most of the promises made by the BNP candidate are not totally under the jurisdiction of the CCC as various concerned government ministries and departments are looking into those matters.

Dr Mahfuzur Rahman, convener of Chattogram's Public Health Right Protection Committee, said as per the third schedule of the Local Government Act, all sorts of responsibilities in the city has been given to the mayors of city corporation without empowerment.

The mayor has responsibility but no power, he said. According to Article 59 of the Constitution, all the government officials and staffers would go under the local government but a law in this regard has not been enacted. So the mayors, virtually, do not have any power to address most of the pledges in their election manifestos.

Only the system of the metropolitan government can address the issue, Mahfuzur said, adding so the public representatives in local government institutions should raise their voices to introduce the metropolitan government system.

Otherwise the mayors would pledge to voters but in many cases, they would not be able fulfil those and consequently the voters would be deprived, he said.

Asked, why the mayoral candidates, despite knowing their limitation, offer such pledges, Mahfuzur said many of them do not have a clear idea about their mandate and others do it to be popular amongst voters even after knowing they do not have the mandate to meet those pledges.

Teenage boy arrested on rape charge

FROM PAGE 12

Sharsha Police Station.

In Siddhirganj, Narayanganj, police are looking for a 20-year-old man accused of raping a ninth-grader.

The girl's family members told police that Sajib used to stalk the girl and raped her on January 18. Her mother filed a case against Sajib yesterday.

The girl was sent to a hospital, said Moshir Rahman, officer-in-charge of Siddhirganj Police Station.

[Our correspondents in Benapole and Narayanganj] contributed to the report.]

ACC sues former OC of Puthia

FROM PAGE 12

Star published a report that he was in service though he had been accused in forgery, land grabbing, and an attempted murder.

According to the case description, Nurul was murdered on June 11, 2019, following his dispute with other transport leaders over the election of Puthia Motor Sramik Union.

On the same day, Nurul's daughter Nigar Sultana filed a murder case with Puthia Police Station against eight people, including transport leader Abdur Rahman Patal and local Awami League leader Ahsanul Haque Masud.

In the FIR, she also alleged that then OC Shakil was involved in manipulating the election results in favour of Patal.

But police later submitted an FIR of the murder case to the trial court in Rajshahi, dropping the names of Patal, Masud and OC Shakil.

Nigar later filed a writ petition with the HC, seeking its directive on forming an enquiry committee to probe Shakil's tampering of the FIR.

On September 16, 2019, an HC bench, led by Justice M Enayetur Rahim, directed the Chief Judicial Magistrate of Rajshahi to conduct an enquiry into the allegation.

Rajshahi's then CJM Md Mehedi Hasan Talukder submitted a probe report to the HC in November 2019, holding five police officials, including three additional superintendents of Rajshahi police and OC Shakil, responsible.

In December that year, the HC observed that the allegation against Shakil was undoubtedly grave and a punitive offence. Based on the judicial probe, the HC directed the ACC to initiate the next course of legal action.

OC Shakil then filed a petition with the Supreme Court, challenging the HC verdict. In March 2020, the SC dismissed his appeal and upheld the HC verdict.

Dhaka

FROM PAGE 12

Prime Minister Narendra Modi during PM level summit with his Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina on December 17 last year, India on January 21 supplied two million doses of vaccines produced by SII.

Under a tripartite deal among the Bangladesh government, Beximco Pharmaceuticals and SII, three crore more vaccines are scheduled to arrive in six months. The first tranche of 50 lakh shots of the purchased vaccine is scheduled to arrive today.

At the vaccine handover ceremony on January 21, Health Minister Zahid Maleque also requested Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Vikram K Doraiswami to ensure that the contract of the vaccine is implemented smoothly.

Bangladesh will begin pilot vaccination of the vaccine on Wednesday, a week before the planned countrywide rollout vaccination campaign.

Indian Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla visited Dhaka on August 18-19 and Bangladesh Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen was then first scheduled to visit India in September and then in December, but could not do it due to the pandemic.

The secretary was also infected with Covid-19.

The foreign office consultations will comprise all the issues of bilateral relations, including trade and commerce, deals on water-sharing on Teesta and other common rivers, connectivity projects and border killings, officials said.

"Bangladesh would seek more Indian investments in Bangladesh and remove the non-tariff barriers of exporting Bangladeshi goods to India," a foreign minister official said.

He said though Bangladesh's export to India has exceeded the \$1 billion mark, the trade between the two countries is heavily imbalanced against Bangladesh.

Dhaka expects Delhi to expedite the settlement of water-sharing deals. In 2011, Bangladesh and India failed to sign the Teesta water-sharing agreement due to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's last-minute opposition. The issue remains unresolved as of now.

The two countries are now working on water-sharing deals on six other small rivers -- Manu, Muhuri, Khowai, Gumti, Dharla and Dudhkumar.

"Besides, the connectivity projects under the Indian Line of Credit also need expedition. We are working on how to speed up the release of money and implementation of the projects," the official added.

'Blue jet'

FROM PAGE 12

The fifth flash sent out a pulsating blue jet, a form of lightning that can reach as far as 50km into the stratosphere and lasts less than a second.

City

FROM PAGE 3

connectivity among the canals where it is possible.

"If this is implemented, Dhaka will be a very beautiful city," he said.

He said they have asked the two city corporations to submit their project proposals on the canals.

Tazul said they will provide all kinds of support from the ministry to the city corporations in this regard.

The capital's city corporations on December 31 formally took over the management and maintenance responsibilities of 26 canals and 10-kilometres of box culverts from Dhaka Wasa, raising hope that city's long-standing waterlogging problem would be solved.

Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) had been responsible for the 26 canals (84.5 km) and the 10-box culverts (around 10 km) since 1988. It also looks after 385 km of storm water drains.

The DNCC and DSCC had been managing 2,200 km of pipe and surface drains alone at that time.

Govt can now publish results without

FROM PAGE 12

and Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board Act, 2020.

Education Minister Dipu Moni placed the bills that were passed by voice vote.

The authorities will be able to publish result if it is not possible to hold and conduct exams at the end of the intermediate and secondary stage and any other stage because of a pandemic, epidemic, and Act of God or any other inevitable circumstances as determined by the government, by an order in the official gazette, said the bills.

The government moved the bills as it could not hold and publish HSC and equivalent exams due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Dipu Moni said that they would issue a gazette notification within the next two days and subsequently announce the HSC exam.

The authorities have completed all their works to announce HSC and equivalent exams, she added.

Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam, after a weekly cabinet

meeting, assured that the results of the HSC and equivalent exams would be published by January 28.

The scheduled HSC and equivalent examinations were cancelled on October 7 due to the pandemic. It was decided that students will get their results based on their SSC and JSC results.

A total of 1,365,789 candidates under 11 educational boards by the first week of this January.

The results will be published after coordinating 75 percent of the SSC and 25 percent of JSC-JDC results, Dipu Moni told the media earlier.

The HSC batch of 2020 will be the first batch of students who will get certificates without sitting for the examinations as it is the first time in the history of the country that a public examination has been cancelled.

On March 17, the government closed all schools to contain the spread of coronavirus. The closure has recently been extended till January 30. The authorities have yet to decide when to reopen the educational institutions.

The long closure has led to the cancellation of exams and left academic calendars in disarray.

BNP MP Harunur Rashid, while taking part in the discussion on the bills, said that some kind of exams should be taken.

"Auto pass will call on a grave crisis. Meritorious students will be the worst sufferers of the auto pass," he said.

Gonoforum MP Mukabbir Khan also said that exams could be held following health guidelines but the government failed to hold this.

Jatiya Party MP Mujibul Haque said that there was an instance of giving an auto pass to students in 1961 and people who passed in such a way still face a disgrace.

BNP MP Rumeen Farhana said students rigorously become attentive to lessons ahead and during a public exam. In this corona situation, students were out of the classroom and practical classes.

"If you give HSC results based on results of previous public results, will not ensure justice for candidates", she said.

No deaths in Europe tied to Covid jobs

FROM PAGE 12

In France, of 800,000 people vaccinated, nine deaths of chronically ill residents of care and retirement homes were recorded by Friday.

The national medicines agency ANSM said that based on available evidence, "Nothing leads to the conclusion that the reported deaths were linked to vaccination."

Other examples include 13 deaths of elderly people recorded in Sweden and seven in Iceland, all with no link established.

In Portugal, a care worker died two days after being inoculated but the justice ministry said a post-mortem found no direct link.

France's interior ministry on January 18 listed 71 "observations of death" in Europe of people who had the inoculation, but offered no further details.

The European Medicines Agency said that despite the deaths, "to date no specific concerns have been

identified with Comirnaty", the commercial name for the Pfizer shot.

In many countries -- such as France, Norway, Britain and Spain -- the frail and elderly are first in line for vaccinations.

"It is not unexpected that some of these people may naturally fall ill due to their age or underlying conditions shortly after being vaccinated, without the vaccine playing any role in that," the UK medicines regulator MHRA said.

The deaths are a highly sensitive issue, and approaches to informing the public vary. France and some Nordic countries have reported post-vaccination deaths and detailed the potential side effects of the jobs even if no link has been established.

But Britain's MHRA said it would make a statement at a later date, possibly seeking to avoid spreading alarm.

In any event, European health officials say the deaths do not call into

question the safety of the vaccines.

Norway has not changed its vaccination rollout, even if it has recommended doctors consider the overall health of the most frail before giving them the job, the policy of numerous other countries.

In India, the huge coronavirus vaccination drive is behind schedule, with a third of recipients not showing up for appointments because of safety fears, technical glitches and a belief that the pandemic is ending.

After one week, India has vaccinated 1.4 million people, or 200,000 people per day. It had initially hoped to process 300,000 per day before ramping up the rollout and inoculating 300 million by July.

At the Sharda Hospital in Greater Noida near New Delhi, pharma student Khushi Dhingra, 17, hugged a friend and wept as she waited to get her shot.

Star journo Mirdha wins AmCham award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Daily Star senior staff reporter Mohammad Refayet Ullah Mirdha has won the prestigious AmCham Frontline Journalism Award for his work during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Along with him, some 25 journalists from print and electronic media also won the awards, and were presented with crests, certificates, and cash prizes by Foreign Minister A K Abdul Momen at a virtual programme yesterday.

Mirdha won the award for his report "Exports crash to a 40-year-low", published on The Daily Star on May 9 of last year.

The award was organised by American Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Bangladesh (AmCham), in collaboration with Masthead PR.

No achieving

FROM PAGE 3

The opening session was titled "Lifelong learning -- education to instil leadership values". Country Director of Asia Foundation Faisal Seraj; BGMEA President Rubana Huq, and Global Campaign for Education (GCE) Co-founder Rasheda K Choudhury participated in the discussion.




Principal of Sunbeams School, Munize Manzur; Brac Institute of Educational Development's Executive Director Dr Erum Mariam and representative from Asia Foundation Sukla Dey participated in the session "Learn and play: benefits of storytelling and activities in children's education."

Prime Bank's Head of Brand Nazmul Karim; JCI Bangladesh National President Niaz Morshed Elite; Deputy General Manager, of MM Ispahani Didarul Hasan, and Bangladesh Youth Leadership Centre (BYLC) Communication Manager Upashana Salam spoke at the session titled "From campus to professional life: reshaping education for tomorrow's workforce."

Former UGC Chair Azad Chowdhury and Prof M Rezwana Khan of UIIU discussed the fourth industrial revolution in the afternoon session.

Upskill Co-founder Mustafizur Rahman; Alokit Hridoy Foundation Chairperson Azwa Nayeem and Founder and Director of Kotha, Umama Zillur spoke on "EdTech: innovation transforming the education landscape."

HerStory Foundation's Curator Katerina Don and ULAB Pro-vice Chancellor Shamsud Mortuza discussed the importance of arts and creativity in modern education practices at a session as well.

Request for Project Proposal

The Climate Bridge Fund (CBF) is a trust established by BRAC with support from the Government of Germany through KfW. The CBF is an innovative direct climate finance mechanism, which will support any local, national and international NGOs present in Bangladesh. CBF Secretariat invites project proposal from NGOs to increase the resilience of vulnerable people who are either displaced or are at the risk of being displaced due to the impacts of climate change and also highly vulnerable to COVID 19 under its **Emergency Response Window (ERW)**. CBF will support projects to be implemented in;

1. Any of the five city corporations/ municipalities among Rajshahi, Barishal, Khulna, Sirajganj and Satkhira and/or
2. Any other location based on justified needs as to be the ultimate destination of climate migrants and hotspots of COVID 19 in climate vulnerable areas.

Duration of the project will be 2 years (max) and estimated budget should be limited within BDT 3 to 10 crore.

Please visit our website for detailed information and instructions to apply: <http://www.brac.net/cbf>

All interested NGOs are requested to complete and submit the project proposal in approved template (available at the website) to: cbf.info@brac.net with subject: **CBF-ERW/Call-NGOs/2021/01**. Project proposal must be submitted in English.

Deadline for submitting: **Wednesday, 3 March 2021, 23.59 pm BST**.

Any form of persuasion shall result in disqualification.

NAGARBARI RIVER TERMINAL

Coal dust hazards being ignored for decades

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

About a thousand day labourers and others in and around Nagarbari river terminal, in Bera upazila, are being exposed to air pollution due to open-air handling of thousands of tonnes of imported coal.

Such unregulated trade activities have been going on at the terminal for decades, but the authorities concerned continue to turn a blind eye to the issue despite its negative impact on human health and the environment.

Near about 20 to 25 traders now use the terminal to import coal. Before shipping it out to 16 districts in the north, hundreds of workers, without any respiratory protection, unload the coal from cargo vessels and store it in massive stockpiles on the terminal yard. Dozens of trucks are then loaded up with the cargo and sent out to different destinations.

While visiting the terminal recently, this correspondent saw about a thousand workers unloading and loading coal.

A group of workers was unloading coal from at least four vessels moored at the river terminal while at the same time, another group was loading coal onto more than four dozen trucks, lined up at the yard.

While a cloud of coal dust hovered in the air, none of the workers were seen wearing any type of gear that would protect them from various respiratory diseases afflicted with inhalation of coal dust.

Asked about the health risks, Sardar Milon Mahmud, a medical officer at Bera Upazila Health Complex, said during loading or unloading of coal at the terminal, a huge amount of coal dust is kicked up in the air.

Its inhalation is causing the workers at the terminal as well as people living in the vicinity suffer from various lung diseases including chronic bronchitis and lung cancer.

Such a massive amount of coal



With coal dust hovering in the air all around and without wearing any sort of face covering, workers carry coal from cargo vessels and unload it onto a huge pile of coal. The photo was taken recently from Nagarbari river terminal yard in Bera upazila of Pabna.

PHOTO: AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU

should not be handled in the open and workers who handle it should wear safety gears such as face masks and gloves, he added.

Shahadat Hossain lives on daily wage that he earns by loading and unloading coal at Nagarbari river terminal. He said it is difficult to breathe and make rapid physical movements with a face mask on. Wearing gloves also slows the loading or unloading work down. Since working faster means more money, the workers avoid wearing those during work.

Besides, when a worker makes only between Tk 600 and 800 a day, she or he cannot afford to pay Tk 50 to 100 on face masks or gloves every day, he also said.

Sabina Begum, another worker, said no one provides face masks or gloves to the workers. "We always suffer from cough and various other respiratory problems. But what can we do? We are poor."

Ikram Hossain, who works as an agent for one of the coal importers, Modhumoti Enterprise, at Nagarbari terminal, claimed that even though

they provide face masks and gamchha (a piece of cloth traditionally used as a towel) to the workers at the terminal, the workers refuse to use those, saying that they cannot work faster with their faces covered in those.

Contacted, Bera Upazila Nirbahi Officer Asif Anam Siddiqi said the coal traders at the terminal have been ignoring their repeated calls for refraining from loading and unloading of coal in the open. They claim that it would cause fire hazard if coal is stockpiled in a confined

area. However, the upazila administration cannot conduct any mobile court at the terminal as it falls under the jurisdiction of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), he added.

Sazzadur Rahman, assistant director of BIWTA and also in charge of Baghabari and Nagarbari river terminals, said the yard being used at the Nagarbari terminal has been leased out to private operators who are renting the place to coal traders.

MOULVIBAZAR GANG RAPE

Prime accused held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Police arrested a man on Saturday in connection with a case for gang-raping a pregnant woman in Sadar upazila on Wednesday.

The law enforcers detained Wadud Mia, 45, also the prime accused in the case, from his house early Saturday.

Earlier, the victim filed a rape case with Sadar Model Police Station accusing four people including Wadud and another named and two others unnamed.

According to the case statement, Wadud and his three cohorts entered the victim's room by breaking open the door on Wednesday midnight and gang-raped her while her husband, an auto-rickshaw driver, was out of home. Officer in Charge of the police station Yasirul Haque said they were conducting drives to arrest the other accused of the case.

Stolen baby rescued

Two arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

A two-year-old baby boy, allegedly stolen from Bagachhara Bazar in Satkhira's Sharsha upazila on Wednesday, was rescued from Sonabaria village in Kalaroa upazila on Saturday.

Police also arrested Salma Khatun, 23, and Lutfar Gazi, 55, of Sonabaria village, in this connection, In-Charge of Bagachhara Police Outpost Uttam Kumar Biswas said.

Police said an unidentified woman, in guise of an NGO worker, went to the house of one Ashraf's house in Bagachhara area on Wednesday and lured his wife, also mother of the minor boy, of giving her Tk 30,000 after enlisting her as one of the beneficiaries of her NGO.

Accordingly, she took Ashraf's wife and father to Bagachhara Bazar and while they were having breakfast the unidentified lady fled scene with the baby.

On Saturday, a team of Bagachhara police with the help of Sharsha police and PBI rescued the baby boy from Sonabaria village.

Squash sees successful farming in Jashore

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Habibur Rahman Habib has found success in squash, a foreign variety of winter vegetable, cultivation in Monirampur upazila of Jashore district.

Hailing from Kodlapara village in the upazila, the youth has started cultivating the vegetable commercially for the first time. He saw You Tube videos on squash cultivation from where he got inspiration to cultivate the vegetable.

Later, he collected seeds from Dhaka and started farming on his one bigha and two decimals of land, said Habib.

He added that squash plants look like sweet pumpkin plants. Squash is rich in vitamin and protein.

"In June last year, I cultivated cucumber on two bighas of land. I got acquainted with squash by seeing You Tube videos on cultivation of the foreign variety of winter vegetable. Then I started cultivating squash in consultation with the local agriculture officer after collecting seeds from Dhaka," said Habib.

"As it is a winter vegetable, I have sown the seeds in three phases in early November spending 12 to 13 thousand taka. I have already sold the vegetable at Tk 30,000," he said.

He is the son of Shik Shamsul Huda of Kodlapara village in the upazila. He passed Kamil in 2019.

He had a grocery store in the local Rohita market. He left the trade in grocery following a family feud and started farming.

Habib's field is now filled with



A farmer works at his squash field in Jashore's Monirampur upazila.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

green, black and yellow squash, said locals.

"I am now selling green and black squash at Tk 25 and yellow squash at Tk 50 per kg in the local market," he said.

Local buyer Sagar Islam said "I had never eaten squash before. I bought one squash at Tk 40."

Two more farmers have cultivated squash in Monirampur upazila. They are Obaidul Hasan and Khalilur Rahman.

Obaidul has cultivated squash on 14 decimals of land next to Habib.

While he was in abroad, Obaidul got acquainted with squash farming.

Farmer Khalilur Rahman has cultivated squash on 1.5 bighas of land.

Monirampur Upazila Agriculture Officer Herok Sarkar said, the winter vegetable is rich in protein. Squash cultivation has also been bringing good profit for growers.

They are motivating the farmers to cultivate squash as the vegetable farming brings profit to growers, said the agriculture office.



Commuters face huge trouble and struggle a lot while getting on and off the trains in Naogaon's Atrai Rail Station as some unscrupulous traders set-up a fish market illegally at the station's platform.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Upazila Engineer

Sadar, Noakhali.

www.lged.gov.bd



"শেখ হাসিনার মূলনীতি
শ্রাম শব্দের উন্নতি"

Memo No: 46.02.0087.000.14.001.20-394

Invitation for Tender (Works)

e-Tender Notice No: 06/2020-2021

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following works, details are given below.

Sl No	Package No	Name of work	Tender Last selling (date & time)	Tender Closing (date & time)	Tender Opening (date & time)	Tender ID No
01	ADP/20-21/W-01	1. Construction of Wooden Bridge on over Noakhali Khal Under Ashwadia Union at Sadar Noakhali. 2. Improvement of Hagle Kali Monder Road by Brick Flat Soling & Construction of Post palisading Wall on Same Road Under Dadpur Union at Sadar Noakhali.	09-Feb-2021 12:30	09-Feb-2021 13:30	09-Feb-2021 13:30	539089
02	ADP/20-21/W-02	Improvement of Ashwadia Asrawan Kandro Road by Brick Flat Soling Under Ashwadia Union at Sadar Noakhali.	09-Feb-2021 12:30	09-Feb-2021 13:30	09-Feb-2021 13:30	539280
03	ADP/20-21/W-03	1. Improvement of Surjanarayan Bahar Montu Sarder Jame Mosjed Road by Brick Flat Soling Under Purbo Charmatua Union at Sadar Noakhali. 2. Improvement of Obydullah Road By RCC under Noakhali Union at Sadar Noakhali.	09-Feb-2021 12:30	09-Feb-2021 13:30	09-Feb-2021 13:30	539282
04	ADP/20-21/W-04	Improvement of Hazi Nur Mia Road by Brick Flat Soling Under Binodpur Union at Sadar Noakhali.	09-Feb-2021 12:30	09-Feb-2021 13:30	09-Feb-2021 13:30	539283
05	ADP/20-21/W-05	1. Construction of Road & Drain Near of Noakhali Sadar Circle A.S.P Office at Sadar Noakhali. 2. Construction of Post palisading Wall on Bhuiyan Degi East side Under Ewazbalia Union at Sadar Noakhali.	09-Feb-2021 12:30	09-Feb-2021 13:30	09-Feb-2021 13:30	539286
06	ADP/20-21/W-06	1. Development of N.S.I Makraz Mosjed at Sadar Noakhali. 2. Construction of Post palisading Wall on Debipur Hasan Ali Road side Under Neazpur Union at Sadar Noakhali.	09-Feb-2021 12:30	09-Feb-2021 13:30	09-Feb-2021 13:30	539291
07	ADP/20-21/W-07	1. Manufacturing & Supplying of Furniture Low & High Bench at Thakerhat Hazi Ahamad Ullah High School Under Sadar Noakhali. 2. Construction of Boundary Wall Near Sadar Upazila Election Office at Sadar Noakhali.	09-Feb-2021 12:30	09-Feb-2021 13:30	09-Feb-2021 13:30	539294
08	ADP/20-21/W-08	1. Construction of Foot Bridge on West Sullakia Near Anondha Mosjed Over Khal Under Kaladarap Union at Sadar Noakhali. 2. Improvement of Sobir Ali Bhauyan Road by Brick Flat Soling & Construction of Post palisading Wall on Same Road Under Ashwadia Union at Sadar Noakhali.	09-Feb-2021 12:30	09-Feb-2021 13:30	09-Feb-2021 13:30	539295

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 12.30PM on 09-Feb-2021.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd), or cephelpdesk@lged.gov.bd.

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Sadar, Noakhali.
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SCOTTISH INDEPENDENCE REFERENDUM

Nicola Sturgeon vows to hold another 'legal' vote

AFP, London

Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon yesterday said she planned to hold a legal referendum on independence from Britain despite Westminster's opposition, as an opinion poll showed a majority would vote yes.

If her Scottish National Party (SNP) wins a strong showing in regional elections in May, Sturgeon said she would seek a fresh referendum even though Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said such a vote should only be held once in a generation.

"I want to have a legal referendum, that is what I am going to seek the authority of the Scottish people for in May and if they give me that authority, that's what I intend to do," she told the BBC's Andrew Marr Show.

Johnson "will flatly refuse the demand," The Sunday Times quoted senior government sources as saying.

Sturgeon cited the fact that "the polls now show that a majority of people in Scotland want independence."

A Sunday Times poll found 50 percent of Scottish voters wanted another referendum in the next five years and 49 percent would vote for independence, while 44 percent would reject it.



A 2014 referendum saw 55 percent vote "no."

The Sunday Times quoted a forecast that the SNP will win a "landslide" in May polls for the Scottish parliament, giving Sturgeon a strong basis to call for the vote.

She spoke at the Scottish National Party (SNP) was due to discuss its "roadmap to a referendum" at a policy forum on Sunday.

The SNP says it will request a Section 30 order from the British government allowing the holding of another referendum. If this is refused it intends to push through its own legislation to prepare for a referendum and "vigorously" oppose a legal challenge from

London.

Scotland could hold a preliminary referendum, calling for negotiations on independence, Alan Trench of University College's constitutional unit told The Sunday Times.

The newspaper poll found 50 percent of Scottish voters wanted another independence referendum in the next five years, despite the fact only 22 percent thought an independent country would be better off economically.

The poll also found 53 percent in Scotland would vote to rejoin the EU.



A person runs past the statue of Winston Churchill at the Parliament Square, as snow falls in London, Britain, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

NEWS IN BRIEF

NZ detects first community virus case in two months

New Zealand health officials yesterday confirmed the first case of Covid-19 in the community for more than two months, sparking urgent contact-tracing efforts north of Auckland. A 56-year-old woman who recently returned from Europe tested positive 10 days after completing a compulsory two weeks in managed isolation, although she had noticed symptoms several days before getting tested. Contact tracing was underway after it was revealed the woman and her husband spent several days travelling around the Northland region while she was potentially infectious, visiting about 30 different locations. It marks the first known case of community transmission in New Zealand since Nov 18.

Top Spanish general resigns over vaccine queue-jumping

over vaccination queue-jumping Spain's top general resigned on Saturday after allegations he had received the Covid-19 vaccine ahead of priority groups, one of a number of public officials who have sparked public anger because of reports they have jumped the vaccination queue. Defence Minister Margarita Robles had asked General Miguel Angel Villaroya, chief of defence staff, for explanations after media reports on Friday that he had received the vaccination. In a statement on his resignation, the defence ministry indicated but did not explicitly state that Villaroya had had the vaccination.

Asian El Chapo' arrested

Dutch police have arrested the alleged leader of a large Asian drug syndicate who is listed as one of the world's most-wanted fugitives and has been compared to Mexican drug lord Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman. Tse Chi Lop, a Chinese-born Canadian national, was detained on Friday at the request of Australian police, who led an investigation that found his organisation dominates the \$70 billion-a-year Asia-Pacific drug trade, Dutch police spokesman Thomas Aling said on Saturday. Tse is expected to be extradited after appearing before a judge, Aling said, adding that his arrest by national police took place without incident at Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport. Tse's crime syndicate allegedly dominates the Asia-Pacific crystal methamphetamine trade, which increased fourfold in the five years to 2019, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. Regional law enforcers say the syndicate has imported highly potent meth into more than a dozen countries, including Japan, Australia and New Zealand, as well as trafficking heroin and MDMA.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

China-Taiwan tensions rise days into Biden presidency

Taipei reports large incursion by Chinese air force; US carrier group enters South China Sea amid tensions

REUTERS, Taipei

Chinese air force planes including 12 fighter jets entered Taiwan's air defence identification zone for a second day yesterday, Taiwan said, as tensions rise near the island just days into US President Joe Biden's new administration.

China views democratically ruled Taiwan as its own territory, and has in the past few months increased military activity near the island.

But China's activities over the weekend mark a ratcheting up with fighters and bombers being dispatched rather than reconnaissance aircraft as had generally been the case in recent weeks.

After eight Chinese bomber planes and four fighter jets flew into Taiwan's defence zone on Saturday, between mainland Taiwan and the Taiwan-controlled Pratas Islands in the South China Sea, a further 15 flew into the same air space yesterday, Taiwan said.

Taiwan's Defence Ministry said China sent six J-10 fighters, four J-16s, two SU-30s, a Y-8

reconnaissance aircraft and two Y-8 anti-submarine aircraft.

Taiwan's air force was sent up to respond, it added. China has yet to comment. It has previously said such actions are aimed at defending the country's sovereignty and designed to act as a warning against "collusion" between the United States and Taiwan.

The move is likely to further concern Washington, which on Saturday urged China to stop pressuring Taiwan and reaffirmed its commitment to the island and desire to deepen ties.

Earlier yesterday, the US military said that a US aircraft carrier group led by the USS Theodore Roosevelt had entered the disputed South China Sea to promote "freedom of the seas."

Biden was sworn into office only on Wednesday. His administration says its commitment to Taiwan is "rock-solid". The United States, like most countries, has no formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan, but is bound by law to provide the island with the means to defend itself.



Police uses a water canon during a protest against restrictions put in place to curb the spread of the coronavirus disease, in Amsterdam, Netherlands, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

US meddling in 'domestic affairs'

Says Russia a day after arresting 3,500 pro-Navalny protesters

AFP, Moscow

The Kremlin yesterday accused the United States of interfering in Russia's domestic affairs and downplayed the scale of the weekend's protests, when tens of thousands rallied in support of jailed opposition politician Alexei Navalny.

More than 3,500 demonstrators were detained in protests across the country on Saturday, with several injured in clashes with police in Moscow, following Navalny's call to rally against President Vladimir Putin's 20-year rule.

The West has widely condemned the "harsh tactics" used against demonstrators, with French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian yesterday saying the mass arrests of protesters was "an intolerable affront" and a "slide towards authoritarianism".

EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell has said the bloc would discuss "next steps" on Monday.

Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov yesterday accused the US embassy of interfering in Russia's domestic affairs after the mission distributed a "demonstration alert" to US citizens in Russia recommending they avoid

protests.

"Of course, these publications are inappropriate," Peskov told a state TV channel. "And of course indirectly, they are absolutely an interference in our domestic affairs."

A US mission spokeswoman said US embassies and consulates around



the world routinely issue safety messages to US citizens.

"This is a common, routine practice of many countries' diplomatic missions," she told AFP on Sunday.

The US embassy in Moscow on Saturday said that Washington supported "the right of all people to peaceful protest, freedom of expression".

Peskov also accused protest organisers of seeking to "rock the

boat" and said the number of people who had demonstrated paled in comparison to Putin supporters.

"A lot of people vote for Putin," Peskov said, pointing to last year's constitutional plebiscite that allowed 68-year-old Putin to remain in power until 2036.

Navalny, Putin's most prominent critic, was arrested on returning to Moscow last weekend following months of treatment in Germany for a near-fatal poisoning with a Soviet-designed Novichok nerve agent.

He then called for Saturday's unauthorised protests, which took on an unprecedented geographic scale, spanning more than 100 cities.

The OVD Info monitor said police seized at least 3,521 protesters, with 1,398 people detained in Moscow and 526 in Saint Petersburg.

The head of the Kremlin's human rights council, Valery Fadeyev, said most of those detained in Moscow had been released.

He also defended the detentions, saying the protests were illegal and took place during a coronavirus pandemic. "I see no violations whatsoever," he said.

Pirates kill sailor, kidnap 15 off Nigeria

AFP, Ankara

Armed men killed one sailor and abducted 15 from a Turkish cargo ship off the coast of Nigeria, Turkey's Anadolu news agency reported yesterday.

That left three crew members to sail the Liberian-flagged Mozart owned by a Turkish company, the state agency said. The dead man was Azerbaijani. Several crew members were wounded.

The Mozart had been en route from Lagos to Cape Town in South Africa when it was boarded on Saturday.

It was now on course for nearby Gabon.

Pirate attacks on ships worldwide jumped 20 percent last year driven by a record spate of kidnappings off West Africa.

A total of 195 incidents of piracy and armed robbery were reported, up from 162 in 2019.

US to unveil more climate policies

AFP, Washington

US President Joe Biden's administration next week will release more policies it believes are needed to tackle climate change and is urging China to toughen one of its targets on greenhouse gas emissions, his top climate advisers said on Saturday.

Gina McCarthy, the White House's national climate adviser, did not say what policies would be released. A memo seen by Reuters on Thursday showed Biden will unveil a second round of executive orders as soon as Jan 27 that include an omnibus order to combat climate change domestically and elevate the issue as a national security priority.

"We've already sent signals on the things that we don't like that we're going to roll back, but this week you're going to see us move forward with what's the vision of the future," McCarthy told a virtual meeting of the US Conference of Mayors.

Biden, a Democrat who took office on Jan. 20, quickly issued executive orders canceling the Keystone XL pipeline that would import tar sands oil from Canada and rejoining the 2015 Paris climate agreement.

John Kerry, Biden's special climate envoy, said a recent pledge by China, the world's top greenhouse gas emitter, was "not good enough." In September, Chinese President Xi Jinping set a goal for his country to become carbon neutral by 2060, 10 years after the 2050 time frame favored by most countries, while also pledging a more ambitious short-term goal on emissions.

As secretary of state under former President Barack Obama in 2015, Kerry helped bring China to the table at the UN climate conference in Paris. Now, the Biden administration has begun to apply diplomatic pressure on countries to work harder on climate, said Kerry.

He talked on Friday with foreign ministers in Europe, who told him they had high expectations for the Biden administration after a lack of action on climate in the Trump years.

11 miners rescued after 14 days in China

AFP, Beijing

Rescuers in east China yesterday pulled 11 miners from hundreds of metres underground where they had been trapped for two weeks, state media reported, as the race to locate the remaining 10 intensified.

The miners were brought to the surface starting from around 11 am yesterday, state broadcaster CCTV reported -- a major breakthrough for a rescue operation that has captivated the nation.

One miner was in "extremely weak physical condition" and rushed to hospital, CCTV said.

The 11 miners were rescued after the air ventilator shaft was cleared, Xinhua reported, citing the operation's command centre.

Specialist teams have been battling difficult conditions since an explosion at the Hushan mine in Shandong province trapped the miners underground amid rising waters on January 10. The explosion occurred in a ventilator shaft, causing a blockage that damaged the cable car.

"Zoonosis and Transboundary Animal Diseases Prevention and Control Research" Project
Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute
Savar, Dhaka-1341

No. 33.05.2672.112.06.001.20-114 Date: 21/01/2021

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender will be invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocurement.gov.bd>) for procurement of following works. Details are given below:

Tender ID No.	Ref. No. & package description	Tender publishing date & time	Tender closing date & time
539570	Ref. No.: 33.05.2672.112.06.001.20-89 Supply of Row materials	21/01/2021 at 10:00am	10/02/2021 at 3:00pm
539572	Ref. No.: 33.05.2672.112.06.001.20-89 Supply of Digital Camera and Computer accessories		
539574	Ref. No.: 33.05.2672.112.06.001.20-89 Laboratory and other Equipment (Next Generation Sequencing)		
539575	Ref. No.: 33.05.2672.112.06.001.20-89 Laboratory and other Equipment		

To get access to the e-Tender document, the required fees is to be deposited through any registered branch of enlisted banks on or before of abovementioned date & time. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Mohammed Abdus Samad, PhD
Project Director
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GD-159

Bhawal Badre Alam Govt. College
Gazipur
www.bbagg.edu.bd

Memo No. BBAGC/2021/CEDP/40 Date: 20/01/2021

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. No.	Tender ID No.	Name of supply	Last date and time of tender security submission	Tender closing date & time
1.	538874	Procurement of Furniture & Fixtures for ICT Lab, Laboratory & Classroom of Bhawal Badre Alam Govt. College, Gazipur.	08-Feb-2021 12:30pm	08-Feb-2021 1:00pm

This is an online tender, when 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' branch up to 7 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).

Professor Masuda Sikdar
Principal
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GD-158



(L) A student procession at Dhaka University campus during the mass uprising of 1969. (M) Deepa Sen, leading the procession by Dhaka University students after Asad was killed on January 25, 1969. (R) A street children at the forefront of a procession during the mass uprising of 1969. Police bullets killed the child soon after the photograph was taken.

THE ANGRY YOUNG WORLD

Dhaka University Campus in context: East Pakistan's "Mass Upsurge" at Local, Regional, and International Scales

SAMANTHA CHRISTIANSEN

This article considers student activism at Dhaka University in the 1960s as a case study for considering student politics at multiple scales: local, regional, and international. In addition to providing a historical narrative of Dhaka's engagement in the Mass upsurge campaign that led to the end of the Ayub Kahn regime, it also considers the ways this movement was informed by a sense of student power that extended beyond national borders.

In 1968, of course, students were causing headaches for government leaders far beyond Pakistan's national borders and regional scale. While newspapers were under strict censorship and were limited in their ability to run stories about the activities of anti-government activity in Pakistan, they were free to report on the activities of students elsewhere, and they did so in high volume. In fact, in the Pakistan Observer for the year of 1968, student uprisings dominate the coverage, occupying as much attention as the Vietnam War. There was also a weekly column reporting on student political uprisings entitled "The Angry Young World" which ran articles on a variety of uprisings. The sense from reading these dailies was of a world being turned upside by youth revolt; thus, even though the papers did not have any stories regarding student activity in Pakistan, they fomented a spirit of youth political agency through reportage on other arenas, and created an international scale into which students at Dhaka University could place themselves. These newspaper stories provided the linkage of Dhaka University students with the larger "imagined community" of the youth in the Global Sixties. Of particular interest was the rising young star in the British New Left, Tariq Ali. In an article entitled "Britain's Student Revolt Goes International" the international spirit of "1968" is personified by Ali:

Britain's Rudi Dutschke is a Pakistani 24-year-old Oxford student Tariq Ali whose energetic face, with its black mustache, is today the very face of student agitation in Britain... The mission that Tariq Ali has set himself and that of his followers is to make heard, as loudly as possible, the protest of a whole youth against the actual state of the world... For the first time in history, Britain today has an internationalist youth. However limited its action may be currently, it is opening a new era (d'Etchevers, Jaqueline. 1968. "Britain's Student Revolt Goes International." The Pakistan Observer, May 5, p. A12).

Articles such as these connected Pakistani students directly to the global uprising of youth political activity in 1968. They also made Tariq Ali a powerfully exciting figure, and students were eager to make contact. As he wrote in his memoir:

The student movement in Pakistan (which then included Bangladesh) was in its fourth month of struggle and the revolt had extended to every town in the country. The Student Action Committee from Rawalpindi and Dhaka were pressing me to return. I was determined to see it all for myself (Ali, Tariq. 2005. Street Fighting Years: An Autobiography of the Sixties. London: Verso, p. 319)

Ali (2005) made arrangements to visit each wing, and after his visit to West Pakistan, where he was well received, he was certain that, "The entire country seemed to be crying out for change, but before I could accurately estimate the possibilities I had to visit East Pakistan" (Ali 2005:323). Ali's experience in Dhaka depicts clearly the fluidity of identity in the period. On one hand he was an international figure, on another he was a West Pakistani, and yet he found common ground while simultaneously recognizing the local specificity, explaining:

I was only in Dhaka for a few days, but it became very clear that this was a different

world. Linguistically, culturally and politically it was a separate nation. Its oppression made it difficult not to become a separate state. And yet, I felt more at ease, intellectually and politically, in Dhaka than in Rawalpindi. The political culture was far more advanced. I spoke at a large student meeting underneath the famous Amtala tree on the Dhaka University campus (Ali 2005:323).

Ali's speech was important on multiple levels. As a figure, he represented an important blurring of the distinctions between East and West Pakistan, as well as international identity. His visit and his support for the East Pakistan movement represented the mutually constitutive relationships between the scales that the mobilization existed within.

The processions were growing larger and larger each day, and the city was no longer functioning. Demonstrations against the regime were reaching into numbers for 40,000 to 50,000 in attendance (Umar, Badruddin. 2006. The Emergence of Bangladesh. Volume 2: The Rise of Bengali Nationalism (1958-1971). New York: Oxford University Press, pp.154-63). On January 20th the movement took a deadly turn. A massive procession of students had begun to march from the Amtolla to the General Secretariat. Police opened fire and attacked the students. Nabi (Nuran, Nabi. 2010. Bullets of '71: A Freedom Fighter's Story. Bloomington: Authorhouse) recalls:

The police confronted the protesters. A student leader of Chatra Union named Asad

How often had his ageing mother,
With such tender care,
Hung that shirt out to dry
In her sunny courtyard.
Now that self-same shirt
Has deserted the mother's courtyard,
Adorned by bright sunlight
And the soft shadow
Cast by the pomegranate tree,
Now it flutters
On the city's main street,
On top of the belching factory chimneys,
In every nook and corner
Of the echoing avenues,
How it flutters
With no respite
In the sun-scorched stretches
Of our parched hearts,
At every muster of conscious people
Uniting in a common purpose.
Our weakness, our cowardice
The stain of our guilt and shame—
All are hidden from the public gaze
By this pitiful piece of torn raiment Asad's
shirt has become

Our pulsating hearts' rebellious banner.
The day after the three-day mourning period, a gathering occurred just off the Dhaka University grounds that exceeded 100,000 demonstrators from a wide swath of society. Protesters carried placards with Asad's image, as well as the images of the Language Martyrs from the Bhasha Andolan. During a march protesting Asad's murder, police again opened fire, killing more demonstrators (Hanan, Mohammed. 1987. Bangladesh Chatra Andoloner Itihas. Vol. 2: 1953-1969. Dhaka: Owarshi Prokashani p. 371).

By the end of January, the government had virtually no control of the Eastern province and the students in West Pakistan, following the direction of Bhutto, were rioting again. In an article in a weekly news magazine Holiday, in February 1969, Badruddin Umar commented, "...the students have emerged



Dainik Azad, January 21, 1969

Protest against the Ayub regime extended through the diaspora community as well, as students in London overtook and occupied the Pakistan High Commission building. The London Times reported:

More than 100 Pakistani students took over the Pakistan High Commission Building...after a stormy protest meeting at which students condemned the Ayub regime. They occupied two floors of the building...Demonstrators lined the balcony chanting and waving placards saying: 'This building is occupied' and 'Ayub Out.' (Ali 2005:244-45).

Students were united at local, regional and even international scales with a sense of political agency and power.

In Dhaka, the students responded to the uprisings in the West by escalating the Eleven Point Campaign. The leaders of SAC met at Modhur Canteen and devised a plan to bring the Ayub regime to its knees. Tofail Ahmed recalls the moments just before the group launched a series of strikes in January 1969 that would come to be called Mass Upsurge, "It was no longer just autonomy. We needed total governmental structural change." (Personal interview 2010). The group decided that they would call for a General Strike on January 5, 1969. The call for the strike was heeded by all of the major political parties. In response to the unity of the SAC, the political parties formed the Democratic Action Committee as a united platform to free all political prisoners and to suspend the Ayub Khan government.

The days following the January 5th general strike were filled with constant agitation in Dhaka. The Guardian newspaper, commenting on the situation, even called Tofail Ahmed, the convener of SAC and VP of DUCSU, the "virtual governor" of Dhaka (Kamol, Ershad. 2010. "The Tragedy of Student Politics." The Star Weekend Magazine, February 12).

was at the forefront of the procession. A police officer approached Asad and brandished his gun at point blank range. He fired. Asad's lifeless body fell to the street. We couldn't believe what we had just seen. Anger filled our blood as we charged to the site. The police, overwhelmed, retreated. Asad's body was recovered and brought to the college (p. 122).

The brutal assassination of Asad uz Zamman, a student at Dhaka University and a well-known political activist on campus, had a profound mobilizing effect on the movement. The student community was affected deeply and personally by the death of such a popular and prominent member of the campus. A gruesome image of his dead body just after being shot, with blood pouring from the back of him was printed on the cover of virtually every newspaper the next morning, and SAC declared three days of mourning on his behalf.

Students gathered the morning after the death and raised Asad's bloodied shirt onto a pole. Thousands of students gathered in mourning for their fallen comrade. Tofail Ahmad recalls, "At that day, we took an oath that Asad's death would not be in vain. He was one of us—not just a Bengali—a student of Dhaka University, truly one of us. We felt a sadness deep in our bellies" (Personal interview 2010). Asad was declared a martyr by the students. A well circulated poem for the martyred Asad, captures the mood of the students,

Like bunches of blood-red Oleander,
Like flaming clouds at sunset
Asad's shirt flutters
In the gusty wind, in the limitless blue.
To the brother's spotless shirt
His sister had sown
With the fine gold thread
Of her heart's desire
Buttons which shone like stars;



Amanullah Asaduzzaman
(10 June 1942 – 20 January 1969)

as a powerful political factor not because it is an accident, but because they are performing a historical task in the development of our society" (Umar, Badruddin, 1969. "The Eleven Pointers" Holiday, February 9, p. 6.). He chastised the political parties for their inability to show the same unity and sophistication as the students demonstrated in the Eleven Point Program, arguing, "It is precisely because the students have announced a programme which is very much in conformity with the thinking of the ordinary people—the peasants, the workers, the middle class, the students... that the people have rallied around their eleven point program" (Umar 1969:6). The movement had taken on dimensions that were beyond the demands of the Six Points, thanks to the students, and it had become imbued with a sense of power that Ayub could not ignore.

Ayub announced, on February 21, 1969 that he would not run for office in the next election. The date of the announcement, February 21, as the day the largest student movement success in the nation's history, the Bhasha Andolan, celebrated annually, was certainly not an accident. He devised a plan for constitutional reforms and planned for roundtable talks to discuss the reforms with major political leaders. He also released the prisoners of the Agartala Conspiracy Case, including Mujib. On February 24, 1969, Sheikh Mujib went before a crowd of over 100,000 people at the race course grounds near Dhaka University, and embraced Tofail Ahmed, thanking the students for their work and dedication. At this event, Ahmed placed a garland of flowers around Mujib's neck and gave him the title "Bangabandhu" (friend of Bengal). This title stayed with Mujib throughout his life, and is still used as an affectionate and honorific term for Mujib (Husain, Syed Shahid. 2011. What was Once East Pakistan. Karachi: Oxford University Press).

The roundtable talks fell apart, and finally, after months of chaos and disorder, Ayub conceded defeat and stepped down from power in March 1969. He handed over power to an interim military administration, headed by General Yahya Khan. Yahya declared Martial Law, but also declared that national elections would be held within a year. The Mass Upsurge movement had shaken the Pakistani state to its core and the students of Dhaka University felt an empowerment that was on scales both geographically and in terms of community that was unprecedented. In terms of the Global Sixties, students in Pakistan had achieved what revolutionaries young people across the world desired: they had literally brought down the ruling regime.

Student activism in the late 1960s at Dhaka University cannot be contained in a narrative of nationalism nor of internationalism, and as such, serves as a valuable example elucidating the overlapping scales at which movement identity functioned simultaneously. While certainly at times, as demonstrated in the discussion of the local context, students were addressing specific and unique circumstances tied to their most immediate location (the campus), at other times, as demonstrated in the regional and international contexts, that same campus served as a place where students enacted and articulated their actions as part of larger frameworks of understanding. Thus the campus itself, as a place, also did not function within a singular scale symbolically for students. Overall, as scholars continue to seek understanding of the student activism of the 1960s as a pattern of "Restless Youth" occurring across the world, the case study of Dhaka University provides a useful example of the importance of considering various scales of context (local, regional, international) as interdependent and mutually constitutive in the actions and imaginations of movement participants as they define both themselves and the places they claim as their own.

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This is an abridged version of the article titled A Campus in Context: East Pakistan's "Mass Upsurge" at Local, Regional, and International Scales which was published in South Asia Multidisciplinary Academic Journal [Online] on December 1, 2019.

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The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

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Economic pangs of the pandemic

The authorities must intervene to assist the 42 percent pushed below the poverty line

WE had predicted at the very outset of the pandemic that one of the long lasting inevitable negative impacts of Covid-19 would be on the economy of the country, and that countries across the board, irrespective of their economic status, would have to cope with the economic downturn long after the health hazards of the pandemic were mitigated. We are not done with the pandemic yet and many parts of the world are faced with not only a second wave but also different strains of the virus. However, the initial manifestations of the socio-economic impacts are already far too easy to see.

According to a nationwide survey carried out by South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM) between November and December last year to find the impacts of the pandemic on socio-economic conditions, 42 percent of 5,577 households covered in the survey were found below the poverty line. Interestingly, SANEM had interviewed the same group of households in 2018 and had found 21.6 percent of them to be below the poverty line. This percentage doubled last year—all due to the pandemic. The consequences have been worse for rural areas than urban areas. Another long-term impact in this regard is the rise of the extreme poor to 28.5 percent last year from 9.4 percent in 2018, nationally. Sadly, those who were marginally over the poverty line have gone below it in the last year.

While these adverse economic impacts are not unique to Bangladesh, perhaps the pinch has been felt harder here. Therefore, the authorities need to address the situation that is germane to Bangladesh, stemming from the pandemic, such as the emergence of this "new poor".

The poverty level has increased—this is a reality. Numbers are not as important as how we respond to the phenomenon. The government has to address all the three sectors that have been hard hit: the decline in domestic economic activity and impact on the informal economy, the impact on RMG exports and the decline in foreign remittance. We believe that the government should chalk out immediate, short and long term plans to overcome the crisis. The most important thing is to generate economic activity and employment opportunities by increasing investment, implementing special programmes to provide cash and food assistance to the poor in the worst affected areas, and providing loans to encourage small business.

Tk 428 crore project for women entrepreneurs

A timely and laudable initiative

WE laud the government's plan to undertake a Tk 428 crore project to develop the skills of 256,000 unemployed and disadvantaged women and hone them as entrepreneurs. If approved, the project, to be implemented by the Jatiyo Mohila Sangstha, a women welfare organisation under the women and children affairs ministry, will also help set up 160 sales and display centres, food corners and beauty parlours, where women can be self-employed. What is particularly notable is that the initiative is not concentrated in the urban areas and at the district level alone, but rather aims to set up training centres at the upazila level and in remote areas in all 64 districts. If implemented properly, this will go a long way towards building the skills and confidence of rural and disadvantaged women to explore opportunities they did not have access to previously.

Despite women's advancement across all sectors in Bangladesh, it is unfortunate that women entrepreneurs continue to face multiple economic, social and cultural barriers that curtail their true potential. In fact, last year, Bangladesh was bottom-ranked among 58 economies in the Mastercard Index of Women Entrepreneurs for 2020, a ranking based on an analysis of 12 indicators and 25 sub-indicators spanning advancement outcomes, knowledge assets and financial access, and supportive entrepreneurial conditions. Women are still discriminated against when it comes to accessing SME bank loans, in violation of Bangladesh Bank's guidelines, and there are very few opportunities for skills development. This is an embarrassment for a country that professes to prioritise women's empowerment.

During the pandemic, we have seen women come up with innovative business plans to support themselves and their families, utilising limited resources at their disposal. However, they need systematic support from the government and business community to build and expand their businesses, develop their skills and sustain themselves in the long run. We are glad that the government has taken a timely and judicious initiative for women entrepreneurs, at a time when Covid-19 has adversely affected employment opportunities for vulnerable groups. We hope that the project will be approved and the funds will be disbursed in an equally timely and judicious manner.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Monitor vaccinations

We finally received a timely gift from India, 20 lakh doses of vaccine for the coronavirus, and are thankful for it. Also, three crore vaccine doses that we purchased from the Serum Institute of India are set to arrive in the country in phases, and we will soon begin our inoculation campaign. It is a matter to be proud of, especially during these trying times. The elderly and frontline workers should be given priority during the vaccination phase. Those who receive the vaccine need to be monitored as well should any side effects occur, and health officials must remain alert. Moreover, the government must strictly monitor every step of the vaccination programme to prevent it from being mishandled and reaching the black market.

Priyanka Chowdhury, by email



FAHMIDA KHATUN

MACRO MIRROR

FOLLOWING the inauguration of his Presidency, Joe Biden has already given several executive orders which are of great significance, not only for the US but for the entire world.

Stepping into the role amidst one of the greatest challenges in mankind's recent history, one thing is for certain: President Biden has a long to-do list. Covid-19 has shattered the US healthcare system and its economy during the pandemic, much like it has done in other countries. With no signs of the pandemic's severity slowing down in the US, the Biden administration has no time to waste, and must make haste in order to make up for the lost four years under his predecessor at the White House.

On the economic front, the country has experienced a fall in output and employment due to disruption in production and businesses. In October 2020, the International Monetary Fund projected that the US would have a 3.1 percent growth in 2021 as opposed to 3.9 percent on average for the advanced countries. As far as dealing with the economic crisis, Biden has been vocal on the need for government spending—unlike his predecessor, who would not support funding on state and city levels in order to combat the pandemic. Biden plans to make huge investments on infrastructure to generate employment. Spending on education will also be an important component of such investments. He plans to hike taxes on the upper class in order to create a fiscal space for his intended investment, given that government expenditures will increase federal deficit significantly.

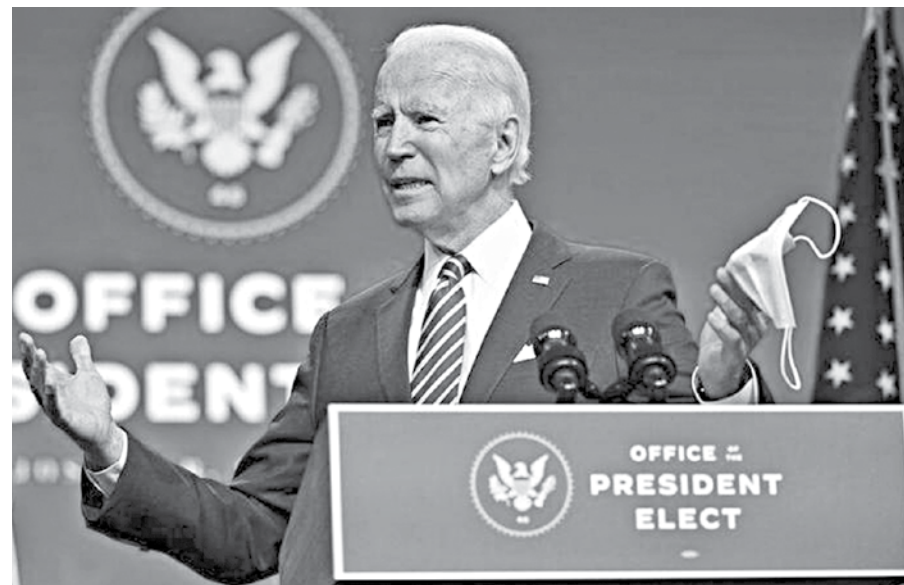
The pandemic has exposed all of the hidden weaknesses within the US healthcare system. Unfortunately, sentiments towards the scale and extent of Covid-19's impact, on both human health and the economy, were weak and disrespectful towards the pandemic's ability to disrupt the very way of life. The result of which was a President who left the White House without any cohesive strategy to address the pandemic.

The entire world had assumed that an economy as developed and bountiful as

the US would take the lead in tackling the pandemic. Unfortunately, these expectations were not met due to both insensitivity and incapability. However, the need for a comprehensive health response to the coronavirus is being felt since the pandemic's initial outbreak. Despite vaccines rolling out in less than a year since the pandemic began, not everyone is optimistic in overcoming the current health challenges. Access to vaccines is not guaranteed for everyone. Beyond that, there still remains uncertainty regarding the availability of vaccines for the less fortunate, especially in poor countries. Several global leaders

to end the pandemic has remained underfunded till now. Under COVAX, the poor countries would receive free vaccines but the rich countries would pay for the vaccines so that the fund can be used for poor and vulnerable populations. To recall, COVAX is a collaboration among GAVI (the vaccine alliance), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations. It will help provide two billion vaccines to citizens of 190 countries, of which 98 are higher income countries and 92 are low and middle income countries.

Such initiatives are noteworthy and



Stepping into the role amidst one of the greatest challenges in mankind's recent history, one thing is for certain: President Biden has a long to-do list.

PHOTO: AP

have urged for the vaccine to be a public good that will be available to each and every person worldwide. But there are apprehensions that countries may exhibit nationalistic behaviours in their vaccine distribution methods. Such was the experience during the H1N1 influenza pandemic in 2009. Covid-19 vaccine nationalism will also further accelerate the divide between the poor and the rich in case of health outcomes, leading to poor economic and social outcomes in low income countries.

The initiative titled the Covid-19 Vaccines Global Access Facility (COVAX) that was proposed in June 2020 for ensuring equitable access to immunise the poorest of the world in an effort

extremely useful during the current crisis. Unfortunately, at the political level, the world still has no clear plan on tackling the virus. There are not enough commitments on funds for the poor countries to deal with the pandemic. The UK and the EU have taken the lead in supporting the COVAX facility. The Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation has also committed a large amount towards the cause.

In September 2020, the former US President Donald Trump rejected the idea of joining the COVAX. He also stopped funding the WHO. Sadly, multilateral systems have taken a hit from the US government during the past four years. Under the Trump administration, the US

Bangladesh the preferred option in an uncertain world



MOSTAFIZ UDDIN

AMONG the main characteristics which brands look for when entering a sourcing destination are political stability. Stability brings confidence and certainty and allows brands and retailers to plan long-term. The last thing any brand wants is to be shifting from one sourcing destination to another.

Here is an example: China. In the past 18 months, serious concerns have been raised about the province of Xinjiang, due to issues around forced labour and the repression of the Uyghur Muslim population.

I am not here to discuss the rights or wrongs of Xinjiang but what I can say is that as a direct consequence of these issues coming to the fore, fashion brands and retailers now have a huge headache on their hands. The reason is that the US has subsequently banned all products entering the country which contain cotton from Xinjiang. This creates huge problems for brands which use Xinjiang cotton but it also creates a challenge for brands sourcing any apparel from China, as much of the cotton used to feed China's textile industry is from Xinjiang.

China, the world's largest exporter of apparel, is not the only competitor of Bangladesh which has political instability right now. Ethiopia was viewed as a threat to Bangladesh not so long ago. Its business model was seeking to replicate our own—exporting cheap ready-made garments and competing heavily solely on price.

But now Ethiopia is also causing brands and retailers to have sleepless nights. Until last year, the country had relative political stability in comparison to other countries on the notoriously unstable African continent. It was selling itself as an investment hub for textile manufacturers, creating a number of business parks which have attracted customers such as H&M, PVH and Gap.

However, recent months have seen violent conflict in Ethiopia's northern Tigray region. This has been fuelled by ethnic power politics and is threatening the country's political and economic stability. According to some reports, the violence has likely killed thousands of people, including many civilians, and displaced more than a million people internally. Many commentators are now

suggesting that the scale of the conflict could scare off foreign investment in Ethiopia's garment industry. Some brands have already been forced to close some of its production units and this kind of instability is the last thing Ethiopia needs at a time when it is trying to develop its fledgling garment sector. Why would brands look at sourcing from there given the political instability and associated reputational risk of sourcing from a war-torn country?

In fact, everywhere I look, in terms of the competitive landscape for Bangladesh's RMG sector, I

western Myanmar is believed by some to be the most serious by far of the country's numerous, decades-old internal wars, with some of the most intense fighting seen in years. After the conflict escalated in early 2019, the government ordered a strong military response and designated the Arakan Army as a terrorist organisation. Such measures appear to have made matters worse, and problems and instability in Myanmar continue. What brands will make of all this, who knows?

Do we have our own problems in Bangladesh? Of course, we do. No



PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Compared to our key competitors, it is fair to say that Bangladesh is pretty stable right now and has been for many years.

see challenges for brands. Even neighbouring Myanmar has problems, and the issues there typify the challenges brands face when looking to source from developing countries. Myanmar only began exporting garments again in 2012 as the country had previously faced economic sanctions following a military coup in 1988. Many brands have begun sourcing from Myanmar since that time and, again, commentators have suggested Myanmar is a competitive threat to Bangladesh.

Again, however, political instability has reared its head. In fact, the current war between government forces and the ethnic Rakhine Arakan Army in

country is perfect. But compared to our key competitors, it is fair to say that Bangladesh is pretty stable right now and has been for many years. Full scale safety remediations after the tragic Rana Plaza has transformed Bangladesh into probably the safest apparel sourcing country. The country also has the highest number of green garment factories in the world. It has an abundance of trained workers, strong backward linkage, infrastructure, logistics and the entrepreneurial know-how.

Brands know what they are getting with Bangladesh. They know they can be in for the long haul as our country has for decades proved itself to be a reliable, low risk partner for apparel sourcing;

distanced itself from organisations such as the United Nations, the World Trade Organisation, and the WHO, all of which have to work with governments to face the multitude of challenges our world presents.

However, things seem to be looking up. The US now intends to join the COVAX vaccine project. With President Biden willing to work together with the global community, there is optimism that the US will come forward to lead during the critical recovery path from the pandemic. Indeed, the National Strategy for the Covid-19 Response and Pandemic Preparedness of President Biden spells out seven goals towards beating Covid-19. These goals include: (i) restoring trust with the American people through a robust whole-of-government response that puts science first; (ii) mounting a safe, effective, equitable vaccination campaign; (iii) mitigating the spread of the virus through expanding masking, testing, data, treatment, workforce, and clear public health standards; (iv) expansion of emergency relief and exercise of the Defense Production Act; (v) safely reopen schools, businesses, and travel while protecting workers; (vi) protecting those most at risk and advancing equity, including across racial, ethnic and rural/urban lines; and (vii) restoring US leadership globally, advancing health security, and building better preparedness for future threats.

As President Biden initiates all out efforts to tackle the pandemic, it is important to understand that the pandemic has to be controlled not within one country but in all countries due to the very nature of a pandemic. As citizens of a globalised world, people have to travel across borders. Therefore, vaccinating its own people within a country does not bring any lasting result. Keeping the majority of the poor people in other countries outside immunisation makes its own people vulnerable, and this has huge economic and social costs. That is why a collaborative and coordinated approach is needed when it comes to combatting the pandemic.

The world will watch curiously how President Biden steers the journey towards a pandemic free world.

Dr Fahmida Khatun is the Executive Director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue. Views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of the organisation she works for.

such partners are becoming increasingly difficult to find in an uncertain world.

These are important issues which need bringing to the fore at a time of change. Over the next few months, maybe beyond, brands will be reassessing supply chains as business picks up again after Covid-19. The industry is, in many ways, in a state of flux.

Our country, its leaders and its business owners must strike while the iron is hot to once again make our case as the trading partner of choice. Political instability among competitor sourcing destinations and pandemic chaos has

only strengthened our hand in a world where brands and retailers more than anything crave certainty, familiarity and business continuity.

As Bangladesh will continue to be the world's preferred destination for apparel sourcing, brands and retailers should strengthen their partnerships with Bangladeshi apparel manufacturers to best serve themselves. It will be a win-win for both the buyers and manufacturers. While the journey will be longer, the best thing all the passengers could do is enhance cooperation and partnership to make it more successful.

Mostafiz Uddin is the Managing Director of Denim Expert Limited. He is also the Founder and CEO of Bangladesh Apparel Exchange (BAE).

Will the BCS examinations continue to possess our students?

It is high time we attach value to professions that contribute to society and not just personal ambitions



DURING this pandemic, many of our universities, both general and technical, have set the target of completing undergraduate final examinations before January 31. They have given the highest priority to these particular examinations over all other academic activities, including in-person classes. They have done so to enable final year students of undergraduate programmes to apply for the 43rd Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS) examinations. This week, the University Grants Commission (UGC) requested the Bangladesh Public Service Commission (BPS) to extend the deadline for BCS applications till March 31.

Nowadays, the BCS examinations have come to be the prime goal (if not the only one) in the lives of our students, and they are investing all their efforts and energies in its pursuit. Our educational institutions have also started endorsing this pursuit by complying with the requirements of these examinations. Our students have become so serious about the BCS exams that they start preparing for them as soon as they are promoted to the second year of their undergraduate studies, often at the cost of their regular academic activities. What is more, when they get enrolled in Masters programmes, many of them are not regular and mindful about attending classes. Even when they attend classes, most of their attentions remain occupied with BCS preparations.

Consequently, the very objective of their acquiring subject-based in-depth knowledge through comprehensive reading and research, the objective for which they get admission into a particular department of a university, is ultimately neglected. And we the teachers, in our turn, are day by day getting used to this reality, and are making necessary adjustments to match the priorities of our students.

Why has the situation taken this turn? We need not go far to find an answer. University of Dhaka lecturer Rubaiya Murshed, in a column in *The Daily Star* on

January 2, diagnosed some of the causes behind this. The first cause in this respect is the discrimination and corruption that is rampant in government sector jobs, which prevents our students, the job-seekers, from finding prospective government employment in most areas. Finding no other alternatives, they are compelled to turn their attention towards BCS examinations. According to Murshed, the authorities of the BCS examinations have so far managed to maintain the credibility of these examinations to a great extent, thus making the BCS a first choice for most job-seekers. It is a view that I must agree with, as well as the fact that BCS cadres enjoy a certain level of social status and dignity in our society. Another point presented by Murshed in her column is significant, but also worrying for our society. She deplors the fact that we regard someone's success in the BCS examinations "as one of the most valued achievements in our society", and because of our excessive glorification of this success, our students desperately run after it, sacrificing their



File photo of students queuing in front of the central library of Dhaka University, waiting to get in.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

In a society where there are gross deficiencies in the rule of law, in good governance and in democratic practices, it is obvious that these particular cadres will happen to get greater opportunities to abuse their power, override others' jurisdictions, or obstruct others' legitimate rights. And it happens because they have little fear of being held accountable for their misdeeds.

mental peace and comfort in the process.

However, it should be mentioned that all the jobs of the BCS cadres are not equally valued in our society. Some particular cadres are held superior to others, and it is to the jobs of these particular cadres that we, as members of society, ascribe all the dignity and importance. But why do we attach so much more value to these jobs than to others?

The answer should be sought in our failure to uphold morality and ethics in our social and national life. It is regrettable that we do not hold law-breakers in contempt, do not despise those who are corrupt, and do not resist those who misuse power. Instead, we applaud them for their guts in breaking the law, admire them for their ability to go unpunished after engaging in corruption, and place the powerful over the powerless and the humble. As Murshed rightly writes, we are "assigning value to what should not have so much value". Very often, we overvalue the persons who assume overlordship, or those who exercise overarching power.

In our society, the status and dignity of some particular cadres or of some particular professions have come to be synonymous with the extent to which they can exercise power and earn money, or can establish supremacy and dominance over people and other professionals or cadres, whether it is done rightfully or wrongly. We eulogise them for the power they possess, but we do it mainly because of their opportunity and capability to misuse their power and office.

In a society where there are gross deficiencies in the rule of law, in good governance and in democratic practices, it is obvious that these particular cadres will happen to get greater opportunities to abuse their power, override others' jurisdictions, or obstruct others' legitimate rights. And it happens because they have little fear of being held accountable for their misdeeds.

In such a backdrop, it is quite natural that the professions or the jobs without any prospects of gaining so-called power and illegal money will lose their lustre and glamour, but the ones involving

those prospects will gain extra brightness and splendour. That is why the glory and recognition of job-holders in the fields of knowledge, research, education, healthcare, science and technology, art and culture, film and media, etc. are fading away, day by day, in our society. Our students are no longer being lured towards the professions of scientists, researchers, educators, journalists, writers, artists, social activists, etc. or even of doctors, engineers, architects or agriculturists, which were once highly sought after.

I do not find it unusual when I see my students, who have already been selected as BCS education cadres, still trying again and again to become cadres related to administration, law enforcement, tax, customs, etc. I do not wonder when I see increasing numbers of medical, engineering or other technical students rushing to apply for the jobs of general cadres, especially some particular ones, and choosing to leave behind their own technical specialisations. But how do we resist this trend? Will the principle of moralising to our students about concentrating on acquiring knowledge and working for the philanthropic good of society come to any use? Should we attempt to convince them that their talents are needed not only for the jobs of some particular cadres, but also for jobs in many other sectors or areas, for the greater interests of our country?

I think mere moral or didactic speeches will not yield any results until or unless we can change the total value system of our lives, creating a new one based on ethics and morality—until we can change this sorry state of our society and build a new one based on the rule of law, a system of checks and balances, and patriotism. We need to build a society where everyone will get his or her dues, where there will be mutual trust and respect among people and professionals, where no hegemony of one profession will exist over another, and where transparency and accountability will be the core principles of our governance. Unless we can build such a society, the allure of certain BCS cadres will continue to work its magic on our students.

Mohammad Emdadul Huda is Professor and Head of the Department of English at Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University in Trishal, Mymensingh.

Surviving a pandemic alone is powerful, not pitiful



DURING a global pandemic, living alone may sound terrifying to some and liberating to others. I would say there is no straightforward answer. It can certainly get overwhelming at times, but I have

found it can also be beautiful, courageous and empowering.

I have been living on my own for quite some time now and have been facing a lot of the challenges associated with living alone as a single woman in a patriarchal society. Still, things were different until the pandemic hit, as I used to be at work during the week. Besides the regular tasks of living alone and working full time, the additional responsibilities that come with being safe in this pandemic were humongous. However, they made me even more resourceful, self-sufficient and resilient. There were times I felt lonely, but I simply considered that as a part of the experience through which I had to navigate the pandemic.

The highs
Staying away from workplace toxicity and politics helped me to be in a better mental state and to develop a better routine with a focus on my needs. The emotional eating that results from the stress of workplace drama was not there, resulting in significant progress toward my health goals.

One day, after speaking with a friend, I

learned that his favourite pastime, dancing, was largely on hold due to the pandemic, but he had picked up a new hobby instead—painting. This inspired me to buy my first ever ukulele, something that I always wanted to learn to play. I started learning the western music notations for the first time with the help of a musician friend who happily agreed to give me lessons online.

The challenges
In the times of coronavirus, I need to be extra cautious while living alone in one of the most densely populated cities in the world, since most people here generally do not think about the unconventional challenges solo dwellers might be facing. I know that I cannot afford to get Covid-19, as I can hardly expect any help from anyone if I fall ill.

Living alone definitely became a lot more challenging during the pandemic, in this society where almost everyone lives with someone. As a result, the system only considers the challenges faced in communal/family spaces, ignoring the unique psychological, emotional, socio-cultural, economic, structural and systemic challenges of living alone in a pandemic. Finding reliable online stores, ordering online and getting home deliveries might sound simple, but is quite complex. Online platforms are relatively new in this country, and there are many problems with that system.

For a major period, I was imprisoned in my own house, with restrictions imposed on moving out of the apartment complex. The building owners locked the main door and the rooftop, leaving me feeling claustrophobic at times.

Obviously, there is no opportunity to have shared meals or physical contact. "Touch" being one of my primary "love languages", I keep wondering how long someone can survive without in-person contact. The days when I go out to a pharmacy or a grocery store, it is probably a good thing nobody ever asks how I am doing; I do not know if I could resist the temptation to share all that I have kept unspoken. I do not dare ask others how they are doing. Talking to strangers is not at all a norm in this culture. People act even colder/more guarded in the context of a pandemic that is of a contagious nature.

Last but not the least, I could not do partner dancing—something that takes me out of time and space, bringing me into an energetic reality of altered consciousness. I missed the mystery, the fun, the passion and the poetry that is created on the dance floor.

Coping mechanisms
When work from home started, it was a completely new thing for me. When I learned about a friend's goal to come out of the pandemic as a healthier, fitter and more disciplined person, I quickly realised the importance of maintaining a routine and holding myself accountable to a healthy lifestyle during Covid-19. Maintaining a healthy lifestyle—eating clean, working out and maintaining meaningful relationships are key, now more than ever.

I feel extremely lucky that my favourite Zumba instructor continued to teach classes online. Not only that, but all my instructors who are based in faraway lands started to offer classes online. That gave me the opportunity to continue classes that I once

attended in person, with teachers that I admired. One hour of Zumba is one happy hour in a day.

Whether dancing with a group of people or dancing on my own in the kitchen—dance makes me feel happy to be alive. My morning rituals include meditating, listening to upbeat music and sitting in the sun. The sun that falls on my skin and the wind that touches my hair reminds me to be grateful for life. Often, I touch an egg or an onion to feel their texture, to feel alive. Having an attitude of gratitude helps me to survive. I am grateful to the people who speak to me about things other than Covid-19; talking about Covid-19 has become the new perfunctory conversation. I am also grateful for those people from all different time zones who work hard to find time to video chat with me. These moments of connection, though distant, are the best gifts possible.

Instead of counting the numbers of people infected and dead, I try to keep myself busy counting my blessings.

I do whatever it takes to nourish and nurture myself, without judgment. At times, it means listening to the same song repeatedly, and other times it means changing the songs way too many times. I sing out loud, not needing perfection or an audience to enjoy my singing. I realised that I have been given the gift of music to feel joyful, and I can sing and wash dishes at the same time.

The lessons
Quite often in our daily lives, we race around and fill our days with one activity after another, as activity is thought to be good, and lack of it bad. We forget to sit

still, to contemplate clouds or stars, or to pet an animal. In the pandemic, I learned the art of stillness and discovered the energy that comes from sitting still. I learned the importance of setting aside time to do "nothing" and not feel guilty about being "unproductive".

Surviving a pandemic all by myself has also taught me about minimalism. For many months, I only bought the necessities—groceries and medicine. The pandemic keeps reminding me about *Memento Mori* (remember that you die) and makes me remember repeatedly the dispensability of material things.

Something that never really made complete sense to me in the past, started making sense—while living alone during the pandemic with no physical contact with other human beings, I understood why my yoga teacher used to teach us to kiss our feet and hands and say to ourselves "I love me."

The pandemic has helped me connect with the people who matter. I reach out to check in on people. I try to be "present" when they share their feelings. Talking to others also helps me put things in perspective. The pandemic has created an opportunity to unveil ourselves to others and appreciate the beauty of rawness. Even the most reserved people have become courageous enough to be vulnerable and to have honest conversations with others. Those to me are the most magical and precious moments during a very difficult pandemic.

Faria Rashid is a freelance writer and human rights activist.

QUOTABLE Quote

W SOMERSET MAUGHAM
(1874-1965)
British writer.

To acquire the habit of reading is to construct for yourself a refuge from almost all the miseries of life.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Pageantry
- 5 Tile holder
- 10 Finished
- 11 Make happy
- 12 Floor model
- 13 Fulminated
- 14 It may be studded
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WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinion@gmail.com.

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

A	S	T	O	R	L	E	S
U	H	R	A	R	O	M	A
N	O	R	A	D	A	L	I
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ENSURING LAND AND FOOD RIGHTS AT THE TIME OF COVID-19 AND BEYOND

The Daily Star and Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD) jointly organised an online discussion titled "Ensuring land and food rights at the time of COVID-19 and beyond" on December 18, 2020. Here we publish a summary of the discussion.



SHAMSUL HUDA,
Executive Director,
ALRD

Two-thirds of the world's population and two-thirds of the poor people live in Asia. The poverty situation and vulnerabilities of the marginal farmers and the various marginal communities are of great concern to us. This COVID-19 situation is very critical for their existence.

Through this discussion, we are hopeful that we can come up with some recommendations in regards to our future actions to ensure the land rights of the people and reduce their vulnerabilities.

We have to work for a safer today and secure tomorrows for the farmers in relation to food, land, environmental and human rights. We need to fight all kinds of systemic discrimination against women, indigenous peoples, farmers, and all other marginalised communities across Asia.

VIDEO PRESENTATION

Asian NGO Coalition for Agrarian Reform and Rural Development (ANGOC), Philippines

COVID-19 has evolved into crises of poverty, hunger, and malnutrition which burden family farmers, fisherfolk, agricultural workers, landless people, indigenous peoples, and slum dwellers more. Nationwide lockdowns and restrictions on trade and travel have disrupted food chains. As the government asked people to stay home, the need for secure land and housing tenure has become crucial for everyone.

There are individuals and groups who seek to take advantage of this situation through illegal logging, illegal mining, and land grabbing. This situation confirms that development frameworks must be transformed, recognising the primacy of people and the environment to ensure food for all. Access and control over land and natural resources should be in the hands of the small producers.

A fundamental working principle for building lasting food security is to reduce the distance between where food is produced and where the same food is consumed.



ANTONIO B. QUIZON,
Researcher and
Former Chairperson
and Executive
Director, (ANGOC),
Philippines

COVID-19 has deepened the pre-existing inequalities and poverty. Small farmers remain at the frontlines of this pandemic, as food producers.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused severe disruptions in the food chain supply, undermining the ability of small food producers to access their land and the natural resources. Illegal mining has reportedly increased over this period along with increased militarisation in areas with land disputes, especially in territories of indigenous peoples.

Furthermore, women's land rights are at risk as their titles and certificates are in the hands of their husbands. Some have been forced to concede their land after losing their husbands to COVID-19. Overall, the COVID-19 crisis has created an environment where it has become easier to violate the tenure rights of the vulnerable population. We have also witnessed the curtailment of political rights during this pandemic.

We need to build greater crisis-resilience in our land and food systems. We need to implement agrarian reforms, support smallholder farmers, and promote agro-ecology that reduces dependence on external inputs and emphasizes shorter supply chains and local territorial markets.

We have protected areas for cultural and historical sites. Such Similarly protected areas also need to be created for agriculture. In Bangladesh, research shows that on average, one percent of agricultural land is lost every year.

Lastly, we must address the digital divide for farmers and small producers. Environmental changes, especially improper use of land, have been the primary drivers of past disease emergencies, including the current pandemic. We need to seriously review the ways in which we produce food and utilise our environment. We need to heed the lessons learnt from this pandemic to refocus actions on ending poverty and inequalities.



ROWSHAN JAHAN MONI,
Deputy Executive
Director, ALRD,
Bangladesh

Though Bangladesh is known as the "land of farmers", farmers in this country have no control over their agricultural lands. Although women's contribution to agriculture is 72.6 percent, they are not recognized as farmers.

To achieve middle-income country status, the government of Bangladesh has virtually strategised its land investment for growth, allocating more agricultural Khas land for off farming use like EPZ/SEZs, thermal power plant, etc. Deprived of fair prices, debt-ridden small farming families shifting their occupation from farming to off farming, often migrate to city area. Forest being cleared for commercial interventions have also resulted in the eviction of many indigenous communities from their lands and deprived them of their livelihood.

Despite achieving self-sufficiency in food production, a large portion of the country's poor and marginalised people are deprived of their right to food, specifically nutritious and safe food. This right to food is also not constitutionally guaranteed in Bangladesh.

Despite bumper production of rice this year, harvested crops were not able to reach markets due to the lockdown. According to a 2020 survey report by BRAC, extreme poverty is projected to rise from 24 percent to 84 percent in the immediate term.

COVID-19 has been a wake-up call reconfirming that agriculture is the backbone of this country's economy and a stepping stone for inclusive development. It is high time to go for comprehensive land and agricultural reforms. We also need to extend all possible support to promote the small producers to ensure their food security and enable an environment for inclusive development.



UJJAINI HALIM,
Executive Director,
Institute for
Motivating Self
Employment (IMSE),
India

In India, smallholder farmers are still the pillars of the rural economy. Women play a vital role in this sector but face various kinds of discrimination starting from non-recognition to lack of access to governance.

India ranked 94 among 107 countries in the Global Hunger Index 2020. In the context of COVID-19, a majority of the people belonging to lower castes and religious minorities are predisposed to the vulnerabilities of the pandemic.

Although we have enough food grain reserves, the supply chain is very weak. There are a few things the government can do to make the Public Distribution System (PDS) more effective. Firstly, PDS needs to be made universal. We have a rationing system, but the prices of the essential commodities are on rise. This needs to be checked. The relief packages need to contain foods that can provide the nutritional requirements of the people.

The ongoing farmers' protests in India are huge and are extremely important. Farmers are protesting vehemently against three farm acts which are pushing further corporatisation of agriculture and contract farming.

One of these acts has taken out cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, onions, and potatoes from the list of essential commodities, thus curbing government role in regulating these essential commodities and allowing private companies to act freely there. This can have adverse effects on not only the farmers but also on middle-income and poor consumers. The COVID-19 restrictions have been used to curb protests against various newly-enacted government acts and policies which are issued often as ordinance, not even through parliament.



DEWI KARTIKA,
General Secretary,
Konsorsium
Pembinaan Agraria
(KPA), Indonesia

Indonesia is afflicted with land-grabbing conflicts, forced land acquisitions, and land conversions. Criminalisation and violence has also become rampant during this pandemic. The military and the police are yet to adopt

an effective approach in handling situations related to land-conflict.

We are facing challenges due to the inconsistent release of information on national food security situations. At the onset of the pandemic, we were told that our food supply is very secure. However, around June, the President announced that there is a food crisis. On the other hand, the small producers could still produce their own food and remain independent. Therefore, the pandemic showed us that most villages with agricultural lands demonstrated resilience.

During the pandemic, there were mass protests due to the speeding up of the legal drafting process of the Job Creation Law, also known as Omnibus Law. But, it did not stop the government from drafting the law. Then there is the anti-agrarian policy in the name of food security which actually strengthens food corporations instead of small producers. The political space is also shrinking.

We need to come up with a new business model for food sovereignty and extend our solidarity beyond COVID-19. A comprehensive reform is relevant and urgent in Indonesia. We are facing issues of food sovereignty and food security, while trying to fulfil the land rights of the people.



JAGAT DEUJA,
Former Executive
Director, Community
Self Reliance Centre
(CSRC) and Expert
Member, Land
Issues Resolving
Commission, Nepal

Nepal's economy still largely depends on agriculture. 27 percent of our Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is agriculture-based. Landlessness is a major problem; about 29 percent of families are landless and living mostly in disaster-prone areas. Another major issue is the insecure tenure. About 25

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Employ community-based agro-ecological farming systems
- Reduce the distance between where food is produced and where the same food is consumed
- Create protected areas for agriculture
- Introduce comprehensive land and agricultural reforms
- Create an enabling environment to help poor rural households make their lands productive
- Adopt policies based on the needs of the majority
- Formulate laws on the right to food, farmers' rights, and protecting agricultural lands
- Ensure that the food production system is green
- Create new investment and employment through fiscal policy rather than monetary policy
- Ensure equitable distribution of land
- Regulate urbanisation and industrialisation

percent of people are living in informal land. These people are denied basic services.

An estimated 1.3 million families are waiting for their land titles. Eviction of poor people from settlements for large-scale development is also an issue. This trend is now increasing. Recently, there has also been an increase in land-grabbing, mainly in the name of tourism promotions.

In the 2019 Global Hunger Index, Nepal ranked 73rd. As per the Central Bureau of Statistics (CBS), 15 percent of household members are living with less than the daily minimum requirements of calories.

One silver lining is that the pandemic has made the policymakers realise the importance of family farming. There needs to be a sort of joint campaign at a multi-country level in order to highlight resource distributions and address poverty and hunger issues.



VAING SAMRITH,
Program Manager,
Star Kampuchea,
Cambodia

The land rights situation in Cambodia is very concerning for the communities. They have to take out loans from banks. Their daily livelihoods are hugely affected due to job losses and there being no income source. Taking out loans also affects their land security, since they will have to sell their lands to pay back the loans.

The natural resources in the 15 provinces are not sufficient in amount, especially if we look at their availability in the past. The private sector wants to encroach upon the lands that belong to the local communities. The communities are also concerned about their forests and natural resources that are no longer available because of the economic land concessions. In the past, the indigenous people also relied on the natural resources offered by the forests but these forests have already been cleared for farming.



NATHANIEL MARQUEZ DON,
Executive Director,
ANGOC, Philippines

A number of milestone legislations have been passed by the Congress in response to the clamour of farmers, indigenous people, and small fisherfolk, such as the Comprehensive Agrarian Reform Law (1988), Indigenous People's Rights Act (1997), and Fishery Code (1998).

About 42 percent of the county's land area has been transferred to the smallholders till now. Despite this, there is a need for the enforcement of land rights, an enabling environment and support services to help poor rural households make their lands productive.

Poverty still remains a major challenge. According to a survey carried out between September 17, 2020 and September 20, 2020 by Social Weather Survey (SWS), around 7.6 million Filipino households experienced hunger due to lack of food. SWS also noted that these numbers have been rising since May of this year, at the height of the strictest lockdown in the region.

As per the 2018 Philippines Land Conflict Monitoring Report prepared by ANGOC, 352 cases of land and resource conflicts were documented covering 1,318,501 hectares, which account for four percent of the total territory of the Philippines. 48 percent of the cases documented were related to communities against a business establishment and 16 percent were related to community members and the government. According to the November 24, 2020 report by ANGOC, land and resource conflicts have been increasing, with most of these cases happening between March and June 2020.



DR RASHED AL MAHMUD TITUMIR,
Professor, Department
of Development
Studies, Dhaka
University

The availability of agricultural land is on the decline because of rapid urbanisation and land grabbing. Arable land in the country shrank to 7.7 million hectares in 2019, from 9.13 million hectares in 1972. In the last few decades, there has been massive land fragmentation in the country and, in the process, a lot of land is going to waste due to the creation of boundaries. Smaller lands make farm mechanisation difficult and inefficient since tractors and tillers cannot function in lands with smaller dimensions. A comprehensive agrarian reform is needed.

In terms of food security, the supply of food is now well beyond the country's average requirement, according to statistics. But, issues arise when it comes to the affordability of food. The availability of nutritious food is also in a vulnerable state. Bangladesh ranked 88th among 117 countries in the Global Hunger Index of 2019 and thus has serious hunger problems. The impact of COVID-19 has made the situation worse as food inflation continues to rise while real wage is falling.

There is a need for a universal basic income grant for every citizen. Provision of universal public goods should be made adequate. Policies must be taken for the majority, instead of considering only the interests of a few. The production system must be green and clean to ensure sustainable recovery. New investment and new employment must be created through fiscal policy rather than the current reliance solely on monetary policy through the credit-based stimulus package.

There is no doubt that distributing khas land among landless people can significantly help curb poverty and food insecurity. A full-fledged lifecycle-based social security

programme must be designed to ensure support in every life cycle phase of an individual. These schemes may curb poverty and inequalities as well as ensure food security.



SYEDA RIZWANA HASAN,
Chief Executive,
Bangladesh
Environmental
Lawyers Association
(BELA) and Advocate,
Supreme Court of
Bangladesh

Whether it's Indonesia, Nepal, Bangladesh or the Philippines, we are all facing a crisis of the system and the development paradigm. It's not about who has more land and who has less; it's about who has ownership of the land and how it is being used for urbanisation. Is it being used for industry or are we prioritising humankind's very basic need – your right to shelter and food? We have a development model that asks for more and more GDP, but that obsession with GDP destroys our natural resource base.

We need to talk about laws that protect the agricultural land and the right to food that will protect the farmers' rights to hold land and produce food.

Every year, around one million people lose everything due to land erosion in Bangladesh. We need to ensure that our land is equitably distributed. The government has said that no private economic zone will be set up in farmers' land, but extremely fertile lands are being grabbed.

We need a law on the right to food, legal promulgation on farmers' rights, and laws on protecting agricultural land. A draft is pending with the government for many decades now. The government does not want the process of urbanisation or industrialisation to be regulated because the people involved in business and industrialisation are their allies, and they pay for their election campaigns.



DR MOHAMMED HELAL UDDIN,
Director Research,
Centre for Integrated
Rural Development for
Asia and the Pacific
(CIRDAP)

GDP growth cannot be maintained without focusing on the ecological aspects.

In Bangladesh, there has been a move from agriculture to non-agriculture. In 1990, 58 percent of rural households' main occupation was agriculture. Only 23 percent were in non-agriculture. In 2010, households engaged in agriculture went down to 38 percent and households that shifted to non-agriculture increased to 41 percent. Those who have access to land are not cultivating it because farming is no longer profitable. If farmers forsake their operations, the government is forced to ask for commercialisation and seek commercial firms' recourse.

There hasn't been a substantial increase in encroachment during the COVID-19 crisis. Small food producers are facing mobility restrictions in terms of access to water, seeds, labour, forest resources, and the land upon which they rely for their livelihoods. If there is lesser access to markets, there will be high prices for production inputs and lower prices for the producers. This means they will have lower income and have a reduced ability to pay for land rentals. As a farmer, if you face lower income and higher price of foods, you will consume less.

The pandemic has also increased rural indebtedness, forcing small farmers to pawn or sell off their lands. In poor countries, where there is little regulatory oversight, money lenders have targeted rural villages where residents have limited financial assets. All the recovery packages are tailored to serve formal medium and large enterprises. There is almost nothing for small-scale producers.

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJAN,
Commercial Supplements Editor, The Daily Star & Moderator of the session

We know that 80 percent of the global farmland is occupied by the farmers and they produce 80 percent of the world's food. Asia supplies the highest percentage of agricultural produce in the world. But, unfortunately, it is observed that in many Asian countries, the food insecure family farmers, the fisherfolk, and the forest dwellers do not have sufficient access to and control over land and other natural resources. The main reason behind this is the growth-oriented development infrastructure which only focuses on the growth of food production while ignoring the rights of the farmers or producers.



(L) Bangladesh all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan enjoys possession as the players warm up with a game of football at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday, on the eve of the third and final ODI against the West Indies (R), who were hard in training with the bat and ball following defeats in the first two matches.

PHOTO: STAR

Wholesale changes unlikely for third match

SPORTS REPORTER from Chattogram



Since Bangladesh have already won their three-match ODI series against the West Indies with a game in hand, there was curiosity about whether the team management would tinker with the playing eleven for today's third and final match.

However, ODI captain Tamim Iqbal said that the Tigers would make very few changes for the third match, with an eye on the 10 points that are up for grabs in the ICC ODI Super League, the pathway for qualification to the 2023 World Cup.

The playing eleven was unchanged for the first two ODIs and the hosts dominated proceedings by bundling out the West Indies below 150 runs on either occasion.

However, there are high chances that pacer Taskin Ahmed, Mohammad Saifuddin will appear and that one of the two uncapped players in off-spinning all-rounder Mahedi Hasan and left-arm seamer Shoriful Islam will ODI debut.

The day-night game is scheduled to be started from 11:30am at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram, although the port city's atmosphere was not as filled with as much excitement as it usually is before an international game.

The reason for that is probably because spectators are not allowed into the ground and another reason may be the upcoming Chattogram City Corporation elections scheduled to start on January 27.

The third and final ODI will be a great opportunity for Bangladesh to grab another ten points for the ODI Super League but at the same time the team management will also want some players to get into the groove ahead of a tough assignment against New Zealand in March.

Head coach Russell Domingo will definitely want to see opener Liton Das, who missed out with the bat in the first two ODIs despite getting starts, get going in the third game. Young Nazmul Hossain Shanto is also under pressure after failing in both the games at his new number three position.

On the other hand, the West Indies have found it difficult to cope with a relatively inexperienced side and coach Phill Simmons believes it is their batting department which is the biggest area of concern.

Skipper Jason Mohammed and his troops are yet to bat the full fifty overs of an innings this series and will be hoping for a better show on a relatively flat Chattogram pitch.

West Indies debutants prove tricky for video team

MAZHAR UDDIN from Chattogram

In modern-day cricket, video analysis has become the most essential tool in scouting opposition and strategising for any team in world cricket as it provides a detailed idea of their opponents.

Whether it is a bowler's action or a batsman's strong areas, international teams and players spend a lot of time with video analysts scoping out opponents and rectifying their own mistakes during training sessions, knowing that even the slightest bit of foot movement can make a huge difference in a game.

The West Indies side touring Bangladesh has been labelled as weaker opponents made up of unknown players, most of whom made their debut in the three-match ODI series. And although Bangladesh managed to win the series quite comfortably, the Tigers' team management were keen to analyse the players before they arrived in the country.

But while it is relatively easy to collect footage of players who have already made their international debut, this young and unknown West Indies side, which featured 10 new faces in their line-up after top cricketers opted to sit out the tour, proved to be difficult to plan for.

Video analyst Srinivas

Chandrasekar, who also works for the Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Indian Premier League, has become a vital member of the Bangladesh team with his work with players off the field and he spoke of the challenge of tracking down the footage.

"It was a huge challenge. I had to start collecting footage of those players a couple of months prior to the series during the Indian Premier League. I had a chat with Jason Holder and got an idea of whether the West Indies might come up with a bunch of unknown cricketers for the tour," Srinivas told The Daily Star yesterday.

"I looked for the footage and collected it gradually. In some

cases I could only manage to find front and back views from their recent domestic fifty over competition. Players like Akeal Hosen, Nkrumah Bonner and even Kyle Mayers, our players had already done their homework on them by analysing videos well before the series."

Teams all around the world struggled against Mustafizur Rahman when he started his international career, but as time progressed they have analysed each and every movement of Mustafizur's bowling action and how he bowls his cutters.

Cricketers need to work continuously on their game to sustain a career at the international level and members

of the Bangladesh team also understand that. There was a lot of discussion about left-handed batsman Nazmul Hossain Shanto's new role at number three although the youngster failed to utilise the opportunities he got and was dismissed in a soft fashion in both games.

Srinivas said the youngster had been in constant touch with him and had asked for footage of his batting to rectify mistakes.

"I must say all the players of our team are very keen to improve their game and constantly ask for the video footages to me. Many are now talking about Shanto recently but I must say that young guy has been working really hard on his game," he said.

Sk Russel maintain unbeaten streak against MSC

SPORTS REPORTER

Sheikh Russel continued their eight-year streak of not losing to Mohammedan SC in the Bangladesh Premier League as the visiting Black and Whites surrendered a lead to play out a 1-1 draw at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Sheikh Russel last lost to Mohammedan in 2013 during the sixth edition of the league and since then the 2012 champions defeated Mohammedan eight times and drew three times before playing out another stalemate yesterday in their 24th league meeting.

Smarting from a 1-2 drubbing at the hands of Saif SC in their home match in Cumilla, Mohammedan looked determined to secure full points and they had the lion's share of possession but lacked bite in the attacking third after taking the lead from a spot kick.

Sheikh Russel were rather more effective in the attacking third as they troubled the Mohammedan backline on a few occasions but had to drop points in the third match after two consecutive wins due to the poor finishing of their forwards.

Both Mohammedan and Russel came close to taking the lead once each but both goalkeepers stood tall to thwart attacks before Malian striker Souleymane Diabate sent Sheikh Russel goalkeeper Ashraf Islam Rana the wrong way from the spot one minute into first-half stoppage time after defender Sohel



Sheikh Russel forward Giancarlo Lopes Rodrigues celebrates his 56th-minute equaliser against Mohammedan in their Bangladesh Premier League fixture at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday. The match ended in a 1-1 draw.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Rana handled the ball inside the box.

After resumption, Mohammedan looked intent on doubling the lead but their attacks were in vain in the face of a solid backline but Sheikh Russel took advantage of the transition period by launching quick counterattacks.

Brazilian Lopes Rodrigues did

not hesitate to level the margin with a close-range header in the 56th minute after Mohammedan goalkeeper Ahsan Habib Bipu failed to gather another header from Hemanta Vincent Biswas.

Lopes and Mohammad Elias squandered two good chances to wrap up the third victory for Sheikh Russel, who now have seven points

-- four more than Mohammedan, with each team having played three matches.

NIXON POWERS CTG ABAHANI

A first-half strike from Brazilian forward Nixon Guylerme powered Chattogram Abahani to a 1-0 win over Federation Cup runners-up Saif Sporting Club in the day's second match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium.

The tie was very important for the clubs after their disappointing start -- Saif SC dropped points against Rahmtganj MFS and Ctg Abahani lost to Sheikh Jamal DC. They staged a comeback to win their respective second matches last week.

Although Saif SC beat Ctg Abahani 3-0 in the Federation Cup semifinals, the port city outfit dominated throughout the match, except the latter parts, after Nixon struck the all-important goal in the 24th minute to ensure Ctg Abahani's second win and Saif's first defeat in their third match.

MUKTIJODDHA TASTE VICTORY Muktioddha Sangsad notched their maiden victory in this year's league when the hosts handed a 1-0 defeat to visiting Arambagh KS at Brishreshtha Flight Lt Motinur Rahman Stadium in Munshiganj yesterday.

Forward Mehdi Hasan Royal, who also struck a goal in their 2-1 defeat to Sheikh Jamal, struck the decisive goal in the 47th minute to sink Arambagh KS, who have suffered three straight defeats to stay at the bottom of the 13-team table.

Another Root MASTERCLASS

AGENCIES



Joe Root produced another masterpiece of sub-continental batting with a wonderful century that carried the England cause almost single-handedly in the second Test at Galle.

Root became the first England batsman to score over 150 in consecutive Tests in 16 years as he tormented Sri Lanka and led his side to 339 for nine in their first innings at the close of play on day three yesterday.

However, the tired and cramping England captain was dismissed in the final over of the day for 186, run out after clipping the ball to short leg Oshada Fernando.

The England captain had never before hit hundreds in back-to-back matches but there was an air of inevitability about his 19th Test ton, with his team endlessly grateful for his stocks of class and concentration across 309 balls.

Continuing to lay emphasis on sweeps and reverse sweeps, the right-hand batsman taking calculated risks has worked tremendously well in his favour. In between the scoring shots, Root put on display a confident defensive game not



JOE ROOT...186

only the first English batsman to score two centuries in a Test series in Sri Lanka.

Root followed up his 228 in the first Test to match the feat of Marcus Trescothick, who scored 194 and 151 in consecutive tests against Bangladesh in 2005.

He had failed to score a test century in 2020, the first time in his career he went a calendar year without a ton, and his return to form will be welcome as England head into four tests in India straight after this series.

"It was an amazing innings," Root's team mate Jos Buttler told reporters. "To back up his double hundred in the first test was a challenge both physically and mentally, and it has been a masterclass in batting against spin."

"It's a great education for all of us, Not just the tactical and technical aspects, but also the concentration to apply himself for so long. "There were some amazing shots that show the confidence and skill level. He even played a late cut left-handed today. Everybody can learn a lot from watching Joe play spin."

England still trail by 42 runs and will seek to wipe out the deficit with Jack Leach and Stuart Broad at the crease on the fourth morning, although Sri Lanka spinner Lasith Embuldeniya has been excellent with career best figures of 7-132.



LASITH EMBULDENIYA...7 FOR 132

hesitating in committing to his front-foot game.

With England losing four wickets for not too many runs, the 30-year old batsman has taken the onus upon himself to steer the English ship for the second consecutive time in the series.

In what is his 19th Test century overall, fourth in Asia and third in Sri Lanka, it is worth mentioning that Root has become



Juventus' Weston McKennie celebrates scoring their second goal with Cristiano Ronaldo as Andrea Pirlo's side moved into the top four with a 2-0 home win over Bologna yesterday. Juventus are now seven points behind Serie A leaders AC Milan.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'A monumental moment for Pakistan'

AFP, KARACHI



South Africa will play their first Test in Pakistan for 14 years this week, a match being described as a "monumental moment" for the revival of international cricket in the country.

The match in the port city of Karachi starting Tuesday marks a significant vote of confidence for Pakistan where international cricket was suspended following a terrorist attack on the Sri Lanka team's bus in Lahore in 2009.

A tight security cordon has been thrown around the venue and Pakistan Cricket Board chief executive Wasim Khan said South Africa's visit was significant. "These are very exciting times for fans and supporters," said Khan. "I would say that it's a monumental moment that South Africa is here after 14 years and everybody is looking forward to the matches."



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CTG MAYORAL CANDIDATES

Pledges are beyond their mandates

RASHIDUL HASAN and ARUN BIKASH DEY from Chattogram

Most pledges made by the mayoral aspirants of the two major parties -- Awami League and BNP -- in their manifestos for the January 27 Chattogram City Corporation election are beyond the legal and financial mandates of a mayor, experts said.

Speaking to The Daily Star, local government and urban experts said the promises made by the AL mayoral aspirant Rezaul Karim Chowdhury and his main rival BNP's Shahadat Hossain on the mass transport system, river and canal reclamation, stopping of hill cutting, land management, resolving housing and water-logging problems are not under their jurisdiction.

"The mayoral candidates just mentioned those in their manifesto to woo and attract voters," said urban researcher Prof Nazrul Islam, also chairman of Centre for Urban Studies.

The eminent urban expert also said, "It seems the mayoral candidates have made such pledges without having an understanding of their mandate and jurisdiction."

Local government experts said that in a bid to materialise those pledges, the government will have to delegate its power to the city corporation or a city government will have to be formed.

"But we have no instance of any political government delegating its power to a local government body like the city corporation," he said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



People trying to lift a three-wheeler after it turned turtle in a head-on collision with a pickup on the Barishal-Dhaka highway near Barishal Sadar upazila's Rentitola area yesterday. Four people were injured in the accident. Many are defying the ban on three-wheelers plying highways, increasing the risk of road accidents.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Daily infection rate drops to below 4pc

473 new Covid cases detected

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh recorded a daily infection rate of 3.34 percent, with 473 new cases reported until early yesterday.

The country saw a daily infection rate of 5.49 percent on January 18, 4.90 percent on January 14, 8.29 percent on January 10, 7.52 percent on January 4, and 8.18 percent on January 1.

Bangladesh has reported 531,799 cases so far. The country's fatality number rose to 8,023 and the death rate to 1.51 percent, with 20 more Covid-19 deaths in the last 24 hours till yesterday morning.

On March 18, the country reported its first fatality.

So far, 3,555,558 tests, including 14,169 new ones, have been carried out. The overall infection rate stood at 14.96 percent, the Directorate General of Health Services said.

However, 476,413 patients -- 89.59 percent -- have recovered so far.

Dhaka to seek smooth supply of vaccines

Foreign secy to visit Delhi on Jan 28-30

PORIMOL PALMA

Dhaka would seek smooth supply of vaccine under the tripartite agreement on buying Covishield from Serum Institute of India when Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen visits Delhi from January 28-30.

Officials in Dhaka and Delhi said tackling the coronavirus pandemic and economic recovery are the most important challenges the world faces today. Therefore, cooperation on vaccine will be a very important part of the foreign secretary's visit to Delhi.

Besides, the foreign office consultations between the foreign secretaries of the two countries will also discuss the preparations on Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Dhaka in March.

"Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen would thank the Indian government for the gift of two million doses of vaccines given to Bangladesh. At the same time, he would also seek smooth supply of the vaccines that are due in the future," a Bangladesh diplomat from Delhi told this correspondent.

As per the commitment made by India's

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

No deaths in Europe tied to Covid jabs

Say experts; tears and fears as India's huge vaccine push falters

AGENCIES

Despite dozens of deaths of people shortly after they were vaccinated against coronavirus, scientists say the evidence available so far does not incriminate the new anti-Covid vaccines.

Health agencies stress however that the vast majority of post-vaccination fatalities were elderly, already vulnerable and often sick.

Norway sparked alarm last week when it reported the deaths of 33 of some 20,000 retirement home residents who had received a first shot of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine.

At least 13 of the fatalities were not only very elderly but also considered frail with serious ailments, the Norwegian Institute of Public Health said.

While it noted that no analysis had yet been carried out on the causes of the deaths, it suggested that with the aged and vulnerable the normal side effects of vaccination such as fever or nausea could have contributed.

The novel coronavirus has killed at least 2,121,070 people since the outbreak emerged in China in December 2019, according to an AFP tally from official sources at 1100 GMT yesterday. More than 98,689,590 cases of coronavirus have been registered.

On Saturday, 14,364 new deaths and 579,278 new cases were recorded worldwide.

Outside Norway the news raised widespread concern and fed anti-vaccine scepticism, prompting the authorities to stress that no link had been established between the vaccine and post-jab deaths.

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FIR MANIPULATION ACC sues former OC of Puthia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday sued Inspector Shakil Uddin Ahamed for tampering with FIR of labour leader Nurul Islam murder case in Rajshahi's Puthia in 2019.

ACC Assistant Director Al Amin filed the case with its integrated office in Rajshahi under the Penal Code and Prevention of Corruption laws, said Jahangir Alam, ACC deputy director.

In December 2019, the High Court ordered the ACC for necessary legal action as it found Shakil's involvement in tampering with the FIR was a grave and punishable offence.

Shakil Uddin Ahamed, hailed from Chapainawabganj, was suspended and attached to Sylhet range police in March 2020 after The Daily

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'Blue jet' lightning detected from ISS



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A blue jet -- a bolt of lightning that shoots upwards from thunderstorm clouds -- has been spotted from the International Space Station.

The phenomenon was spotted by the European Atmosphere-Space Interactions Monitor (ASIM) near the island of Naru in the Pacific Ocean.

In an article published in the science journal Nature, astronomers describe seeing five intense blue flashes, each lasting about 10 milliseconds.

Four of the flashes were accompanied by a small pulse of ultraviolet light, which appear as rapidly expanding ring. They are formed by the interaction of electrons, radio waves and the atmosphere and are known as elves (Emissions of Light and Very Low Frequency Perturbations due to Electromagnetic Pulse Sources).

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HSC, EQUIVALENT EXAMS Govt can now publish results without exam

3 bills passed in JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three separate amendment bills were passed in the parliament yesterday, paving the way for publishing results without holding a public exam during a pandemic, epidemic, and Act of God.

The bills are the Intermediate and Secondary Education (Amendment) Bill, 2021, the Bangladesh Vocational Education Board (Amendment) Bill, 2021, and the Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board (Amendment) Bill, 2021.

As per the existing laws, there is no provision to publish the results of HSC and equivalent exams without holding tests.

The amendments were incorporated to Intermediate and Secondary Education Ordinance, 1961, Bangladesh Vocational Education Board Act, 2018,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Teenage boy arrested on rape charge

STAR REPORT

Police arrested a teenage boy and were looking for a young man on separate charges of rape in two districts yesterday.

A 15-year-old boy was arrested in Sharsha, Jashore, after he was accused of raping a six-year-old girl.

Police said the girl was playing near her home when the boy took her to a nearby secluded place and raped her.

Locals rescued her after hearing her screams and sent her to a hospital.

A court sent the accused to jail after the girl's father filed a case, said Badrul Alam, officer-in-charge of

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Parked vehicles illegally occupying a footpath near Karwan Bazar's railway gate area in the capital. Sometimes cars are repaired here, forcing pedestrians to walk on the road and risk their lives. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Vested property recovered from ex-minister Latif

Dist admin demolishes structures built on the land in Tangail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Officials yesterday recovered a property in Tangail worth Tk 50 crore from former minister Abdul Latif Siddique.

The vested property -- 66 decimals of land in Akur Takur Para area of the town -- had been occupied by Latif for a long time, said Executive Magistrate Rozlin Shaheed Chowdhury.

The magistrate and Assistant Commissioner Khairul Islam went to the site with a team of law enforcers in the morning and demolished a half-constructed building before placing a signboard mentioning that the land was listed as vested property.

The magistrate told reporters that a recent High Court verdict came in favour of the government, rejecting Latif's claims of rightful possession of the land.

Locals said the former minister leased the property in 1972. He started building a market there in 2008 but didn't finish the construction.

Deputy Commissioner Ataul Gani told The Daily Star that it was proven in a court that the property was being misappropriated through forgery.

The administration recovered properties worth almost Tk 200 crore in the last few months, he added.

Latif or any of his family members could not be reached for comments.

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PRAYER TIMING JANUARY 25
 Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
 AZAN 5:35 12:45 4:15 5:46 7:15
 JAMAT 6:10 1:15 4:30 5:50 7:45
 SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION