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Your Right to Know

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"It is a scope for Myanmar to make repatriation happen. If they do it, all others will be with them."  
FOREIGN MINISTER AK ABDUL MOMEN



"We are going to work to undo the moral and national shame of the previous administration..."  
US PRESIDENT BIDEN ON REVERSING TRUMP IMMIGRATION POLICIES



"Allowing the majority of the world's population to go unvaccinated will not only perpetuate needless illness... spawn new virus mutations."  
WHO CHIEF TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS

ONLINE REGISTRATION FOR VACCINATION

## Plan revised as response poor

Govt cuts inoculation target to 35 lakh shots from 60 lakh in first month; Covax to give 12.8m shots by June

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The government has decided to inoculate 35 lakh people, instead of 60 lakh, against Covid-19 in the first month of vaccination apparently due to a lukewarm response to online registration.

With the mass inoculation scheduled to start on Sunday, around 80,000 frontline workers from different professional groups and people over 55 completed the registration online till yesterday, according to official data.

It is only 2.29 percent of the revised target of 35 lakh doses.

Meanwhile, the country is expected to receive 12.8 million vaccine doses under the Covax programme by mid-2021, according to a statement.

The Covax programme for Covid-19 vaccines published its first distribution list yesterday, planning enough doses for dozens of countries, to immunise more than three percent of their populations by mid-year. It broke down for the first time how the programme's initial 337.2 million doses will be distributed, with first deliveries expected late this month, AFP reported.

- Around **80,000** people so far registered online
- Only **2.29%** people of revised target registered
- Slow registration may affect first phase vaccination
- Mass vaccination scheduled to start on **Feb 7**

Talking to The Daily Star, several healthcare officials said poor response to the mass inoculation campaign's online registration played the key role in revising the number of doses, but government officials said the plan was changed keeping in mind any unexpected delay in the arrival of the second consignment of shots from Serum Institute of India.

"We need two vaccine shots for each person. If we administer 60 lakh doses in the first month and there is a delay in receiving the second instalment, the whole vaccination process might witness a

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A woman removing the labels and caps from single use plastic bottles she and others have collected in the capital's Meradia area. Plastic recyclers buy these bottles from her. She says her monthly earnings range from Tk 5,000-7,000.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

PROJECT DELAY, COST HIKE

## Take legal action against culprits

PM slams flawed designs, frequent revisions; Ecneec okays Tk 5,433cr rise in cost for 2 projects

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and HELEMUL ALAM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday expressed displeasure over frequent revisions of projects and directed the authorities to take legal action against those responsible for flawed project designs that ultimately push up costs.

"Identify those whose negligence resulted in flawed designs of projects, wasting our time and money. Take legal action against them and apprise me of what action has been taken," she was quoted as saying by Planning Minister MA Mannan.

The PM's directives came after proposals for raising costs and time of two projects were placed at a meeting of the Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec).

She joined the meeting virtually from the Gono Bhaban. Mannan briefed reporters later. The proposals were approved by the



Ecneec. The costs of the two projects went up to Tk 14,608 crore from 9,175 crore due to faulty designs and delays.

One of the projects was "Construction of Important Bridge on Rural Roads" taken up by the Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) in 2013.

The four-and-a-half-year project involving more than Tk 3,900 crore got the Ecneec nod in January 2017 and was scheduled to be completed in June this year.

As of now, the project has seen only 13 percent progress.

The other project is Dhaka Environment Sustainable Water Supply Project of Dhaka Wassa in Narayanganj's Gandhobpur area. The project was approved at the end of 2013 but it has so far seen only 28 percent progress.

The Ecneec yesterday approved the proposal for raising the project cost and also for extending the deadline for its completion.

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## Saw all, heard all; what will we do?

STAR ANALYSIS

All the Prime Minister's Men Tuesday reminded readers, to some extent, of All the President's Men, a book based on epic investigative journalism that revealed the Watergate scandal of President Richard Nixon.

The word "Prime Minister" replaces "President"; the year is 2021, not 1972, the government machinery involved is Bangladesh's, not the US', and it's the investigative report of Doha-based news channel Al Jazeera, not of The Washington Post in America, that went on to rock a government.

The target character of the two stories is similar: a mighty official, who is found to be abusing the government power and going beyond the line of law to sponsor or get involved in criminal activities. The US President was found guilty of trying to cover up a crime and Bangladesh character is accused of corruption.

Comparison is grossly unfair to make in a haste and without seeing the full evidence. Yet, if we have to quickly compare the two reports, we can safely conclude that All the President's Men thrived on the strength of evidence and All the Prime Minister's Men on sensationalising of evidence.

All the President's Men was the famous work by legendary journalists Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein for The Washington Post in 1972 that effectively proved the involvement of President Richard Nixon in the scandal and that eventually saw his back from the White House. That clinical work dominated headlines of the American and global media for years, led to the making of a critically-acclaimed movie and continues to inspire young investigative journalists across the globe till today.

By contrast, it was all quiet on Bangladesh front upon the airing of All the Prime Minister's Men. Some global media went gaga over it, yet the Bangladesh media heard no evil, saw no evil, spoke no evil. The government imposed no

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## AL JAZEERA REPORT Bangladesh mulls legal action: FM

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Criticising Al Jazeera for a recent report on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, top ministers of the government yesterday said they were mulling legal action against the Qatar-based international news organisation.

Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen yesterday said Bangladesh is looking into legal action against Al Jazeera for "spreading misinformation". "Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had never appointed anybody as her bodyguard. Her party [Awami League] men are always her bodyguards," said Momen referring to the August 21, 2004 grenade attacks.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said Al Jazeera's report is not "factual".

It is yellow journalism and they (Al Jazeera) are not following the norms

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

MYANMAR COUP

## Detained Suu Kyi faces charges

Police file case under import-export law; doctors, medical staff across Myanmar stop work to protest

REUTERS

Myanmar police have filed charges against ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi for illegally importing communications equipment and she will be detained until February 15 for investigations, according to a police document.

The move followed a military coup on Monday and the detention of Nobel Peace laureate Suu Kyi and other civilian politicians. The takeover cut short Myanmar's long transition to democracy and drew condemnation from the United States and other Western countries.

A police request to a court detailing the accusations against Suu Kyi, 75, said six walkie-talkie radios had been found in a search of her home in the capital Naypyidaw.

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## DEMOCRACY INDEX Bangladesh moves four notches up

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

While a large majority of countries recorded a decline in their total score compared to the previous year, Bangladesh fared better in the Democracy Index-2020 released yesterday.

Bangladesh has ranked 76th on the latest index of Economist Intelligence Unit -- four notches up from last year's ranking.

But the country is still classified in the "hybrid regime" category, which means that substantial irregularities often prevent elections from being free and fair, according to the report by the research and analysis division of the Economist Group.

"Government pressure on opposition parties and candidates may be common. Serious

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Bangladesh batsmen Shakib Al Hasan, right, and Liton Das walking off the field after the first day of the first Test at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday. The duo thwarted the West Indies bowlers in the last session and gave the Tigers a test advantage as the home side ended the day on 242 for five, with Shakib unbeaten on 39 and Liton batting on 34.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Surveillance stepped up on Myanmar border

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal yesterday said border surveillance has been stepped up to prevent trespassing from Myanmar after the military coup in the neighbouring country.

What is happening in Myanmar is its internal matter, he told a programme at the capital's Police Plaza, adding that Myanmar had been under military rule before.

Myanmar army seized state power on Monday, detaining Nobel laureate Suu Kyi.

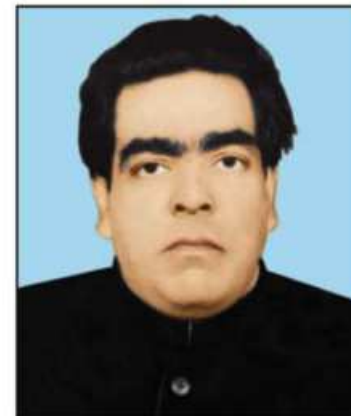
Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen at another event said Bangladesh secured the borders to make sure that any Rohingya influx is prevented.

There are fears among

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

## 43rd Death Anniversary

(Abul Company) The founder of Abul Khair Group noted industrialist and social worker  
**Late Janab ABUL KHAIR**



Death: 4th February, 1978

In accordance with the will of Almighty Allah the Beneficent, you left this mundane world, leaving us and many of your relations overwhelmed by grief. In our everyday life your bright ideals serve as beacon. You are immortal in your death. We pray to Almighty Allah for the salvation of your departed soul.

May Allah the Beneficent bless you with the eternal bliss of paradise. Ameen.

Your loving  
Sons, Daughters and Relatives

**BANGLADESH UPDATE**



**438**  
New cases in 24hrs



**5,36,545**  
Total cases



**8,162**  
Deaths



**4,81,306**  
Recoveries



**2,271,402**  
Deaths



**104,709,044**  
Total case 104s

## ROHINGYA REPATRIATION

# Bangladesh has confidence in China

Says foreign minister; fate of tripartite talks today uncertain

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has confidence in China that it will continue to help repatriate Rohingya, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said yesterday.

He expressed optimism despite the fact that China on Tuesday exercised its veto power at the UN Security Council to block a statement condemning the military coup in Myanmar.

Talking to reporters at his office yesterday, the minister said, "We still have confidence in China. We maintain friendship with all. China and Japan have advanced. China has moved forward [regarding repatriation talks] a bit further. We take China into confidence."

Bangladesh has secured its border to prevent any possible Rohingya influx as feared by some Western countries and rights bodies, Momen added.

China told the UN Security Council that any sanctions or international pressure on Myanmar following the coup would only make things worse.

Both Russia and China have protected Myanmar against criticism at the UN regarding the military crackdown on the Rohingya population in 2017 when some 750,000 Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh. Rights bodies had termed the crackdown a genocide.

Myanmar also faces a genocide case at the International Court of Justice.

More than three years after the influx, no Rohingya returned to Myanmar citing that there is no

guarantee of safety, citizenship and basic rights in Rakhine State. China, which always wanted a bilateral solution, is mediating the repatriation process and a DG-level tripartite meeting, is scheduled for today.

Foreign Minister Momen said Dhaka could not establish contact with the Myanmar authorities in Naypyidaw. Therefore, foreign ministry officials were trying to contact the Chinese and Myanmar embassies in Dhaka, but it could not be confirmed as of yesterday afternoon whether the meeting was going to be held, he said.

The Myanmar military took control of the country, raising fears that the Rohingya repatriation would be delayed.

"We want to continue the [repatriation] process. We had an agreement with the government, not with any individual in Myanmar. Earlier in 1980s and 90's, we repatriated Rohingyas when there was a military regime.

"It is an opportunity for Myanmar to make repatriation happen. If they do it, all others will be with them," the foreign minister said.

Asked if Bangladesh was condemning the military coup in Myanmar or welcoming the new regime, Momen did not give any direct response.

"Myanmar is our neighbour. We believe in democratic values. So, we also want the democratic values, peace, and stability to prevail in Myanmar," he said.

## Plan revised as response poor

FROM PAGE 1

setback," Dr ABM Khurshid Alam, director general of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We do not want any hindrance in the process," he said.

Asked, the DG acknowledged that the online registration received a lukewarm response from the people, but said he was hopeful about people joining the campaign spontaneously.

He said the decision to inoculate 35 lakh people in the first month was made in a national vaccination committee meeting held at the Prime Minister's Office yesterday.

Meeting sources said all the deputy commissioners, UNOs, civil surgeons and other officials from across the country were asked to complete the registration process smoothly and quickly.

Khurshid Alam said there were some pitfalls in the online registration app, called Surokkha, adding that those issues would be addressed soon.

"Besides, community health care centres and union digital centres will start from tomorrow [today] to help people get registered," he added.

Since the Surokkha app was launched on January 27, the registration progressed slowly with some people complaining about difficulties in logging in.

Officials said although the pace of the registration was slow initially, more and more people were getting registered with each passing day.

Experts, however, said the government must intensify its efforts to encourage people to take the jabs if it wants to make the inoculation campaign a success.

Prof Md Sayedur Rahman, chairman at the BSMMU's pharmacology department, said the government has revised the plan sensing that it would not be able to get the vaccine to its targeted group.

He identified a number of reasons for the lukewarm response to the registration.

"Some people are not giving the vaccine due importance while some are not confident about its safety and effectiveness. The registration process is complex. Besides, trust deficit of people and different propaganda against the vaccine are also contributing to the poor response," Prof Sayedur Rahman said.

Referring to the country's birth control and Vitamin-A capsule campaigns which were fruitful in the past, he said a massive awareness campaign was the key to success.

"Those were very successful campaigns. But those were not for all spectra of life like this one. But the campaign for Covid-19 inoculation has so far not been that visible."

Dr Mushtuq Hussain, consultant of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) said, "The reason behind the poor registration rate is reluctance and hesitation among the people.

"It [the rate], hopefully, will increase after the vaccination kicks off," he said.

Dr Mushtuq recommended accelerating publicity about the vaccination campaign.

Meanwhile, keeping in mind the mass inoculation, the government sent vaccine doses to all districts of the country. From those district headquarters, shots have been transported to the upazila level.

It has also almost completed the necessary training for the vaccinators and volunteers, said officials

concerned.

A total of 7,344 teams will be deployed across the country to carry out the campaign. There will be two vaccinators and four volunteers in each team that will inoculate around 150 people a day. The vaccinators will include nurses.

The government has already trained 14,688 vaccinators and 29,376 volunteers for administering the vaccine doses. There will be three vaccine centres in every upazila, officials said.

Bangladesh got 50 lakh doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine from Serum Institute of India (SII) on January 25. The government purchased three crore shots of the Oxford vaccine from SII. As per the contract, Bangladesh will get 50 lakh doses every month.

The country has also received 20 lakh doses of the Oxford vaccine as a gift from the Indian government.

Besides, The Covax programme, led by the World Health Organisation and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, has committed to give Bangladesh a total of 6.8 crore vaccine shots.

**BANGLADESH TO GET 12.8M SHOTS FROM COVAX**

The Covax list yesterday came amid concerns over whether lower-income countries will be left out of the immunisation race dominated by rich nations, a problem Covax was set up to resolve.

Some 145 countries are set to receive enough doses to immunise 3.3 percent of their population by mid-2021, reported AFP.

A statement said the initial distribution was in line with a target "to protect the most vulnerable groups such as health care workers" in the first half of the year.

Countries will receive doses in proportion to population size, with the most going to India (97.2 million), Pakistan (17.2 million), Nigeria (16 million), Indonesia (13.7 million), Bangladesh (12.8 million) and Brazil (10.6 million).

"This is fantastic. We can start vaccinating. It is coming in the next weeks," Ann Lindstrand, coordinator for a World Health Organisation immunisation programme, told a press conference.

Funding is covered through donations for the 92 lower- and lower-middle income economies involved, while for richer countries, buying in operates as a back-up insurance policy for their own vaccination programmes.

The distribution list includes 240 million doses of the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine, licensed to the Serum Institute of India (SII); 96 million doses of AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine; and 1.2 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine.

The Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine is the only one so far to have received emergency use approval from the WHO. Evaluation is under way for the AstraZeneca-Oxford vaccine.

Both require two injected doses. Wealthy self-financing countries were on the list in addition to lower-income nations, including South Korea (2.6 million doses), Canada (1.9 million) and New Zealand (250,000).

The list is non-binding and may change, the statement stressed, but would allow countries to plan for how many doses they will receive in the first rounds.

Longer term, Covax aims to secure enough vaccines for at least the most vulnerable 20 percent in participating countries by the end of 2021, added the statement.



Medical workers wearing red ribbons pose during a protest against the coup that ousted elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi, in Yangon General Hospital in Yangon, Myanmar yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Detained Suu Kyi faces charges

FROM PAGE 1

The radios were imported illegally and used without permission, it said.

The NLD's press officer said Suu Kyi was formally charged with an offence under Myanmar's import and export law.

The document reviewed yesterday requested Suu Kyi's detention "in order to question witnesses, request evidence and seek legal counsel after questioning the defendant".

A separate document showed police filed charges against ousted President Win Myint for violating protocols to stop the spread of coronavirus during campaigning for an election last November.

Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) won the election in a landslide but the military claimed it was marred by fraud and justified its seizure of power on those grounds.

Reuters was not immediately able to reach the police, the government or the court for comment.

The chair of the Asean (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) Parliamentarians for Human Rights, Charles Santiago, said the new charges were ludicrous.

"This is an absurd move by the junta to try to legitimize their illegal power grab," he said in a statement.

The electoral commission had said the vote was fair.

Suu Kyi spent about 15 years under house arrest between 1989 and 2010 as she led the country's democracy movement, and she remains hugely popular at home despite damage to her international reputation over the plight of Muslim Rohingya refugees in 2017.

The NLD made no immediate

comment. A party official said on Tuesday he had learned she was under house arrest in the capital, Naypyidaw, and was in good health.

**PARTY SAYS OFFICES RAIDED**

The party said earlier in a statement that its offices had been raided in several regions and it urged authorities to stop what it called unlawful acts after its election victory.

Opposition to the junta headed by Army chief General Min Aung Hlaing has begun to emerge in Myanmar.

Staff scores of government hospitals across the country of 54 million people stopped work or wore red ribbons as part of a civil disobedience campaign.

The newly formed Myanmar Civil Disobedience Movement said doctors at 70 hospitals and medical departments in 30 towns had joined the protest. It accused the army of putting its interests above a coronavirus outbreak that has killed more than 3,100 people in Myanmar, one of the highest tolls in Southeast Asia.

"We really cannot accept this," said 49-year-old Myo Myo Mon, who was among the doctors who stopped work to protest.

"We will do this in a sustainable way, we will do it in a non-violent way... This is the route our state counselor desires," she said, referring to Suu Kyi by her title.

The latest coup is a massive blow to hopes that Myanmar is on a path to stable democracy. The junta has declared a one-year state of emergency and has promised to hold fair elections, but has not said when.

**G7 CONDEMNS COUP**

The Group of Seven largest developed economies condemned the coup yesterday and said the election result

must be respected.

"We call upon the military to immediately end the state of emergency, restore power to the democratically-elected government, to release all those unjustly detained and to respect human rights and the rule of law," the G7 said in a statement.

China has not specifically condemned the coup in its neighbour but the foreign ministry rejected the suggestion that it supported or gave tacit consent to it.

"We wish that all sides in Myanmar can appropriately resolve their differences and uphold political and social stability," foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told a briefing.

At the United Nations on Tuesday, its special envoy for Myanmar, Christine Schraner Burgener, urged the Security Council to "collectively send a clear signal in support of democracy in Myanmar".

But a diplomat with China's UN mission said it would be difficult to reach consensus on the draft statement and that any action should avoid escalating tension or complicating the situation.

US President Joe Biden has threatened to reimpose sanctions on the generals who seized power.

US Army General Mark Milley, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, tried but was unable to connect to Myanmar's military following the coup.

The military had ruled the former British colony from 1962 until Suu Kyi's party came to power in 2015 under a constitution that guarantees the generals a major role in government.

## Saw all, heard all; what will we do?

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without saying what Al Jazeera did through an investigation of two years across continents and with the help of high-tech surveillance is an eye-opener, demonstrating once more the power of investigative journalism.

It's opened up a Pandora's Box, to which the government has reacted as well by terming it "apparently a politically motivated smear campaign by notorious individuals associated with the Jamaat-e-Islami extremist group."

But this wholesale denial of the sensational disclosures can turn out to be way too costly for the nation and doing more harm than good to the government in the end. A responsible response to any media disclosures would be: take in the facts and leave out the typical trick of any criminal to prove their worth.

A title like "All the Chief's Brothers" or "The Mafia brothers" could have been more fact-based. And, as it appeared from the one-hour, 20-minute reportage, it would have been journalistically appropriate had the report left out the innuendoes and assumptions, sticking instead to its core findings against three murder-convicted brothers -- two fugitives and one pardoned from death row -- who're profiting from the connection of fourth brother's office with security forces and boasting about alleged blessings of the Bangladesh premier.

Sensationalising apart, it goes

his official residence, reports BSS. The AL general secretary said Sheikh Hasina's government has taken a harsh stance against corruption and irregularities and it has already made clear its "zero-tolerance policy" against graft.

He said the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), within its jurisdiction, is working independently to check corruption in the country. "Linking the responsibility of an individual to the head of the government makes the principles of journalism questionable and it is not proper journalism at all," Quader said.

He said Sheikh Hasina is the most successful prime minister since 1975 and her courageous and skilled leadership is highly lauded around the world.

The conspiracies and propaganda against the country both at home and abroad will not work and will backfire, he added.

Saying the country's people remain beside Sheikh Hasina, the AL general

secretary said AL candidates' victory in the ongoing municipality elections is an illustration of this, despite propaganda against the government.

He urged the Al Jazeera authorities not to be a tool of implementation of anti-Bangladesh propaganda and not to release motivational, misleading and one-sided reports.

"Those who have not acknowledged the country's independence, development, achievements and progress yet, are engaged in a series of tactical conspiracies of these reports," Quader added.

Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud said a known syndicate renting slots of foreign media is carrying out anti-state propaganda.

He said, "People are aware and cautious and the Awami League government has a stronghold at grassroots level. Therefore, this little bit of tickling will not bring any benefit."

The information minister said this at a discussion programme organised at the Dhaka Reporters' Unity.

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## Surveillance

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Western countries that there could be another Rohingya exodus amid the military takeover.

"In 2017, when Rohingyas were persecuted, our people welcomed them. Now our people don't want them. We have secured our border. Let others accept them if Rohingyas flee their country, but we don't want to accept them," he told reporters at his office yesterday.

However, the foreign minister added that Dhaka was not anticipating a renewed Rohingya influx.

"Some friendly countries fear that the rest of the Rohingyas would flee to Bangladesh from Rakhine," he said.

Dhaka is willing to continue talks with Myanmar about Rohingya repatriation, he added.

On January 19, it was decided at a secretary-level tripartite meeting among Bangladesh, China and Myanmar that a joint working group meeting would be held today for advancing the repatriation discussion. However, the scheduled meeting is now uncertain since Dhaka has yet to officially communicate with Myanmar following the coup.

Bangladesh is hosting over 1.1 million Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar. They fled Myanmar amid military crackdowns that many rights groups call an ethnic cleansing.

A 2017 military crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine State sent about 750,000 Rohingyas fleeing to Bangladesh, where they are still stranded in refugee camps.

"There are about 600,000 Rohingyas that remain in Rakhine state, including 120,000 people who are effectively confined to camps... they cannot move freely and have extremely limited access to basic health and education services," UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters in New York.

"So, our fear is that the events may make the situation worse for them," he said, reports Reuters.

## Take legal action

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Expressing dissatisfaction over the inclusion of new components in projects during revisions, the PM said, "It's a dangerous thing. A PD [project director] takes up the responsibilities of several projects and stays in Dhaka.

"It's often seen that a few items [components] get included during revisions of a project," the planning minister quoted the PM as saying.

"She then asked: 'didn't you [project directors] visit the project sites and see these things? Why these things were not raised earlier?'" Mannan said quoting the PM.

The premier also gave directives to prepare a master plan so that no bridge or culvert is constructed without proper assessment and feasibility study.

**BRIDGE ON RURAL ROADS**

The LGED took up the Tk 3,926-crore project to build 130 bridges in rural areas to boost the rural economy by creating commercial and employment opportunities which in turn will directly benefit the poor and reduce poverty.

The 130 bridges are supposed to be built in 94 upazilas of 40 districts. The sites were picked on the basis of lists provided by lawmakers.

However, LGED officials did not carry out any feasibility study on about 100 of the 130 bridges.

All the bridges were supposed to open by June this year but only 13 percent project work has been done so far.

The Ecnc yesterday approved extension of the deadline for project completion to June 2024 and also a Tk 2,530.43-crore rise in cost.

According to the project documents, the main reasons for the cost hike include increase in expenditure on land acquisition, and payment of salaries of consultants and staffers for an additional three years.

Planning Commission Member Zakir Hossain Akanda said some of the bridges to be built under the project are more than 100 metres long while many others are below 100 metres in length.

**WASA PROJECT**  
The Tk 5,248.06-crore project, taken up by Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa), was supposed to be completed in June 2020.

Now, the project cost has risen to Tk 8,151.07 crore, and the fresh deadline for its completion is June 2022.

According to the project documents, the key reasons behind the rise in cost are additional construction work, inclusion of new areas in the project, installation of 50 deep tube-wells, legal complications, appreciation of US dollar against taka and delay in land acquisition.

Besides, additional money has to be spent for various purposes, including payment of employees' salaries, consultancy fees and fuel costs.

Though the project was taken up in 2014, work began in 2018 due to problems in tender process and delay in land acquisition.

The documents show a 376-km pipeline was supposed to be set up under the project, but now it has to be extended by another 124 km for which an additional 24 months are needed.

About the cost, Planning Commission Member Mamun Al Rashid said Wasa lacked manpower with technical skills for the project, and this resulted in failure to estimate its actual cost.

Eventually the project cost has gone up, he added.

## SAGAR-RUNI MURDER

## Probe report delayed for the 78th time

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday again asked Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) to submit by March 11 the probe report of a case filed over the murders of journalist couple Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi.

With yesterday's date, the investigation officer has so far taken 78 dates to complete the investigation.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Debdash Chandra Adhikary passed the order after Rab's Additional Superintendent Khondoker Shafiqul Alam, also investigation officer of the case, failed to submit the report yesterday.

Sagar, news editor at private TV channel Maasranga, and his wife Runi, a senior reporter at ATN Bangla, were killed in the early hours of February 11, 2012 in their rented flat in the capital's West Razabazar.

After Sher-e-Bangla Nagar police and the Detective Branch of police, Rab was tasked with the probe on April 18, 2012.

At least eight people, including suspects Rafiqul Islam, Bakul Miah, Masum Mintu, SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Two fruit-sellers spend an idle morning browsing their phones, with customers far and few on cold day when the sun didn't show even at 9am. This photo was taken yesterday at Sylhet city's Hasan market.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

## Number of children trafficked tripled in 15 years globally

UNODC's Global Report 2020 finds

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 2,904 persons were arrested on trafficking in persons charges in Bangladesh between 2017 and 2018, says a new report of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

The Global Report on Trafficking in Persons 2020, launched on Tuesday, says in the period, nine persons were convicted of trafficking in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh recorded 778 cases of trafficking in persons in 2017, and 561 cases in 2018, says the report's country profile on Bangladesh.

In 2017, Bangladesh Police recorded 155 children, 233 females, and 382 males as victims of trafficking. In 2018, it recorded 80 children, 210 females, and 212 males as victims, it says.

The report adds the current legislation on trafficking in persons in Bangladesh covers all forms of trafficking indicated in the UN Trafficking in Persons Protocol.

Globally, the share of children among detected trafficking victims has tripled while the share of boys has increased five times in the past 15 years, UNODC said in a news release on Tuesday, citing the report.

Girls are mainly trafficked for sexual exploitation, while boys are used for forced labour, according to the report.

It says in 2018 about 50,000 human trafficking victims were detected and reported by 148 countries. However, given the hidden nature of this

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

## Premature death of babies on the rise

Finds USAID research

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite significant strides over the past few decades, death of newborns remains a major issue which requires effective intervention, speakers at a discussion said yesterday.

Premature deaths are on the rise in the country, they said in an evidence sharing session at icddr, jointly organised by USAID supported Research for Decision Makers (RDM) activity of icddr and Data for Impact (D4I).

Referring to the Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey (BDHS), speakers said data showed a declining trend in newborn death until 2014. But the last BDHS 2017-18 report showed that the rate has bounced back.

The study showed 30 newborn children die in Bangladesh per 1,000 live births. Of this, 19 percent are premature births and low birth weight (LBW) combined. Dr Ahmed Ehsanur Rahman, associate scientist of icddr, made the keynote presentation where he remarked that Kangaroo mother care (KMC) -- a method of care of preterm infants, is effective in preventing premature death, and considered as an easy and low cost intervention.

"But it involves time and effort from the families and health system to provide KMC to a child as it requires mother and baby's skin-to-skin contact for extensive hours and follow-ups," he said.

Speakers also stressed that in an ongoing pandemic, World Health Organization stated that with specific precautions, KMC does not put babies in additional risk of getting infections. Hence, it is very important to give proper attention to make KMCs and other interventions available and to ensure their use by promoting their benefits to families.

Chaired by Dr Shams El Arifeen, Prof Mohammad Shahidullah, president of the National Technical Advisory Committee on Covid-19 and Dr Kanta JAMIL, senior advisor at USAID-Bangladesh also spoke at the event.

## MJF handing cash support to 15,000 Covid-hit women

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF), a human rights organisation focusing on dignity and well-being of the country's marginalised population, has begun distribution of livelihood support to 15,380 Covid-19 affected marginalised women in 35 districts under 'Excluded People's Rights in Bangladesh' (EPR) programme.

The month-long programme has been supported by the UK Government's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), according to a press release.

Beginning on February 1, MJF is distributing Tk 7,000 to each beneficiary, selected through a rigorous process involving its 42 partner NGOs.

Some 391 citizens' committees were involved in the selection process and also are assisting in the distribution of cash support.

The beneficiary list, verified by union parishes and endorsed by upazila administration, includes women from poor and marginalised communities, indigenous communities of CHT and plainlands, Dalit and Harijan; women with disabilities; Bede community; transgender and fisher folk.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## Race against time to finish training

AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

The Covid-19 vaccines have reached Mymensingh, but the health officials of the division are racing against time to complete the training of field level workers and raise mass awareness among people to join the mass inoculation campaign.

The countrywide vaccination against the pandemic starts on February 7.

The master training for vaccination in the upazila level was completed on Sunday, ABM Mashiul Alam, civil surgeon of Mymensingh, told The Daily Star on Monday.

He said that those healthcare professionals would start a two-day training for field level workers from Monday, adding that training for volunteers and all medical persons will be completed by February 4.

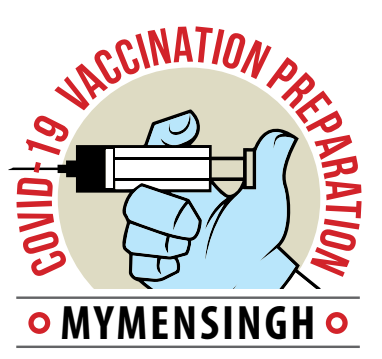
Mymensingh Divisional Director (Health) Dr Md Shah Alam however said that the training of the healthcare professionals and volunteers of the four districts of the division will end on February 6.

On the difficulties people are facing to register for vaccine, the civil surgeon of Mymensingh Mashiul Alam said, "As it is a new app, some people might find it a bit troublesome."

"But registration will go on until the programme reaches its end," said Alam.

Talking to this correspondent, 56-year-old businessman Shahjahan Ansar said that he was yet to learn the registration process.

He said that it would be difficult for



everyday people to register for vaccine unless there was strong campaigning from the government.

Ansar also said that he has not seen much publicity from the government so far.

Emdadul Haque Monzu, a 60-year-old homeopathic practitioner at Mymensingh city's Swadeshi Bazar area, said that it would be extremely difficult for people of his age to register

online personally because most of them are not computer literate.

He also said that his nephew took his NID card for registration.

"I still don't know when and where I will get vaccine shot," Haque said.

"We will go for all-out awareness programmes at grassroot level after vaccination in the division starts on February 7," said Divisional Director (Health) Dr Md Shah Alam.

He also said that the vaccine seekers who don't have internet facility will get registered by the health workers.

Shah Alam said the health workers at field level have initially started awareness campaigning along with their daily assigned job.

Dr Jannatul Ferdous, Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer in Muktagacha of Mymensingh, said they have started training for technical workers who will administer the vaccine at the hospital on Monday.

She said that participants were enthusiastic about the training.

Shahidullah Siddique, a sub-assistant community medical officer (SACMO) said it would not be difficult for them [to carry out the vaccination] since they have been conducting different vaccination programmes

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## Development of oncology drugs in Bangladesh: A success story

JAGARAN CHAKMA

Just 12 years ago, Bangladesh was a 100 percent importer of oncology drugs. Today, it is an exporter that also meets local needs.

This was possible due to the efforts of local pharmaceutical companies, their far-sighted vision and the trust patients have in local products.

In the past 10 years, pharmaceutical companies such as Beacon, Eskayef, Renata, Incepta, Healthcare, and Techno Pharma have come to manufacture more than 110 types of oncological drugs. Just six to seven years ago, around 50 percent of the lifesaving medications had to be imported, posing risks of unavailability, high costs and price fluctuations. Now local pharmaceuticals not only meet 80 percent of the country's demand but also export to at least 140 countries, beginning their journey with limited scale shipments in 2015.

Local companies manufacture 99 percent of the oncology drugs but some patients still use imported drugs or unofficially import them.

"People laughed at me in 2002 when I had taken an initiative to manufacture oncology products. Finally, my plans came to fruition in 2009. Now the patients can get drugs

at a reasonable price," said Md. Ebadul Karim, managing director of Beacon Pharmaceuticals Limited. In the past, only financially solvent patients were able to get treatment due to the high cost of drugs and low-income patients would have to wait till the last moment, he said.

According to Karim, Beacon not only manufactures oncology drugs but it also provides support of BDT three crore per annum to the poor patients and provides diagnostic support. He further said neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka have a government financial support system for cancer patients. The Bangladesh government can provide similar facilities for cancer patients, he said.

Beacon is planning to establish a palliative care centre so that the patients do not have to suffer so much. "We help the patients lead a quality life after taking treatment," he noted.

With a mission to deliver world class anti-cancer products at an affordable price, Eskayef Oncology started its journey in 2018 with many pioneering technologies. Recently, Eskayef Oncology touched another milestone as it has become one of the few Asian companies to get the approval from the prestigious global regulatory body

European Union Good Manufacturing Practice (EU GMP) for manufacturing anti-cancer medicines.

Eskayef's Oncology Manufacturing Facility is the country's first entity that has secured approval from the EU GMP, which is recognised by 27 nations of the EU and considered a passport for entry into the global market. Eskayef is currently producing both oral and injectable anti-cancer medicines maintaining the standards of the EU regulator. "This recognition will help our drugs enter the EU market and other countries," Dr. Mohammad Mujahidul Islam, Executive Director, Marketing & Sales of Eskayef, said.

He also added, "Eskayef is currently exporting its high-quality medicines to 54 countries. With all the latest technologies, facilities and our earnest commitment, Eskayef Oncology is determined to serve the people of Bangladesh and the world with its affordable and global-standard anti-cancer products."

Now, the export of oncology drugs is bigger than domestic market demand. To put things into perspective, Bangladesh exported cancer drugs worth over Tk 500 crore in 2019, and the export of these products in 2020 was almost the same although they

are yet to receive the full export details, industry insiders said.

Meanwhile local cancer drug sales amounted to about Tk 500 crore. Demand is growing by 15 percent on average every year, according to the manufacturers.

Along with conventional chemotherapy drugs, local pharmaceutical companies manufacture the latest oncology products such as oral therapy, immunotherapy, monoclonal antibodies, oral targeted therapies, and liposomal technology products, said the director for global business development of Beacon, Monjurul Alam. He informed that Bangladesh's export of cancer drugs was increasing by around 30 to 35 percent year-on-year. Oncology products were beyond the purchasing power of patients in the past but prices went down by 40 percent when Beacon started production through compliance with high standards, he said. Patients in Bangladesh now spend around Tk 500 crore per year for cancer treatment while it would cost at least Tk 2,000 crore if oncology drugs were imported, according to Alam.

Bangladesh's drugs are winning the global market for their quality and

low prices; the medicines are cheaper than those provided by the developed world, he added. Beacon now manufactures 110 different drugs for all kinds of cancer and exports them to 134 countries.

Alam said there is no difference between the generic and original oncology drugs as the local pharmaceutical companies have built world-class manufacturing plants with sophisticated European equipment.

Locally produced cancer drugs are of international standards and cheaper than imported ones, which is helping cancer treatment in Bangladesh, Md Azizul Islam, consultant physician general and specialist of medicine and oncology at Bangladesh Armed Forces, said earlier.

He believes it will not be long until local pharmaceutical companies manufacture all types of cancer drugs.

## CANCER PATIENTS AND TREATMENT FACILITIES

According to Bangladesh Pharmaceutical Journal, with the increasing rate of people being affected by cancer in Bangladesh, the disease has become a national concern. Anti-cancer drugs play a significant and crucial role in cancer treatment regimen. Inadequate access to essential

anti-cancer medicines may impose serious public health problems in Bangladesh.

According to National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), there are 13 to 15 lakh cancer patients in Bangladesh, with about two lakh patients newly diagnosed with cancer each year. Lung cancer and mouth-oropharynx cancer rank as the top two prevalent cancers in males. Other types of cancer are esophagus cancer and stomach cancer.

In women, cervix, uterus, and breast cancer are most prevalent. Other cancer types, which affect women, are mouth and oropharynx cancer, lung cancer, and esophagus cancer.

There are around 150 qualified clinical oncologists and 16 pediatric oncologists working in the different parts of the country. Regular cancer treatment is available in 19 hospitals and 465 hospital beds are attached as indoor or daycare facilities for chemotherapy in the oncology/radiotherapy departments.

There are about 15 linear accelerators, 12 Co-60 teletherapy, and 12 brachytherapy units currently available. There are approximately 56 cancer chemotherapeutic agents in Bangladesh.

I AM AND I WILL



World Cancer Day

4 February 2021

## CARE BEYOND TREATMENT

It is an honor to lead the fight against the deadliest diseases in society. Serving the patients with quality medicines is our motto. We have served the best quality medicines through our decade of experience and skill. Our footsteps are widening day by day, country to country. Despite many challenges like the global pandemic, we are committed to strive for affordable innovation to lessen the cancer burden around the world.

BEACON ONCOLOGY

BEACON PALLIATIVE CARE

BEACON Pharmaceuticals Limited



### Dr AR Mallick's anniversary of death today

City Desk

Today is the 24th death anniversary of eminent educationist Dr AR Mallick, the first technocrat Finance Minister of the country.

He was professor of South Asian Regional Studies at the University of Pennsylvania, USA, in the early 1960s, and was the founding vice-chancellor of Chittagong University.

He was also president of the Liberation Council of Intelligentsia, the first education secretary, the first High Commissioner to India, and was elected chairman of Asian Development Bank.

His publications include "British Policy and the Muslims in Bengal" and "Amar Jibon Kotha O Bangladesh Mukti Sangram". Bangla Academy published "Dr AR Mallick Sharak Grontho", comprising articles by renowned personalities from home and abroad.

In recognition of his immense contribution to academia, Dr AR Mallick Lecture Halls have been established in Dhaka, Rajshahi and Jahangir Nagar Universities.

On the occasion, a discussion and milad mahfil will be held at RKB Mallick School and College premises at his village home in Rajapur, Dhamrai.



Even though battery-run auto-rickshaws are banned from plying on highways, not only do they run on the Dhaka-Aricha highway -- without fear or regard -- but they do it in bold defiance of law enforcers. Like in this photo, where several of the vehicles are running with a police van in tow. This photo was taken yesterday from Savar's Bank Town area.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Two to die for rape, murder of 11-yr-old

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Shariatpur court yesterday sentenced two people to death for raping and killing a third-grader in Shariatpur's Sakhipur area in July 2017.

The convicts are Md Farid Sheikh (42), and Md Jakir Sheikh (34).

Judge Abdus Salam Khan of the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal in Shariatpur announced the judgement in presence of the accused, Firoz Ahmed, special public prosecutor of the tribunal, told The Daily Star.

The judge said the prosecution was able to prove the charges brought against the accused without any doubt, so they [accused] deserved the highest punishment for their "heinous offences".

According to the case statement, 11-year-old Liza Akter went to Shakhipur Government Primary School for playing on the morning of July 15, 2017.

Her neighbours Farid and Jakir took her to the house of one Alauddin Sheikh at Sakhipur Sardar Kandi village and raped her.

At one stage, the accused strangled her to death and dumped the body into a jute field at night.

On July 22 that year, police recovered the body being informed by locals.

The girl's father filed a case against Farid and Jakir in connection with the murder with Sakhipur Police Station on July 23. Police arrested the two the next day. They pressed charges against Farid and Jakir on January 16, 2018.

## Race against

FROM PAGE 3

under EPI (Expanded Programme of Immunisation) round the year.

Meanwhile, the vaccine doses arrived in Mymensingh last Thursday.

Dr Md Shah Alam said they have received 542,000 doses of vaccines and those have been distributed among four districts -- Mymensingh, Netrakona, Sherpur and Jamalpur on Friday.

Of the vaccines, Netrakona received 72,000 doses; Sherpur 36,000; Mymensingh 3,24,000 and Jamalpur received 72,000 shots, according to civil surgeons of respective districts.

Asked about the list of people to be vaccinated in the first phase, Shah Alam said, "We have prepared a primary list of medical and frontline professionals of different groups. But the final list is yet to be prepared."

The vaccines are being preserved at EPI in every district headquarters, said the director.

The director also said vaccination centre will be set up at every district hospitals and at 30 Upazila Health Complexes (UHC) in the division. Nurses, sub-assistant community medical officers, female welfare visitors and midwives will vaccinate the targeted population.

As per direction, some 45 vaccination centres will be opened in the division

including ten in Mymensingh City Corporation and one in every upazila health complex. Necessary number of booths will be opened according to demand but the number was yet to be finalised, informed the official.

In the meantime, district hospitals and upazila health complexes have been prepared for preservation of coronavirus vaccines and go for vaccination when the authorities concerned wants to commence the process.

He also said the vaccines have been preserved at WIC (Walk-In Cool) freezer rooms at every EPI in district and ILR (Ice Lined Refrigerators) at every UHC.

Security measures have been taken at every EPI of the division and at the same time, uninterrupted electricity supply has been ensured, said the divisional director.

According to divisional director's office sources, a total of 111 people (87 men, 24 women) died of coronavirus infections in Mymensingh division. Fifty-eight deaths were reported in Mymensingh district.

The total number of Covid-19 affected people in Mymensingh Division is 7,766 including 4,521 in Mymensingh district until yesterday. Presently, there are 360 Covid-19 patients in isolation including 43 in institutional isolation at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.

## SEDITION CASES AGAINST BABUNAGARI, MAMUNUL Court asks PBI to submit probe reports by March 3

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday again asked the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) to submit by March 3 the probe reports of two sedition cases filed against Hefajat chief Junayed Babunagari and two others.

They are Hefajat-e-Islam joint secretary general Mamunul Haque and Islami Andolan Bangladesh senior nayebe-amir Syed Muhammad Faizul Karim.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Satyabrata Sikder passed the orders after PBI failed to submit any report, court sources said.

On December 7 last year, Aminul Islam Bulbul, president of Muktiyuddho Moncho's central committee, filed a case against the three with the court of Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate for their "disparaging" comments on sculptures.

Advocate Moshior Malek, founder of Bangabandhu Foundation, also filed a case against Mamunul Haque with the same court over the same allegation that day.

The magistrate took cognisance of charges against the accused and directed deputy inspector general of police of PBI to probe the matter and submit reports to it by yesterday.

The cases mentioned that the statements made by Babunagari, Mamunul and Faizul were tantamount to sedition.

According to the case documents, the accused Mamunul made anti-state remarks on November 13 last year at the BMA Auditorium in the capital's Topkhana Road area, while Faizul made similar comments at an event in Gandaria the same day.

Babunagari also made anti-state remarks at an event in Hathazari, Chattogram on November 27 the same year.

The complainants said all the statements made by the three are tantamount to sedition and go against the state.

They also appealed to the court to issue arrest warrants against the accused for "tarnishing the image of the government and creating anarchy".

## Number of

FROM PAGE 3

crime, the actual number of victims trafficked is far higher. The report shows traffickers particularly target the most vulnerable, such as migrants and people without jobs.

"Millions of women, children and men worldwide are out of work, out of school and without social support in the continuing Covid-19 crisis, leaving them at greater risk of human trafficking. We need targeted action to stop criminal traffickers from taking advantage of the pandemic to exploit the vulnerable," said UNODC Executive Director Ghada Waly.

Female victims continue to be the primary targets for human trafficking. For every 10 victims detected globally in 2018, about five were adult women and two were young girls. Around 20 percent of human trafficking victims were adult men and 15 percent were young boys.

Overall, 50 percent of detected victims were trafficked for sexual exploitation, 38 percent were exploited for forced labour, six percent were subjected to forced criminal activity, while one percent were coerced into begging and smaller numbers into forced marriages, organ removal, and other purposes.

Globally, most persons -- around 62 percent -- prosecuted and convicted of human trafficking continue to be male.

Offenders can be members of organised crime groups, which traffic the great majority of victims, to individuals operating on their own or in small groups on an opportunistic basis.

The Global Report on Trafficking in Persons is produced by UNODC every two years, to inform an effective response to this crime and place it within the context of the UN Sustainable Development Agenda.

## Survivors speak of family's importance in cancer battle

United Hospital marks World Cancer Day

City Desk

The fight against cancer is difficult to win alone. A task of immense mental fortitude, it's important for the family and friends of a cancer patient to support them throughout their painful ordeal, speakers said at a cancer awareness programme yesterday.

The programme, titled "Cancer Screening and Awareness - Let it start from the family" - was organised by United Hospital's Cancer Center to commemorate

World Cancer Day being celebrated around the world today, said a press release.

The programme was attended by Mohammad Faizur Rahman, Managing Director and CEO of United Hospital; Oncologist Dr Rashid Un Nabi; Dr Asim Kumar Sengupta; and Dr Shagufa Anwar, Director, Communication and Business Development, United Hospital, along with doctors and staffers of the hospital and cancer patients and their families, the press release added.

## MJF handing

FROM PAGE 3

Extreme poor women-headed households, widows, destitute women, and victims of violence are also included in the list.

Grievance redress committees involving 354 people have also been formed to address issues relating to selection and distribution processes.

MJF Executive Director Shaheen Anam said: "The support of the British Government is laudable which will empower some 15,000 marginalised women to create sustainable livelihood opportunities to enhance family wellbeing."

Mentionable, MJF successfully distributed Tk 57.5 million to 23,000 marginalised households in 38 priority districts in September last year, supported by FCDO.

## Probe report

FROM PAGE 3

Kamrul Hasan alias Arun, Abu Sayeed, and two security guards of the couple's house Palash Rudra Paul and Enamul Hoque, and the couple's "family friend" Tanveer Rahman had been arrested in connection with the murder.

Later, Tanveer and Palash got out of jail on bail. The others are now behind bars.

## Notice of Time Extension

Memo No: 01/2021

Dated: 04/01/2021

Revised dates of Selling & Closing of Tender (published in Prothom Alo, The Daily Star & Bangladesh Protidin on 07.01.2021) for supply, Installation, testing & commissioning of (a) 1 no. 1000 kg. 17 stops 2.5 m/sec speed fire fighter lift (b) 1 no. 1600 kg. 16 stops 2.5 m/sec speed Stretcher cum passengers Lift (c) 2 no. 1000 kg. 15 stops 2.5 m/sec speed passengers Lift of 14 storeys Anjuman J R Tower with 3 basements, Anjuman Mufidul Islam is given below.

1. Last date of selling 11.02.2021
2. Last date of Tender submission: 25.02.2021, Time 12.00 noon.

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

Memo No. 46.02.8844.000.05.025.20-624 Date: 03/02/2021

**e-Tender Notice No. 03/2020-2021**

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

Tender ID No.	Package No.	Name of work	Tender method
541601	e-Tender/PEDP4/SRJ/KAM/2019-20/W2.01784	Construction of additional classroom of Mamudakola RGNPS under PEDP4.	OTM
529607	e-Tender/PEDP4/SER/KAM/2020-21/W2.02949	Construction of additional classroom of Karnasuti GPS under PEDP4.	OTM

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for tender document last selling/downloading date and time: (02-March-2021, 11:00am BST) have to be deposited online through any registered bank branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

S. M. Sanjid Ahmed  
Upazila Engineer  
Kamarkhand, Sirajganj  
[ue.kamarkhand@lged.gov.bd](mailto:ue.kamarkhand@lged.gov.bd)

GD-227

**Bangladesh Water Development Board**  
Office of the Executive Engineer  
Bogura Mechanical Division, BWDB, Bogura

Memo No. Xen/BMD/GF/169 Date: 03.02.2021

**Invitation for e-Tender**

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the under mentioned works as per terms and conditions stated below.

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Tender Package No. & Type	Name of works	Tender last selling date & time	Tender closing/opening date & time
01.	543061	BMD/Gate/Nilphamari/OTM-14/2020-2021	Manufacturing Supply & Installation of 8 (eight) Nos. MS Lift Gates, 7 (seven) Nos. Pedestal type Lifting device, 1 (one) No. Hand Wheel type Lifting device and Small size 15 (fifteen) Nos. Outlet at Buri Teesta Irrigation main canal BC-1 & BC-2 Structure of Buri Teesta Irrigation Project of Nilphamari O&M Division under Bogura Mechanical Division, BWDB, Bogura during the FY 2020-21.	24-Feb-2021 16:00	25-Feb-2021 12:00
02.	542745	BMD/Gate/Rajshahi/OTM-17/2020-2021	Manufacturing Supply & Installation of 5 (five) Nos. MS Lift Gate & Pedestal type Lifting device at Dangapara 3-Vent Chandpur 2-Vent regulator of Chalanbeel project polder-D of Rajshahi O&M Division under Bogura Mechanical Division, BWDB, Bogura during the FY 2020-21.	24-Feb-2021 16:00	25-Feb-2021 12:30

This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches up to 24th February-2021 (16.00pm).

Md. Mamunuzzaman  
Executive Engineer  
Bogura Mechanical Division  
BWDB, Bogura

পানি-৫১৩/২০২০-২০২১  
৫২৩  
GD-235

**PAN PACIFIC SONARGAON**  
DHAKA

The Oasis of Luxurious Hospitality and Tranquility

**Invitation for Tender**

Sealed tenders are invited from bona-fide contractors/manufacturers/dealers/distributors/suppliers for supply the following items. The detail Specifications, terms and conditions are mentioned in the Tender Schedule.

SL No.	Name of the Items	Schedule Price (Non-refundable)
1	100 KVA (True) Online UPS (Re-tender) - 01 No.	Tk. 1500
2	Switchgear Operational Batteries (Re-tender)	Tk. 1000
3	Fan Coil Unit - 04 Nos	Tk. 1000

Interested bidders may obtain Tender Schedule from the Purchasing Department on submission of an application on their respective letterhead up to February 22, 2021 during the office hours. Tender will be received up to 02:30pm on February 23, 2021 and will be opened on the same day at 03:00pm in presence of bidders, if any.

Tender must be supported by an Earnest Money amounting to 5% of quoted price in the form of Bank Draft or Pay Order from any Scheduled Bank of Bangladesh in favor of Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka.

Pan Pacific Sonargaon authority reserves the right to accept/reject any tender in part or in full or all tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Purchase Manager, Tel (880) 2 9128008, Extn: 4164

**Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh**  
Office of the Executive Engineer  
E/M Division-2, Kurmitola, Dhaka-1229

File No. 30.31.2600.413.03.016.21/ Date: 01/02/2021

**e-Tender Notice**

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). Package information is available in tender notice under e-GP System Portal. This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches. Detailed name of work, Tender ID and closing date & time are as follows.

Sl No.	Name of work	Tender ID	Opening and closing date & time
1	Development work of water supply system at HSA.	542386	23-Feb-2021 12:00
2	Development of water supply system at HSA S.H. Providing & installation of water lifting pump incl. other related works for underground reservoir to overhead tank of Residential Building at Kurmitola R/A at HSA.	531752	23-Feb-2021 12:00

Further information and guidelines is available in the in the e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk.  
নং-৩০.৩১.০০০০.০৫১.১৮.০০১.২১/৯২  
তারিখঃ ০২/০২/২০২১খ্রিঃ  
GD-229

Md. Al-Mamun  
Executive Engineer (E/M) (C.C)  
E/M Division-2, CAAB, Dhaka

**গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার**  
প্রধান সরঞ্জাম নিয়ন্ত্রকের দপ্তর  
বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে  
পাহাড়তলী, চট্টগ্রাম-৪২০২

ফোনঃ +৮৮ ০৩১ ৬৫৯৬০৪, ই-মেইলঃ [ccspt@railway.gov.bd](mailto:ccspt@railway.gov.bd)  
নং সিসিএস/ই-জিপি নোটিশ/২০২১-০২ তারিখঃ ০২/০২/২০২১খ্রিঃ

**ই-জিপি টেন্ডার নোটিশ**

প্রধান সরঞ্জাম নিয়ন্ত্রক, বাংলাদেশ রেলওয়ে, পাহাড়তলী কর্তৃক National Electronic Government Procurement Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) এ নিবন্ধিত দরপত্র আহ্বান করা হয়েছে।

ক্রঃ নং	টেন্ডার আইডি, এপিপি আইডি এবং নথি নং	ক্রয়ের ধরণ ও পণ্যের নাম	দরপত্র পদ্ধতি	দাখিলের সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও শেষ সময়
(১)	Tender ID: 532965 APP ID: 166914 Ref No.: EGP/P3/HB2/16/2020/R	Goods, Tender-Single Lot Procurement of Combined IV Coupler 3 Phase etc. 01 (One) item = 05 Nos.	NCT, OSTETM	03-Mar-2021 15:30

**বিঃ দ্রঃ**

১. শুধুমাত্র ই-জিপি সিস্টেমে নিবন্ধিত ও দরপত্রের ইলিজিবিটি শর্তাবলী পূরণকারী সরবরাহকারীরা ই-জিপি সিস্টেমে সরাসরি অংশগ্রহণ করতে পারবেন।
২. নিবন্ধিত ও অগ্রহী দরদাতাগণ বিনা খরচে দরপত্র দলিল দেখতে পারবেন; তবে দরপত্রে অংশগ্রহণের জন্য দরপত্র দলিল ও দরপত্র জামানত বাবদ অর্থ নির্ধারিত ব্যাংকে জমা করতে হবে।
৩. খুব শীঘ্রই বেশ কিছু দরপত্র ই-জিপি সিস্টেমে প্রকাশিত হবে।
৪. সকল অগ্রহী ব্যক্তি/প্রতিষ্ঠানকে অবিলম্বে National Electronic Government Procurement Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) এ নিবন্ধিত হওয়ার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হল।
৫. পর্যালোচনা সর্বস্বত্ব দরপত্র পদ্ধতির ক্ষেত্রে ই-জিপি সিস্টেমে ব্যবহার করা হবে। বিধায়, এই দপ্তরের তালিকাভুক্ত সকল দরদাতাগণকে অবিলম্বে ই-জিপি সিস্টেমে নিবন্ধন সম্পন্ন করার জন্য অনুরোধ করা হল।

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Illegal structures are being built on the canal in Kalapara upazila of Patuakhali.

PHOTO: STAR

## Illegal structures on Patuakhali canal

Farmers of 10 adjacent villages in Kalapara upazila depend on the canal's water

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Illegal structures are being built on Bharani khal in Dhankhali union under Kalapara upazila of the district, causing hindrance to the normal flow of water in the canal.

There are 10 villages, including paved roads, on both sides of the nine-km-long canal from Devpur dam to Londa area. About five thousand farmers of the villages cultivate several thousand acres of agricultural land through this single canal.

At least 70 structures have already been erected by occupying the canal, said locals.

A list of 70 occupants has already been submitted to the upazila land office to evict the structures. These occupiers are so influential that the people in the land office have become helpless to them.

The canal, which is connected to the Ramnabad river, has a normal tidal flow and the local farmers use its water to produce various crops on their land throughout the year. The water of the canal is also used for household purposes.

According to the locals, farmers of at least 10 villages including Chalitabunia, Dhankhali, Devpur, Panchjunia, Uttar Devpur, Nishanbaria, Daser Howla, Fultali



and Londa use this canal's water. But in addition to building the structures at a few spots of this important canal, people have set up nets in the canal in the name of fishing that is also obstructing the free flow of water.

During a visit, this correspondent found a local influential person named Abdus Sattar Khan setting up a structure in front of the local NGO Codec office.

Wishing anonymity, a local resident said they dared not protest the act of Sattar as he is very influential person in the area.

The authority of the local land office is not taking any effective action even after being informed of the matter, he alleged.

Abdul Hadi Hawladar, a farmer from Panchjunia village, said if the

normal flow of water in the canal was severely disrupted due to construction of various structures, the growers would face severe waterlogging in the rainy season.

Contacted, Abdus Sattar Khan, who is building structures on the canal, declined to make any comments over the matter.

Dhankhali Union Land Assistant Officer Hamidul Haque Bachchu Biswas said a list of occupiers of at least 70 structures from Sombaria Bazar to Fultali has already been sent to the upazila office.

Kalapara Upazila Assistant Commissioner (Land) Jagatbandhu Mondal said immediate action will be taken after investigating the matter.

## Going abroad for cancer treatment not necessary

Survivors, caregivers, experts tell Eskayef Oncology webinar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Empathy for cancer patients and proper treatment, instead of fear or social stigma, can save millions of lives every year, said cancer survivors, caregivers and medical experts.

They said the traditional fear about cancer should in no way dominate the social discourse, as medical scientists have developed high-quality medicines and sophisticated technology, many of which are available at home.

The observations came at a webinar titled "The Stories of Conquering Cancer" jointly organised by Eskayef Oncology and The Daily Star yesterday, on the eve of World Cancer Day today, with theme "#IAmAndWill".

The campaign says: "Our actions have an impact on everyone around us, within our neighbourhoods, communities and cities. And that more than ever, our actions are also being felt across borders and oceans."

Taking part in the webinar, cancer survivor Hashmat Rehana Chowdhury said she was nervous after being diagnosed, but the best thing was that the doctor allayed the fear and suggested the precautions necessary.

"I found the doctor and nurses very supportive and caring. As I regularly went to the oncology centre in Dhaka, the nurses and doctor became like my relatives," she said. Besides, her family, friends and colleagues all supported her.

A teacher by profession, Rehana Chowdhury said she had to continue her job, though work hours were reduced. Her colleagues at the school too were caring.

"I had confidence in caregivers, doctors, and above all Allah," she said.

She said people in general are very afraid of cancer and think they need to go abroad for treatment. That perception has proved to be wrong in her case, she said.

"I have full confidence in the treatment and care provided at home," said Rehana.

Another survivor Habiba Monsur said she was also very afraid when



Guests at the webinar shared their experience of the battle with cancer.

she was diagnosed with cancer. However, there were some issues with the diagnosis that prompted her family and relatives to decide to take her to India.

"However, the doctor in India suggested that the medical protocol that was prescribed in Bangladesh was fine. Eventually, I returned home and continued the treatment and survived the cancer," she said.

While undergoing treatment, she had body pain. The doctor then suggested yoga, which eventually relieved her pain, she said.

"My husband was also very supportive. The doctor had shared possible reactions to medication and so I was prepared to face those," Habiba said.

"The doctor clearly suggested that I should not worry, but remain mentally strong. I tried hard to be so. This is very important," she added.

Her husband Monsur happily shared how mutual understanding, love and affection during the critical days of the disease can help a patient.

He said they had a social pressure to go to India, but then realised that the treatment was same at home. "Actually, my employer provided financial assistance for the treatment. So, I had no major problem. But, quality treatment of cancer is very much possible within the country."

Dr Zafar Md Masud, professor and head at the Department of Oncology at Bangladesh Medical College & Hospital, said there is

no guarantee that cancer treatment would be the best abroad.

Bangladesh has high quality medicine and a healthcare system available now. Mutual understanding between doctors, nurses, family and the patient is very important. Also, lifestyle plays an important role. Social awareness among all on cancer is the key, said Dr Masud, who moderated the discussion.

Dr Shahriar Islam, portfolio manager of Eskayef Oncology, said Eskayef Oncology has state-of-the-art manufacturing facility equipped with many pioneering technologies like ISOLATOR, processes and skilled professionals.

Recently, Eskayef Oncology has touched another milestone with anti-cancer medicine, as it has become one of the few Asian companies to achieve approval from the prestigious global regulatory body -- European Union Good Manufacturing Practice (EU GMP) -- for anti-cancer drugs, he said.

The EU GMP, recognised by the 27 nations of the EU, is considered a passport for entry to the global market. Eskayef can now produce both oral and injectable anti-cancer medicines, maintaining the standard of the EU regulator.

"With all the latest technologies, facilities and our earnest commitment, Eskayef Oncology is determined to serve humanity in Bangladesh and across the world with its affordable, global-standard anti-cancer products," said Dr Shahriar.

## Hundreds in 2 villages water logged for months

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Several hundred families in Bagdanga and Manoharnagar villages in Jashore's Keshabpur upazila have been living in inhumane conditions, as their houses remain under water for nearly two months.

A number of residents of the villages said that the Manoharnagar-Bagdanga canal, which runs alongside their villages, overflowed and flooded their villages.

Pumping of an enormous volume of water into the canal from Shrifala and Bayar Khola beels, under neighbouring Manirampur upazila, caused the canal to overflow, they also alleged.

Inhabitants of the two villages built a few makeshift footbridges with bamboo to communicate with other areas. Many of them are trying to elevate their houses with earth purchased from distant locations.

With their cattle sheds and toilets flooded and no place to take shelter to, many are living in unsanitary conditions. The prolonged water logging, mixed with sewer, is posing health hazards to all inhabitants, especially to the children and the elderly.

Day-to-day activities such as cooking and bathing have become the biggest challenge for the villagers, as they have to wade across murky floodwaters to fetch fresh water from surrounding areas.

Bagdanga resident Mukul Roy said having a cooked meal at home has been one of the most difficult tasks when there

Pumping of an enormous volume of water into the canal from Shrifala and Bayar Khola beels, under neighbouring Manirampur upazila, caused the canal to overflow, villagers alleged.

is dirty water all around.

Sujan Roy, from the same village, said the flooding has washed up sewage from the toilets, posing severe health risks to everyone in the two villages.

Lives of the villagers are in despair and many of them, including children, are suffering from various waterborne diseases, said Tanni Roy Tuki, a higher secondary student.

Vaidyanath Sarkar, a union parishad member, said the water logging has been continuing in the area for about two months and the higher authorities concerned have been made aware of the situation.

Contacted, Panjia Union Parishad Chairman Shafiqul Islam Mukul said pumping out of water from the two villages has started already and the situation in the area will see an improvement in a few days.



Hospitals see a sharp rise in number of child patients, infected with different cold-related diseases, due to the ongoing cold spell across the country. This photo taken on Tuesday shows parents huddle on the floor as the children's ward of Pabna General Hospital is too inadequate to cope with the situation.

PHOTO: STAR

## Man to die, father gets life term for murder

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A Kishoreganj court yesterday sentenced a man to death and his father to life term imprisonment for killing a madrasa principal in Hossainpur upazila in 2009.

The convicts are Manik Mia, 37, of Jirani village, and his father Nurul Karim, 62.

Kishoreganj Additional District and Sessions Judge Md Abdur Rahim also fined them each Tk 2 lakh.

According to the case statement, a quarrel took place between Manik and Roksi, 16, son of Aminul Haque, 55, principal of a local madrasa, over playing cricket.

Later, Manik and his father forcibly took the boy to their house on December 14 in 2009.

When Aminul rushed to the spot to release his son, Manik stabbed Aminul on the chest. Injured Aminul died at a hospital in Dhaka on December 17.



A woman crosses a flooded area, using a makeshift bamboo footbridge made by villagers. Two villages -- Bagdanga and Manoharnagar -- in Jashore's Keshabpur upazila, have been under water for around two months, causing immense sufferings to inhabitants of the villages.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

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



Memo No. 46.02.9141.000.14.140.20-32

Date:01.02.2021

### e-Tender Notice

e-GP Tender Notice Number : 04/2020-2021

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

SL No	Tender ID No	Description of work	Tender/Proposal Document last selling / downloading Date and Time	Last Date and Time for Tender/Proposal Security Submission	Tender/Proposal Closing Date and Time	Method of Tender
01	540392.	eTender/PEDP4/SLT/GOW/2020-21/W2.03056 Construction of additional class room of Shangram Punjee GPS under PEDP4 , Gowainghat, Sylhet.	24-Feb-2021 17:00	25-Feb-2021 14:00	25-Feb-2021 15:00	OTM
02	540393	eTender/PEDP4/SLT/GOW/2020-21/W2.02418 Construction of additional class room of Chattar Gram GPS under PEDP4 , Gowainghat, Sylhet	24-Feb-2021 17:00	25-Feb-2021 14:00	25-Feb-2021 15:00	OTM
03	540394	eTender/PEDP4/SLT/GOW/2020-21/W2.02577 Construction of additional class room of Gulni GPS under PEDP4, Gowainghat, Sylhet	24-Feb-2021 17:00	25-Feb-2021 14:00	25-Feb-2021 15:00	OTM
04	540395	e-Tender/PEDP4/SLT/GOW/2020-21/W2.03111 Construction of additional class room of Siting Bari GPS under PEDP4 , Gowainghat, Sylhet.	24-Feb-2021 17:00	25-Feb-2021 14:00	25-Feb-2021 15:00	OTM

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

To submit e-Tender, please registration in the National e-GP system (<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 on line through any registered bank's branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System portal and from e-GP help desk([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd))

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GD-231

## MYANMAR COUP

## Junta plans probe of last year's polls

AP, Yangon

Myanmar's new leader said the military government installed after Monday's coup plans an investigation into alleged fraud in last year's elections and will also prioritize the COVID-19 outbreak and the economy, a state newspaper reported yesterday.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing announced the moves Tuesday at the first meeting of his new government in the capital, the state-run Global New Light of Myanmar newspaper said.

The military had said one of its reasons for ousting the elected civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi was because it failed to properly investigate its allegations of alleged widespread electoral irregularities. The state Union Election Commission four days before the military takeover had declared there were no significant problems with the vote.

In the November 2020 election, Suu Kyi's party captured 396 out of 476 seats contested in the lower and upper houses of Parliament. The main opposition party, the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party, won only 33 seats.

The military, known as the Tatmadaw, is automatically allocated 25% of the seat in the combined houses under the 2008 Constitution that came into effect under a previous military government.

The state newspaper reported that Min Aung Hlaing told Cabinet members that a new Union Election Commission, with what he described as independent and unbiased personnel, "would examine the voting data to find correct results, and actions would be taken accordingly in the process."



Protesters from Myanmar residing in Japan hold portraits of leader Aung San Suu Kyi and Myanmar's President Win Myint at a rally against Myanmar's military after it seized power from a democratically elected civilian government and arrested the duo, outside Foreign Ministry in Tokyo, Japan yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## NEWS IN BRIEF

## Ukraine's Zelensky bans three pro-Russia TV channels

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has banned three pro-Russian television channels in a move the presidency said was aimed to stave off Kremlin propaganda. The ban came into effect in the early hours of yesterday after Zelensky issued a decree imposing sanctions against pro-Russian lawmaker Taras Kozak and eight of his companies, including the three TV stations. The channels -- 112 Ukraina, Zik TV and NewsOne TV -- are formally owned by Kozak, but are also linked to powerful MP Viktor Medvedchuk, a close ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin. The decree late Tuesday made no mention of the reason for the ban, but Zelensky said on Twitter later his country supports freedom of speech.

## Over 10,000 detained at Navalny rallies in Russia

More than 10,000 people were detained at recent rallies in Russia in support of Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny with many subjected to mistreatment in police custody, monitors said yesterday. Navalny's supporters took to the streets in cities across the country on consecutive weekends last month calling for his release from detention and denouncing Kremlin rule. Hundreds more filled the streets of the capital Moscow Tuesday evening, after



Navalny, 44, was ordered behind bars for nearly three years on old embezzlement charges. At nationwide rallies over the last two weeks, more than 10,000 people were seized by police, the OVD-Info group that monitors opposition protests reported yesterday.

## Another 'Hong Kong 12' lawyer has license revoked

A second Chinese lawyer involved in defending a Hong Kong democracy activist charged with illegally leaving the territory said Tuesday he had lost his license. Ren Quanniu, who represented one of 12 people caught attempting to flee Hong Kong to Taiwan by boat last August, showed AFP a court notice revoking his right to practice. Lu Siwei, who was served alongside Ren on the case, had his licence stripped last month. In Washington, State Department spokesman Ned Price said the US was "deeply concerned" about the disbarment of the two lawyers. "We urge Beijing to respect human rights and the rule of law and to reinstate their legal credentials at once," he wrote on Twitter.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

## NUCLEAR ACCORD WITH WORLD POWERS

## Iran's Rouhani rules out changes

Dismisses calls to broaden terms, include regional countries

AGENCIES

President Hassan Rouhani yesterday ruled out changes to Iran's nuclear accord with world powers and dismissed calls to broaden the terms of the deal and include regional countries.

US President Joe Biden has voiced support for returning to the accord, from which Donald Trump exited, but has insisted that Tehran first resume full compliance and consider expanding the deal beyond the nuclear issue.

Iran's regional arch rival, Saudi Arabia, has also called for a role in any future talks on the agreement.

"No clause of the JCPOA will change. Know this. And no one will be added to the JCPOA," Rouhani said at a televised cabinet meeting, using the deal's official name, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action.



"This is the agreement. If they want it, everyone come into compliance. If they don't, they can go live their lives," he said.

Trump withdrew the US from the JCPOA and imposed crippling sanctions on Iran in 2018, maintaining a policy of "maximum pressure" against the Islamic republic.

Iran a year later responded by gradually suspending its compliance

with most of its key nuclear commitments in the deal, under which it was promised economic relief for limits on its nuclear programme.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Monday asked the European Union to coordinate a synchronised return of both Washington and Tehran to the deal.

But the US State Department spokesman Ned Price said it was still too early to accept such a proposal, repeating calls on Tehran to return to compliance first.

Iran has deepened a key breach of its 2015 nuclear deal, enriching uranium with a larger number of advanced centrifuge machines in an underground plant, reports Reuters.

Meanwhile, UN's top court ruled yesterday that it is allowed to take on Iran's bid to overturn US nuclear sanctions.

## New TB treatment to cut pill intake by two-thirds: study

AFP, Johannesburg

A new tuberculosis treatment that slashes costs and the pill burden for patients will be rolled out in five high-incidence countries this year, international medical research body the Aurum Institute said yesterday.

TB -- a respiratory disease that is preventable and treatable yet kills more than 1.4 million people every year -- is chronically underfunded, with diagnosis and treatment failing to reach millions.

It is currently the world's deadliest infectious disease, with progress to stop its spread unwound by the Covid-19 pandemic as restricted movement disrupted treatment.

"Enough treatments for up to three million patients are expected to be made available for eligible countries this year," Aurum said in a statement.

The new two-drug regime will reduce the weekly pill intake for patients from nine to three.

This is expected to enable better adherence and outcomes, Dr Tereza Kasava, the World Health Organisation's global TB programme director said.

Treatment will initially be administered in Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Mozambique and Zimbabwe.

Seven other nations will follow later.

A deal cut between the manufacturer Macleods, Unitaid and the Clinton Health Access Initiative (CHAI) will cap the price at \$15 for a three-month complete regime.



US President Joe Biden and first lady Dr. Jill Biden pay their respects before the remains of Capitol Police officer Brian Sicknick lay in honor in the Rotunda of the US Capitol building after he died on January 7 from injuries he sustained while protecting the US Capitol during the January 6 attack on the building, in Washington, DC, US on Tuesday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Afghan judge shot dead in ambush

AFP, Jalalabad

An Afghan judge was shot dead in an ambush in the eastern city of Jalalabad yesterday, police said, the third court official killed in less than a month.

Judge Hafizullah was attacked as he headed to work in a motor trishaw, said Farid Khan, spokesman for Nangarhar province's police.

Gulzada Sangar, a doctor at Jalalabad public hospital, said Hafizullah had multiple bullet wounds.

The murder of Hafizullah comes after militants shot dead two women judges working for the Supreme Court in Kabul on January 17.

Several prominent Afghans -- including judges, clerics, journalists, activists and doctors -- have been assassinated in often brazen daytime attacks.

## TWEETS SUPPORTING FARMERS' PROTESTS

## India warns Twitter to comply with orders to block accounts

AGENCIES

India has written to Twitter warning it to comply with orders to block accounts and content related to a protest by farmers, a technology ministry source said yesterday.

Twitter blocked dozens of accounts in India, including that of a leading news magazine, on Monday after the government said that users were posting content aimed at inciting violence.

But it later unblocked some of these accounts.

"Twitter unilaterally unblocked accounts, tweets despite the government's order. Twitter is an intermediary and they are obliged to obey the direction of the government," the source, who declined to be named as the notice sent to Twitter was not public, told Reuters.

India's Home Affairs Ministry had demanded the suspension of "close to 250 Twitter accounts" that were allegedly posting content that sought to foment violence, a government official previously told Reuters.

"Content with #Modi Planning Farmer Genocide was posted on Twitter, which was designed to inflame passions, hatred and was factually incorrect," the technology ministry source said.

Twitter declined to comment on the notice.

Pop superstar Rihanna and climate activist Greta Thunberg also drew the ire of the Indian government yesterday after they tweeted in support of the massive farmers' protest, reports AFP.

Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut, a vocal Modi supporter, responded by calling the protesting farmers "terrorists" and Rihanna a "fool".

Indian farmers' leaders yesterday outlined plans to scale up months of protests against agricultural reforms. "This gathering shows the anger against the government and we will continue our fight," union leader Rakesh Tikait told a 50,000-strong rally of the politically influential Jat community in northern Haryana state.

## CHILD SEPARATIONS AT US-MEXICO BORDER

## Biden sets up task force to reunite families

REUTERS, Washington

US President Joe Biden on Tuesday ordered a review of asylum processing at the US-Mexico border and the immigration system as he seeks to undo some of former President Donald Trump's hardline policies.

Biden also created a task force to reunite migrant families who were separated at the border by Trump's 2018 'zero tolerance' strategy.

"We are going to work to undo the moral and national shame of the previous administration that literally, not figuratively, ripped children from the arms of their families," Biden said, as he signed the three immigration-related executive orders at the White House.

The executive orders called for a dizzying array of reviews and reports that could trigger policy changes in the weeks and months ahead, but provide limited immediate relief to immigrants barred by Trump-era rules.

Immigration advocates have urged the new Democratic administration to quickly undo Trump's policies but Biden aides say they need time to unravel the many layers of immigration restrictions and to put in place more migrant-friendly systems.

"It's not going to happen overnight," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said on Tuesday.

The cautious strategy reflects the tightrope Biden is walking to reverse hardline Trump policies while simultaneously trying to prevent a surge in illegal immigration. Biden opponents could also derail or slow down his agenda with lawsuits if his administration moves too quickly and fails to follow proper procedures.

Meanwhile, US Senate on Tuesday confirmed Alejandro Mayorkas to head the Department of Homeland Security, making him the first Latino and immigrant to hold the position and further solidifying President Joe Biden's Cabinet.

## 71 homes destroyed in Australia bushfire

AFP, Perth

At least 71 homes have been destroyed in a bushfire raging out of control near Australia's fourth-biggest city Perth, authorities said yesterday, as they told residents to ignore a coronavirus lockdown and leave threatened areas.

The blaze has torn through swathes of land in the Perth Hills and was moving towards more densely populated areas.

Six firefighters received minor injuries -- including one who officials said suffered burns and continued working to extinguish the blaze -- but no deaths or serious injuries have been reported so far.

"To the people who have lost their homes, it's just devastating for them. Our thoughts go out to them," Western Australian fire commissioner Darren Klemm said.

Several emergency warnings were issued, with conditions set to worsen later yesterday and strong gusting winds expected to fan the flames.

The blaze hit a population that had just been forced into a snap lockdown after a coronavirus case was detected. About two million people in and around Perth fell under the stay-at-home orders imposed on Sunday.

"This is a situation the likes of which we have never seen before," said Western Australian Premier Mark McGowan.

"A full lockdown and raging bushfires. It is frightening and it will test us all."



A security dog barks after detecting migrants hidden under a lorry headed to Ireland, at the port of Cherbourg, northwestern France, on Tuesday. The photo was released yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

**BOOK REVIEW: FICTION**

# History, lost love, and the road not taken in Jodi Picoult's latest novel

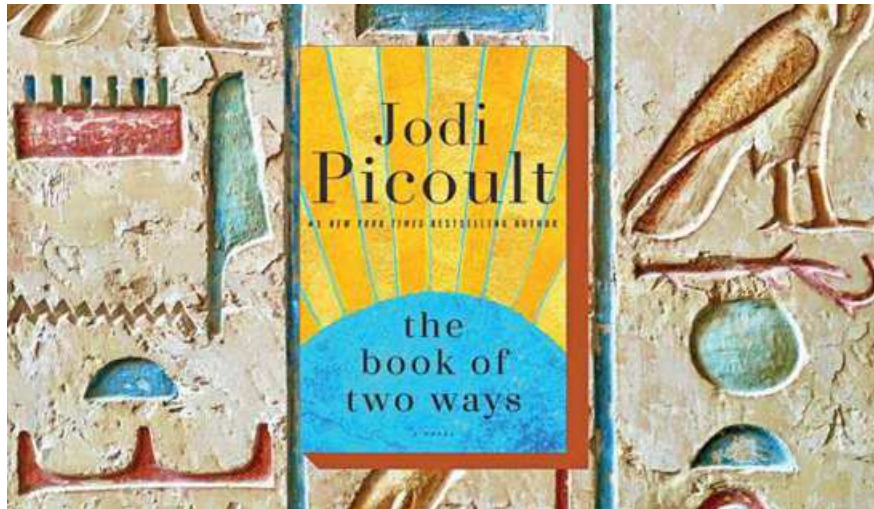
SAMEIRAH NASRIN AHSAN

Jodi Picoult's *The Book of Two Ways* (Ballantine Books, 2020) discusses with great candour the complexities of human choices, of love, regret, death, and other tumultuous complications that make up life. This book couldn't have arrived at a more fitting time, because in many ways it addresses the perpetual uncertainty that has plagued minds throughout the past year and still continues to do so.

The story begins with Dawn McDowell, our protagonist who is flying home to Boston when the aircraft she is on has to make a sudden and potentially dangerous landing. Dawn is a death doula by profession, which means she assists terminally ill patients with the process of dying. As the plane dives for the crash, she expects to meet her own death, and her life flashes before her eyes. She does not, however, see the face of her physicist husband, Brian, or their moments together; nor does she see their daughter Meret and her many stages of growing up. When Dawn closes her eyes during what could have been her last moments, she sees Wyatt Armstrong, a man she had once loved and abandoned long ago. Along with the memory of Wyatt, Dawn's mind is flooded with the dull yet persistent jabs of doubt about past choices, silent regrets, and a timorous thirst to put them to rest. Dawn miraculously survives the crash and in a moment of impulse, switches her travel route to Egypt where she had last seen Wyatt 15 years ago.

The book follows Dawn in her two lives, one in Boston—with Brian and their daughter, where a mask of comfort and predictability eclipses the slow yet permanent cracks forming in their marriage, and where her job as a death doula was never the first choice; and another in Middle Egypt—with Wyatt, where they were rivaling post-graduate students of Egyptology, unearthing wondrous history together and falling in love. Both her lives mirror each other in the most surreal, and an almost poetic manner.

In this latest novel, the author of the acclaimed *Small Great Things* (2016)—



DESIGN: SARAH ANJUM BARI

which is soon to be starred in by Viola Davis and Julia Roberts—discusses many interesting parallels: fate versus free will, science versus mythology, life and death, past and present, and growth and comfort, among a myriad of others. Picoult wonders if the laws of quantum physics are in fact splitting us into different versions of ourselves, each believing that the road taken is destined. She questions whether destiny is determined through choices alone or whether we are inevitably headed towards the same fate no matter what path we ultimately choose to follow.

This core question, and the book's title, is influenced by an ancient Egyptian coffin text known as *The Book of Two Ways*. This coffin text is said to be a map to the underworld which charts two possible routes, one by land and another by water. In Dawn's life, water represents her safe and familiar existence in Boston and land signifies lost opportunities: an incomplete love story and forgotten career aspirations in Egypt. Picoult uses quantum physics, Egyptology, the possibility of the existence of parallel worlds, and the philosophy of hospice to tell this multi-faceted story of loss, self-discovery, and the limits of love.

*The Book of Two Ways* does have the power to overwhelm your senses with

its assemblage of information and the heart-wrenching moral choices the characters are forced to make. But this is the signature Jodi Picoult we all love and appreciate. She asks quite simply, throughout the book: Who would you have been if you hadn't become who you are? Why am I alive when many others aren't? What is left unfinished?

In this Covid-ridden world, where death, unemployment, and lost opportunities have forced many of us to seek alternative paths for livelihood and happiness, there are perhaps no words more appropriate than a quote from Picoult's novel, "Ancient Egyptians believed that the first and most necessary ingredient in the universe was chaos. It could sweep you away, but it was also the place from which all things start anew." Perhaps 2021 is the start of something new for us too—an opportunity to revive abandoned dreams, heal from loss, rebuild from the rubble and ashes of a pandemic-ravaged world and start anew. A hopeful book is a good place to start.

Sameirah Nasrin Ahsan is a mechanical engineer in Dhaka. She aspires to be an author someday. For now, she is content with reading and sharing the stories that make her think beyond herself. Instagram: @booksnher.

**INTERVIEW**

# "Boi Mela-centric love for books poses obstacles for the publishing industry."

EMRAN MAHFUZ, TR. SHAH TAZRIAN ASHRAFI

Minar Mansur, the current director of the National Book Centre (Jatiya Grantha Kendro), was born on July 20, 1960 in the Barlia village of Chittagong. He studied at the University of Chittagong's Bangla department. Amidst the whirlwind of political instability that followed 1975, the poet and researcher published the anthology *Sheikh Mujib Ekti Lal Golap* (1979), and went on to edit *Autobiography of Shaheed Dhivendranath Dutt* (1995), *Neglected Heroes of the Liberation War* (2008), and *Society, Politics and Development of Bangladesh: Thoughts of Prominent People* (2010), among others.

During Bangabandhu's birth centenary year, Minar Mansur organised several book reading programmes, competitions, and library initiatives. Emran Mahfuz of Daily Star Books speaks to the director of the National Book Centre about his thoughts on the country's reading landscape.

**Emran Mahfuz, Daily Star Books (DSB): Readers and writers have been debating the pandemic-induced uncertainty over Boi Mela 2021. How would you evaluate our fair-centric enthusiasm for books?**

Minar Mansur (MM): We are very fortunate that so much creativity and publishing incentive has become inextricably linked with the spirit of *Ekushey*. As a result, a significant chunk of the publishers' annual activities are conducted around the book fair. However, in order for the publishing industry to thrive, it must shed its dependency on a single annual event; it must find ways to actively promote and publish books throughout the year like it does in February.

**DSB: What initiatives has the National Book Centre taken during your tenure to help the publishing industry?**

MM: First of all, I would like to say that this is a multidimensional and long-term work that is never possible for the government alone. It requires the concerted and sincere initiative of all parties concerned, including authors. Unfortunately, effective, well thought out, and far-sighted initiatives are still lacking.

The National Book Centre purchases books worth huge sums of money from publishers every year and distributes them to more than 800 private libraries as grants. Book fairs and book-centred activities are organised and encouraged at divisional and district levels. On an international scale, we have created opportunities for publishers to participate in festivals including the Frankfurt Book Fair and the Calcutta International Book Fair.

**DSB: Please tell us about the recently completed 'Pori Bangabandhu Boi Shonar Manush Hoi' initiative. What other plans does the NBC have in the near future?**



MM: Under such suffocating circumstances ushered in by the pandemic, we started the program on an experimental basis with 10 well known libraries in Dhaka. We encouraged school students to read Bangabandhu's *Unfinished Memoirs*. College students read the *Prison Diaries* and university students read *Amar Dehka Nayachin*.

Our target was to engage 150 students and we received far greater response than expected. After reading the books, the participants wrote their feedback, which was evaluated by professor Shamsuzzaman Khan, writer Selina Hossain, and Liberation War researcher Mofidul Haque. All three judges unanimously admitted that the assumption we often make about the youth not wanting to read books is not true. Lack of initiative seems to be the main reason behind their dimming interest in books.

In addition, 'salon libraries' are being established in 100 salons across the country under the objective of 'Mujib Shotoborshe Shoto Pathagar'. We are also working to run a book reading program across the country to fulfil the promise of 'Mujib Borshe Ongikar, Graame Graame Pathagar'.

**DSB: What roles can universities play in resolving the multidimensional crises in our state today?**

MM: When we started, there were only a handful of universities and their impact was felt all over the country. It was the universities that sustained our struggle for independence. Now there are more than 100 universities, but is there any space for enhanced research? Even in this Mujib year, has there been any significant research on the life and philosophy of Bangabandhu? Only the people associated with universities can say why a gap remains in that space.

**BOOKS BRIEFING**

## Book sales and review competitions mark the beginning of February 2021

**STAR BOOKS DESK**

In any other year, the beginning of February would normally be marked by the month-long Amar Ekushey Boi Mela which unfolds across the Bangla Academy and Suhrawardy Udyan grounds. With the fair starting on March 18, 2021 as per the last updates, due to coronavirus complications this year, bookstores and platforms from around the city are offering their own alternatives this month.

**Baatighar Ekushey Boi Utshab 2021:** Inaugurated by actor, politician, and activist Asaduzzaman Noor and author Anisul Hoque, Baatighar's book fair is scheduled to run every day until February 28, 10am to 10pm, at the bookstore's premises at Bishwa Shahittya Kendro, Bangla Motor, Dhaka. Locally published books will be available with a special discount of 25 to 40 percent.



**Courtside Boi Mela 2021:** Jointly organised by Chef's Table and online bookseller Rokomari.com, the fair will continue until February 14. The modest set up at Chef's Table Courtside includes stalls by Bookends, Boi Bichitra, Jamil's Comics & Collectibles, Rokomari.com, Ruhama Publications, Shomokaleen Prokashon, and popular children's publisher Mayurpankhi Publications, along with stationary by Pilot, Lotte, and Pentel Bangladesh.

Winners of the Chef's Table Courtside & Litmosphere Book Review Contest, which was taking submissions until January 30, will receive gift vouchers.

**Abul Mansur Ahmad Book Review Contest:** With the objective of reacquainting readers with the works of the renowned writer, journalist, and politician, the Abul Mansur Ahmad Smriti Parishad are hosting the competition until February 21. Submissions must be previously unpublished reviews of the books *Sher-e-Bangla Hoite Bangladesh-er Culture*, comprising 1,000-1,200 words in Bangla. Participants can post the submissions on the Abul Mansur Ahmad Facebook page or on their respective Facebook profiles—the caption must include #AbulMansurAhmad (in English and Bangla) and #BookReviewProtijogita (in Bangla). The reviews can also be emailed to amatrust2015@gmail.com. Top three winners will receive BDT 1,000-3,000.

**THE SHELF**

## South Asian pasts in books

**STAR BOOKS DESK**

History is made up of more than battle stories—the most riveting and nuanced of historical tales are those that touch upon the lives, experiences, and textures of the stories making up any region or civilization. The following books, published over the past few weeks and months, etch a history of Bengali and South Asian lives through the lenses of radio dispatches, food recipes, historical fiction, and research.



**SHUNCHEN SHWADIN BANGLA BETAR KENDRO 1971**  
Modhupok, Bangladesh  
Alamgir Kabir

Film director and activist Alamgir Kabir aired the first of his Shwadin Bangla Betar Kendro dispatches on the Bangladesh Liberation War on June 15, 1971. From then on until October 7, 1971, he continued to release radio dispatches that offered unflinching commentary on West Pakistan's genocide on East Pakistanis and on the geopolitical forces at play. First published in English as *This was Radio Bangladesh, 1971* (Bangla Academy, 1984), the dispatches are now for the first time available in Bangla, translated by Afzalur Rahman, Arastu Lenin Khan, Priom Pritim Pal, and Shamsuddoza Sajen, with an Introduction by Kamal Lohani. The collection has been edited by AKM Atikuzzaman, Tahmidal Jami, and Arost Lenin Khan.

**CARPUS MAHAL THEKE SHANTI CHUKTO: PARBOTTO CHATTOGRAM-E RASHTRIO NITIR ITIHASH**  
University Press Ltd (UPL), Bangladesh  
Anand Bikash Chakma

Comprising the product of years of research by Dr Anand Bikash Chakma, Associate Professor at the department of History, Chittagong University, the book explores the development of events in the Chittagong Hill Tracts region from the Mughal period to the British and Pakistani rule and its ongoing existence as part of Bangladesh.



**THE RUNAWAY BOY**  
Eka, Westland Publications, India  
Manoranjan Byapari

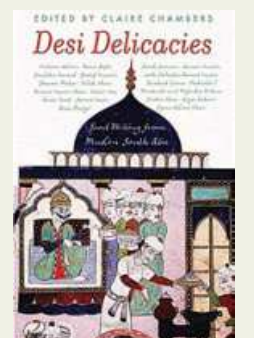
Manoranjan Byapari was born in Barisal, East Pakistan in the 1950s. He moved to West Bengal at the age of three, settled in refugee camps as a child, and became part of the Naxalite movement in his 20s, which landed him in jail. He taught himself to read while in prison, and upon gaining release, became a writer after a chance encounter with Mahasweta Devi while driving her rickshaw in Kolkata.

His latest novel, translated from the Bengali by renowned translator V Ramaswamy, begins in the marshlands of Barisal during Partition, and follows the turbulent lives of a family forced to migrate to West Bengal while suffering the caste prejudices imposed upon "Chandals".



**DESI DELICACIES**  
Pan Macmillan, India  
Claire Chambers

A professor of Global Literatures at the University of York, England, Chambers has written extensively on literary representations of Muslims in Britain and South Asia. Her new essay anthology—complete with mouth-watering recipes—explores the sentiments, relationships, and histories entrenched in South Asian Muslim cuisine.



## Plight of Rohingyas might worsen after Myanmar military coup

*The world must put pressure on Myanmar to protect Rohingyas from further violence*

THE United Nations' fear that the recent coup in Myanmar will worsen the plight of around 600,000 Rohingyas staying in the country must be taken seriously by the world. The Rohingyas in Myanmar have been living in constant fear as their basic rights are not ensured. Reportedly, among the 600,000 Rohingyas who remain in the Rakhine State, 120,000 are confined in camps. They have very limited access to basic healthcare and education and cannot even move freely. The 750,000 Rohingyas who fled to Bangladesh after having faced genocidal violence by the Myanmar army in 2017 have still been living in our refugee camps as the repatriation process could not be started. And now, with the Myanmar army taking control of the country and declaring a state of emergency, the future of the repatriation process seems very uncertain.

Amid such a situation, it is unfortunate that the United Nations Security Council members could not agree on a statement on the Myanmar coup although they should have sent a clear signal in support of democracy there. This has happened as China and Russia, Myanmar's two close allies, sought more time to give their opinion regarding the situation. During the Rohingya crisis in 2017, China always prevented the UNSC from issuing joint statements insisting that the brutal military crackdown on the Rohingyas was an internal issue of Myanmar. We hope China will stop doing the same now and act to solve the present crisis in the country.

We are more concerned about the changed situation in Myanmar because the coup might have a serious negative impact on the Rohingya repatriation process. Although not much progress was made in repatriating the Rohingyas while a civilian government was in power, with the military in power now, it might get worse. At this point, Bangladesh should request China to play its role in starting the repatriation process.

Most importantly, during this uncertain time in Myanmar, the safety and security of the Rohingyas living in the country must be ensured at all costs. Only last month, the Human Rights Watch (HRW) in its report described how the Rohingyas remaining in the Rakhine state were subjected to government persecution and violence. They are already suffering having been cut off from access to adequate food, healthcare, education, and livelihoods, and must be protected from facing further risk of violence. The world should do everything to protect their rights.

## Are sand lifters above the law?

*Attack on journalist is the latest in a long list of transgressions*

WE strongly protest the assault on Kamal Hossain, a correspondent of Bangla daily Sangbad in Sunamganj's Tahirpur upazila, who was beaten up for his attempts to collect information on illegal sand and stone extraction in the area. A video clip obtained by *The Daily Star* shows a traumatised Kamal tied to a tree at a local bazar, begging for mercy to his attackers. Four people were subsequently arrested in this connection. Kamal was reportedly investigating the activities of sand lifters on the banks of Jadukata, a transboundary river once famed for its scenic beauty which has now reportedly lost its navigability due to unchecked and unplanned extraction of sand and sand-mixed stone over the decades. Sand lifting has always been a major environmental challenge in the region. But the fact that nothing could stop it shows how powerful and unrelenting those involved with the business are.

In fact, the attack on Kamal Hossain is the latest in a long list of transgressions committed by these people. A June 2020 report by this paper highlights a trend that couldn't be broken despite judicial moratoriums on sand extraction and leasing out of sand quarries ("balumohal"), sporadic drives and arrests by officials, and protests by local residents. The report shows how the illegal activities resumed with renewed zeal after every drive, for which the local administration was no less responsible. The administration has either leased out new quarries or attempted to do so, enabled the operations of extraction parties in other ways, or simply looked the other way. This is despite a High Court ruling on June 3, 2010 terminating sand extraction in the Jadukata river "illegal". Activists say the impunity enjoyed by influential people involved with the business and the oft-complicit silence of the local administration are responsible for why sand extraction continues unabated, despite its devastating effect on the river.

Journalist Kamal Hossain is another casualty of this mindless drive for profits. We urge the government to take all measures necessary to ensure he gets justice. Equally importantly, the government must take decisive action against sand extraction in line with the High Court ruling, and hold to account officials who fail to uphold it. We understand that the sand of a river may need to be dredged for navigability purposes, but that must be done in a planned manner, and only after proper hydrographic surveys. Dredging or sand/stone lifting for private gains must not be allowed under any pretext.



A CLOSER LOOK

TASNEEM TAYER

THE United Nations has rightly expressed fears that the recent military coup in Myanmar would exacerbate the plight of the Rohingyas still remaining in the country. "There are about 600,000 Rohingyas those that remain in Rakhine State, including 120,000 people who are effectively confined to camps; they cannot move freely and have extremely limited access to basic health and education services," said UN spokesperson Stephane Dujarric.

While the recent episode of Rohingya genocide was unleashed during the regime of the democratically elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi in 2017, which led to the exodus of more than 700,000 Rohingyas to Bangladesh after having endured unspeakable horrors, the seizing of power by the military—who will have no accountability either to the people or to the international community—is likely to make life worse for those who had remained behind.

The Myanmar military, which ruled over the country for fifty years till 2011, has a track record of taking brutal and atrocious measures to suppress dissent and public calls for democratic rule. One may recall that in 1998, it carried out a massacre of thousands of people—including students, Buddhist monks, community leaders and civilians in

*The Myanmar military, which ruled over the country for fifty years till 2011, has a track record of taking brutal and atrocious measures to suppress dissent and public calls for democratic rule.*

general—who had called for a transition to democracy, in a stark reminder of the ruthlessness that the military is capable of. During the massacre, the military not only killed the protesters but also healthcare professionals—doctors and nurses—who had been treating the wounded at the Rangoon General Hospital, as reported by Human Rights Watch.

And this time, although Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD) party, in anticipation of a coup (since

to the second quarter of the year. "We pushed [sic] to initiate the repatriation in the first quarter, but Myanmar sought more time for logistical arrangements and some physical arrangements. So we asked to start repatriation in the second quarter, and they agreed on it," Bangladesh's Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen said with regard to the agreement.

In a statement issued late last year, Bangladesh's Ministry of Foreign Affairs added, "Myanmar has made all necessary arrangements for the repatriation and

inhumane conditions.

In view of the current realities and the history of Myanmar military's torture of the Rohingya and pro-democratic civilians, Bangladesh's responsibility in the repatriation process has only increased manifold. Bangladesh has embraced with open arms the hundreds and thousands of desperate Rohingyas fleeing into the country since 2017, and has sheltered and hosted them ever since. Even in the face of waning donor support over the years, Bangladesh has been proactive in providing shelter to these refugees.

While the international community has praised Bangladesh's generosity towards the Rohingya refugees, they have done little to ensure their safe repatriation back to their homeland. Now with the military in power, the international community can do even less in this regard. Bangladesh, however, as the host of the Rohingya, must now be more vigilant in its repatriation discussions and processes with the new Myanmar government. While it needs to push for the Myanmar government to take back the Rohingya as per the previous agreement—from the second quarter of 2021—it also needs to make sure that policies and mechanisms are in place to monitor how the Rohingyas are treated once they are taken back.

Myanmar taking the Rohingyas back only to detain them in squalid camps remains a possibility, one that Bangladesh must ensure does not happen once the new government there starts the repatriation process.

The United Nations and the greater international community must support Bangladesh in this. China and Russia, and even ASEAN countries, are unlikely to allow the UN to take any proactive measures against Myanmar. Given India's economic ties with Myanmar and their joint military efforts to counter insurgency in the shared border regions, India is also unlikely to come to Bangladesh's aid in this regard. The new Biden administration now needs to step up and take leadership in pushing the Myanmar government to not only take back its own people but also to ensure that they can return to their homes in a safe environment and that their rights as citizens are ensured.

The Rohingyas have suffered the pain and trauma of genocide. The least we can do is to make sure they go back to their homeland with dignity and safety.

Tasneem Tayer is a columnist for *The Daily Star*. Her Twitter handle is: @TayerTasneem



File photo of Rohingya refugees walking along an embankment after fleeing from Myanmar into Palang Khali, near Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, on November 2, 2017.

PHOTO: REUTERS/HANNAH MCKAY

trouble had been brewing between NLD and the military for some time), called for the nation to resist it, the Myanmar people have not come out on the streets to rise up against the autocratic usurpers of power.

Given the history of the Myanmar military against their own people, one can only wonder how things would turn out for the already persecuted Rohingya minority.

This is a concern for Bangladesh more than any other country. First of all, the sudden shift in power in Myanmar has pushed its Rohingya repatriation agreement with the country into uncertain grounds. It was recently agreed upon by Myanmar to start repatriation of the Rohingyas back to the country in June 2021. Bangladesh wanted the repatriation to start from March 2021, but due to Myanmar's request, it had been delayed

reaffirmed Myanmar's readiness to receive the verified displaced persons in line with the bilateral agreements."

Now with the hardline Myanmar military taking full control of the power, one wonders if Myanmar would keep its part of the commitment. Even if the military agrees to take the Rohingyas refugees back, Bangladesh will have to be more watchful to make sure that the Rohingyas being taken back, if at all, are given their due rights and the protection they deserve.

Even under the NLD, swathes of land in Rakhine State and many Rohingya villages had been demolished to erase the existence of any Rohingya settlement there, and of course, to make space for the special economic zones. And many of the Rohingyas still in Myanmar are being detained in camps in Rakhine State under

## Municipal Polls: Tales of Two Candidates



ABDUL MATIN

like Eid, New Year and Independence Day as preparations for contesting an election. As the polling date approaches, they become more active. They wear a smiley face, address people very politely whenever they meet them. They print attractive posters seeking votes and visit voters house-to-house posing as their admirers and close friends. They organise processions and public meetings in support of their candidacy.

The candidates promise to build roads, bridges, schools, colleges, water supply systems, sanitation and draining facilities... basically anything conceivable for the benefit of the voters. They open temporary offices where they entertain prospective voters with tea and cigarettes. For most party workers, it is an opportunity to earn a few bucks as the candidates pay them handsomely for their services. Needless to say, electioneering in our country has become an expensive affair. As a result, mostly the rich people can afford to contest elections.

Even in festive moods, untoward incidents also do occur during elections. There are occasional clashes between rival candidates and their supporters, often resulting in injuries and even deaths. Occasionally, polling agents are driven out of the polling centres on the election day by supporters of the rival candidates. Thus we see both money and muscle play decisive roles in most elections in our region. As a result, honest people who have no money or muscle power hardly get an opportunity to contest the elections.

A similar situation is now prevailing in the ongoing municipal elections in Bangladesh, perhaps with very few exceptions. Two stories will illustrate this point. First, it has been reported that a candidate named Jamal (not his real name) recently contested in a municipal

election for the position of councillor but failed miserably. Out of frustration, he went to a pond close to his home early in the morning and dived seven times in the cold water. While diving, he was holding his ears with his two hands in front of the media and some local people. After each dive, he shouted loudly, "I promise I shall never contest any election."

Later, he explained his reasons. He said: "I am an honest man and I wanted to serve my people sincerely. I became a

honest and sincere people take Jamal's advice seriously and abstain from contesting future elections, what will be the character of public representation in our country? What will our leaders deliver to the people if only candidates with money and muscle power are elected to hold important positions in local bodies and parliament?"

Now here is a different story to indicate that the future may not be as scary as depicted above. It has been



ILLUSTRATION: THE SEATTLE TIMES

candidate hoping that the people would vote for me because of my honesty and sincerity. Initially, everybody in my locality supported me. I thought I would easily win but a day before the election, the whole scenario changed dramatically. All my supporters deserted me because a rival candidate bought all of my supporters by paying them handsomely. Consequently, I lost to him. Now I have realised that no honest person can win an election unless he also spends lavishly on buying votes. So I promised never to contest any election in the future, and I would advise all honest people to do the same."

Knowing the present culture of elections in our country, this story seems to be authentic and it terrifies us. If all

reported that one beggar was contesting an election for the councillor position in a municipality. Let us call him Zahed, not his real name. He is a real beggar in the sense that he actually begs for alms. Irony is, during elections, all candidates beg for votes but we do not call them beggars! Zahed was a day labourer during his early life. He is now 70 years old and unable to work. So he became a beggar to meet his family expenses. He organised other beggars in his locality and formed a Beggars' Association of which he became the chairman. (Begging, by the way, is not a respectable profession and should be discouraged. Some people are, however, forced to beg as there is no effective and comprehensive system to rehabilitate them.)

Zahed is well-known as an honest person. His fellow beggars inspired him to contest the election. Initially, he was hesitant as he had no money to contest the election. The people in his locality came to help him. They contributed whatever they could to meet his election expenses. Tk 100, 200 or 300. His wife also came to his aid. She prepared tea for his supporters who came to visit him. He reportedly became a popular candidate. His arguments were simple but very convincing. He said that he was a beggar and he had been poor all through his life. So he understood the sufferings of the poor people which no well-to-do candidate could. Marginalised people like Zahed live in slums in very unhygienic conditions without proper roads, sanitation, water supply and drainage systems. A candidate like him is thus better suited to solve their problems.

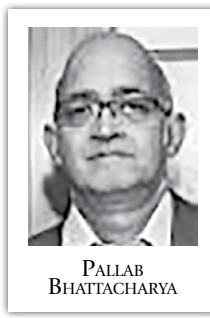
Zahed's candidature is a unique case in our country. He had no money and no muscle power and yet he was contesting an election with the support of fellow beggars and the local people. To say the least, this is democracy in its best form. It is not known if he won the election but his candidacy itself is a giant step forward toward the empowerment of the marginalised people. One can only hope to see more candidates like him in future elections, both at local and national levels.

According to one estimate, most of the current members of our parliament (over 61 percent) belong to the business community. The voices of the marginalised people are, therefore, rarely heard in parliament even though they form the vast majority of our population. Their problems and grievances remain mostly unresolved. Their voices will be louder if marginalised people like farmers, day labourers, domestic workers, garment and factory workers and rickshaw pullers find their way to all public offices in our country. Surely they can do this if they can unite and organise themselves, like the supporters of Zahed. Their journey to power may be long and arduous but if they can accomplish this, they will be a major driving force to realise Bangabandhu's dream of emancipation of the downtrodden people of our country.

Dr Abdul Matin is a retired nuclear engineer and former Dr. Rashid Chair Professor of BUET.



# Indian farmer protests: A daunting challenge for Modi government



**T**HE biggest political challenge that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government faces right now is the agitation on the outskirts of Delhi by farmers coming mainly from Punjab, Haryana and western part of Uttar Pradesh. The protest by thousands of farmers has already entered its third month, and there is no sign of a resolution even after eleven rounds of talks between the protesters and the government. Both sides are firmly entrenched in their respective position on the fate of the three new contentious agricultural laws piloted by the Modi government as one of its bold reform initiatives.

While the farmer unions insist on total repeal of the laws, the government has offered to make changes in the legislation to address their concerns, an offer that the unions lost no time in rejecting. What's more worrying for the government is that the farmers are intensifying their agitation and have threatened to block highways across India on February 4 to press their demand. Desperate to end the protest which has already set off churning within a section of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its ideological mentor Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the government had offered to put the three laws on hold for 18 months to allow more discussions on the issue. But it did not work as the protesters apparently took it as a sign of its defensive posture. The offer to suspend the laws was made after taking a cue from a suggestion made earlier by the Supreme Court. The apex court's proposal to appoint an expert panel to study the laws was seen as "a face saver" for the government, but some have also called it a "judicial overreach".

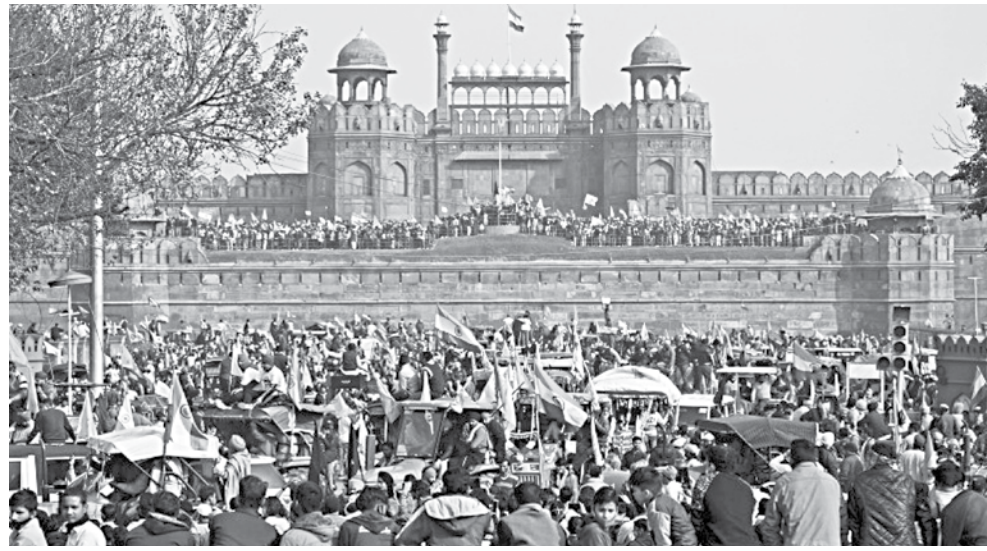
The agitation, which had been peaceful for the first two months, took a violent turn on January 26 when the farmers riding tractors smashed through security barricades and entered the Indian capital from various points. The most serious part of the violence was the protesters storming the Red Fort, an iconic Mughal-era landmark, and the hoisting of

a religious flag at the ramparts from where the prime minister addresses the nation on Independence Day on August 15 every year. There have been allegations and counter-allegations from both sides, but there is no doubt that the violence came as a setback to the farmers who were hit by a rift as two of the 40-odd unions of farmers pulled out of the agitation. A number of national and regional farm unions, with separate leaders, have come under the umbrella banner of Samyukt Kisan Morchha for the ongoing agitation. However, the protest by the other unions not only continues but the number of protesters also appears to be swelling.

The three new laws in question are: The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement on Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, and The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act. The farmers' contention is that the laws will lead to the creation of private mandis (village markets for selling crops) which, along with the state-run Agriculture Produce Market Committees (APMC), will push all agriculture businesses towards private markets. This, they argue, will end the existing government markets and intermediary (commission agents) mechanism for procurement and allow large, financially powerful traders and corporate houses operating in the markets to procure farm produce at "incidental" prices.

The farmers also want the federal government to provide the legal guarantee of a minimum support price (MSP) for their crops by introducing a new law. Another key contention of the farmers is that since the state governments will not be able to collect market fee, cess (a form of tax) or levy for trade outside the APMC markets, the laws will make them vulnerable to corporates which might exploit them. On the other hand, the government has proposed that there will be a uniform policy of taxes, fee and cess for both government and private markets. But the farmers are distrustful of that, claiming the government would delay procurement and turn the public markets inefficient.

In Punjab and Haryana, the commission agents and farmers enjoy a relationship developed over the decades under the existing system of crop procurement. On an average, at least 50-100 farmers are attached to each



File photo of Indian farmers demonstrating against three new agricultural laws at the historic Red Fort in New Delhi, on January 26, 2021.

PHOTO: AFP/SAJJAD HUSSAIN

agent who takes care of farmers' financial loans and ensures procurement and prices for their crops. Farmers are apprehensive that the new laws will do away with these agents and have them replaced by corporate houses that may not help them in their hour of need—for example, in cases not related to farming such as marriage in the family or house construction. Inherent in this is the fear of the new and the uncertainties that inevitably come with any change.

A majority of the protesting farmers are from Punjab where the ruling Congress party and main opposition party Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) have already shown their support to the farmers. According to a study by Punjab Agricultural University, there are more than 1.2 million farming families in Punjab and 28,000 registered commission agents. A large part of Punjab's political economy relies on funds infused by federal and state-owned procurement agencies that buy a major portion of wheat and rice grown in the state. In the 2019-2020 rabi crop season, Punjab supplied 129.1 lakh tonnes of the 341.3 lakh tonnes' wheat procured for the federal government's pool.

A sizable number of the protesters are also from neighbouring Haryana state, ruled by BJP, where the party is in a catch-22 situation.

To enter Delhi, farmers from Punjab have to cross through Haryana but the state government has failed to prevent the swelling crowds of protesters coming to Delhi from Rajasthan and Punjab, the two states ruled by the Congress. Had the BJP foiled the farmers' journey through its territory, it might have given rise to a serious law and order situation, something the saffron party can ill-afford.

A question that is often asked is why farmers in other Indian states are not hitting the streets in support of their colleagues in Punjab and Haryana. There is no APMC Act in at least 15 Indian states, and nearly 18 states allow private markets and direct purchase from farmers by private corporate houses. It is estimated, therefore, that the three farm laws are expected to make a difference only in some states and chiefly in respect of cereal crops and onion because most of the vegetables are already out of the purview of APMC markets.

In pushing through the farm laws, Narendra Modi's BJP government followed up on its economic agenda, which revolves around market economy, as vigorously as it pursued its political-ideological agenda of scrapping the special constitutional status of Kashmir and criminalising instant triple *talaq* as a step towards a uniform civil code. According to the government, the idea behind the three laws is

to liberalise the farm markets in the hope that doing so would make the whole system more efficient and allow farmers to get more options to sell their crops and thereby stand a chance to earn a more remunerative price.

India's progressive deregulation of the farm sector envisages a shift from input subsidies and procurement regimes like MSP to income support and facilitation of greater private investment in agriculture, which badly requires fund infusion particularly to build cold chain infrastructure and other forms of value addition and join the global food supply chain that remains insulated from disruptions like Covid-19. This is also a foreign policy objective strongly advocated by the Modi government in its outreach to major countries like the US, Japan and Australia. According to an official estimate, India's share in global food markets stands at 2.3 percent. The efforts to make India a key link in the global food supply chain by becoming a major food exporter need a major investment in agriculture.

As the budget session of parliament progresses, the opposition is gearing up to corner the government on the issues of farm laws and the unrelenting protests by farmers at Delhi's borders. And with many parties including regional outfits and some BJP allies—some of which have clout in rural areas—rallying behind the farmers, the government has its task cut out.

The RSS' call to the government to be sensitive in handling the farmers' agitation has drawn murmurs of discontent in a section of the BJP that feels that the issue could have been handled more tactfully. One view is that since the government is ready to put the three laws on hold for one and a half years for facilitating more talks with the farmers' unions, this could have been done before the bills containing the laws were introduced in parliament last year, or that they could have been referred to a select committee once the objections were flagged, which would have weakened opposition to the laws. On the other hand, the farmers would do well to show flexibility, an ingredient inherent in cross-the-table negotiations, for any resolution to be reached.

Pallab Bhattacharya is a special correspondent for The Daily Star. He writes from New Delhi, India.

## 100 years on, DU needs a conducive research environment

HASEENA KHAN and ZEBIA ISLAM SERAJ

**I**N a recent webinar titled "History of the University of Dhaka and Higher Education in Bangladesh", organised in connection with the celebration of 100 years of Dhaka University, the discussion on the importance of research came up in all the presentations. The necessity of generous funding for research to address the challenges of the 21st century was highlighted by every speaker. Mahfuz Anam, editor of *The Daily Star*, stressed that together with funding what was important was a research environment. We could not agree more. However, a research environment to us holds a different meaning than what we understood was implied by Mr Anam. The lack of freedom to do research on a subject of one's choice is the main constraint in providing a conducive research environment. For us, a research environment for science holds a different meaning. Let us explain.

A university teacher has to take between 4-6 theory classes per week and at least 2-4 practical classes. Then there are round-the-year midterm exams, formative tests, the course finals together with grading the tests/exams. Also to keep pace with the dynamics of new developments, especially in the field of biological science, one has to be up-to-date with all the recent advances so that when teaching, the students are kept at par. At the end of the day, a serious researcher is left with little time to read, plan and conduct research. Let's not cite examples of teachers who do not even take regular classes, let alone do research.

We understand that we cannot expect to have teaching assistants as most universities in the developed countries do. However, what we can at least hope for is a conducive research environment. To us, a research environment means having enabling policies in place that would allow us to carry out



The Curzon Hall building in Dhaka University.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

research without having to deal with all the hassles we face. Biological research in Bangladesh depends mostly on the import of perishable items, many of which are shipped on dry ice and have to be cleared from the airports almost immediately. For purchase of such chemicals, researchers have to rely on vendors who, through participation in the RFQ (request for quotation) or tender, get the purchase order.

There are two problems associated with this. Firstly, this is a long-drawn-out process and takes months in the best-case scenarios, and now with Covid-19, it is taking twice as long, if not more. If a forgetful student does not notify when s/he has used up the last lot of a reagent, then further research on the

same has to wait for the fresh import to arrive, which with the tendering system and the shipment time could very well require almost four months under normal conditions. For meaningful research, this is a big obstacle. Dhaka University could have a "Cell" which would deal with the system of direct purchase. The government should make provisions allowing direct payment to foreign companies by the university. This would reduce the time needed in the lengthy process of tendering. In addition, if Dhaka University is allowed to make such transactions, then the price of the reagents would come down, since public universities are reimbursed the CD/VAT imposed on the imported chemicals.

In this regard, it may also be pointed out

that instead of reimbursement of the VAT/Tax, Dhaka University, or all public universities for that matter, should be exempted from paying the same. Assessing the amount of the taxes requires a good number of days during which the perishable items sitting at the airport get their shelf life reduced drastically—that is, if they retain any activity at all. Individual departments should have a post for an MS holder who would coordinate the needs of the faculty regarding research material with the "Cell". A post for communication and networking of the departments, the "Cell", the government, news media and industry would help to coordinate and disseminate research findings.

Dhaka University should also have technically skilled, knowledgeable engineers, the real ones, who are capable of addressing the breakdowns of high-end equipment. At the end of most projects, there is usually no money for maintenance of equipment purchased during the project. We know of a few such expensive equipment that broke down after the project had ended and were never repaired. For a faculty member, it could seem like the end of the world to have a machine break down on you and to have an important experiment stop short. Uninterrupted supply of electricity is another prerequisite for a conducive research environment. Erratic flow of electric currents leads to breakdown of sensitive machines, especially those running round the clock like a -80°C freezer. When this happens, biological samples stored at such ultra-low temperatures have to be immediately transferred to another freezer (finding a suitable freezer is a big challenge because such freezers are not something that most departments of institutes have aplenty). If this happens overnight or during a few

days of holidays at a stretch, many valuable samples are lost. A nightmare for researchers indeed.

For the creation of a suitable research environment, Dhaka University should also have PhD fellowships. We need our talented young minds to do their PhDs in our country, in our institutions. However, without a handsome fellowship, we will never be able to compete with North America, Europe or the Oceania in retaining our best. Most importantly, local PhDs with good publications from their PhD research should get preference when competing with foreign-degree holders for jobs in Bangladesh. Another aspect which has turned into a big concern for researchers is the large sum of money required to publish in good journals. Dhaka University can establish central funds for this purpose which they can pay through the "Cell". Also, if institutional membership is established, then discounted publication fees can be expected for some journals.

Even teachers most passionate about research would want to be spared the headache of going through the intricacies of purchase, timely arrival of chemicals, smooth functioning of most equipment, etc. Added to this is the lack of appreciation of the PhDs they produce. This, on top of their load of teaching, writing research proposals, reports and manuscripts for publication in reputed journals, could be hugely taxing. These are some reasons why most teachers shy away from such a labour of love. But 100 years on, it is about time Dhaka University understood what it takes to conduct world-class research and formulated the right policies for creating an encouraging research environment.

Haseena Khan and Zebia Islam Seraj are scientists who teach at the Department of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology, Dhaka University.

**QUOTABLE Quote**

**WILLIAM WORDSWORTH**  
(April 7, 1770 - April 23, 1850)  
English Romantic poet

*Wisdom is oftentimes nearer when we stoop than when we soar.*

**CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH**

**ACROSS**

- 1 Sow's mate
- 5 Demonic
- 9 Film category
- 10 Power provider
- 12 Indian, for one
- 13 Silly
- 14 Lifter's burden
- 16 "Life of Pi" director
- 17 - Darya (Asian river)
- 18 List of carried goods
- 20 Refuses
- 22 Tampa team
- 23 "Battlestar Galactica" role
- 25 Racket
- 28 Some beers
- 32 Compact dog
- 34 Old auto
- 35 Tiny worker
- 36 Steeping gadget
- 38 Knucklehead
- 40 Patriotic river
- 41 Audacity
- 42 "Baby, - Your Loving"
- 43 Bring up
- 44 Says further

**DOWN**

- 1 Turned into
- 2 Minimal baseball lead
- 3 Saudi native
- 4 Made fresh
- 5 Polite Post
- 6 Part of many
- 7 Milano's land
- 8 Feeling friendless
- 9 Turn
- 11 Film units
- 15 Louisiana explorer
- 19 Be boastful
- 21 Poetic foot
- 24 Quinine's target
- 25 Andorra neighbor
- 26 Fireplace bit
- 27 Duds
- 29 Made blank
- 30 Depends
- 31 Did shoe work
- 33 Say
- 37 Role for Craig
- 39 Eggs, to Caesar

WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO [dsopinion@gmail.com](mailto:dsopinion@gmail.com).

**BEETLE BAILEY**

**BY MORT WALKER**

**BABY BLUES**

**BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT**

**YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS**

B	A	B	A	R	A	P	T		
E	V	A	N	S	I	S	A	I	D
L	A	T	T	E	S	I	D	L	E
L	I	T	T	R	E	A	D	L	E
A	L	L	S	T	A	R	L	E	D
S	E	W	E	D	H	E	R	S	
C	A	R	S	A	W				
F	I	R	M	B	A	T	H	S	
E	M	U	S	U	N	S	E	T	S
E	P	I	S	O	D	E	S	E	R
L	A	S	E	R	S	A	L	A	D
S	L	E	P	T	T	H	E	T	A
A	R	T	S						

# Daily rate drops below 3 percent

FROM PAGE 12  
 An indication of how widespread the infection is in the area where testing is occurring and whether levels of testing are keeping up with levels of disease transmission, according to John Hopkins University.  
 A high percentage of positive cases means that more testing should probably be done and it suggests that it is not a good time to relax restrictions aimed at reducing coronavirus transmission.  
 As a rule of thumb, the positivity rate is thought to be "too high" if it is more than five percent.  
 In May, the World Health Organization recommended that the positivity rate should be below five percent for at least two weeks before governments considered reopening.  
 Referring to the WHO, the Health Minister Zahid Maleque said on Tuesday, "The positivity rate has been near three percent for many days. We are in a good situation and we have to try maintaining it."  
 Mushtuq Hussain, consultant of the

Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) told The Daily Star yesterday, "The current positivity rate doesn't mean the transmission is under control. In fact, community transmission is ongoing and it may go up anytime as like as we observed in many countries."  
 He said there is no alternative to wearing masks, washing hands frequently and maintain physical distance.  
 Prof Ridwanur Rahman, an infectious disease specialist also echoed him.  
 With the latest figure, the total number of confirmed cases rose to 536,545, according to the press release.  
 And the total number of deaths reached 8,162 which is 1.52 percent of all confirmed cases.  
 In those 24 hours, a total of 578 Covid-19 patients recovered from their illnesses, raising the total number of recoveries to 481,306.  
 With this, the recovery rate stands at 89.70 percent.  
 Among the 13 deceased, 11 were males.

# 4 homeopathy shop owners

FROM PAGE 12  
 people in different places of the town died since last Saturday after consuming poisonous liquor collected from the homeopathy shops," said Humayan Kabir, officer-in-charge of Bogura Sadar Police Station.  
 Monower Hosain Ripon, 42, brother of a person who has fallen ill after drinking the toxic liquor filed the case accusing four owners of local homeopathy shops on Tuesday.  
 The accused are Shahinur Rahman Shahin, 42, owner of Khan Homeo Herbal, Nur Mohammad, 65, supervisor of Punam and Parul Homeo Laboratories, Nurnabi, 58, owner of Parul Homeo Lab and Nur Islam, 60, owner of Punam Homeo Lab.  
 Nur Islam, Nur Mohammad and Nurnabi are siblings, said police.  
 Police arrested Nurnabi, 58, Md Abdul Khalek, 55, owner of the Moon Homeo hall in Gallapatri area, Md Abu Jewel, 55, a staffer of Hasan Homeo and Shahidul Islam Sabur, 55, proprietor of Korotoa Homeo and Laboratories Private Limited, Bogura.  
 OC Humayan said the arrestees were sent to court yesterday afternoon with an appeal for seven days' remand for each and that the Bogura court granted two days' remand for each of the arrestees.  
 Police arrested them after conducting drives since February 1, said OC Humayan

Kabir.  
 The arrestees admitted that they use to sell rectified spirit to the local consumers, said Ali Asraf Bhuiyan, superintendent of police, Bogura.  
 "We have conducted drives in three homeo laboratories [Parul, Moon and Korotoa] today [Wednesday] and recovered some other chemical as well as rectified spirit. We are examining the chemicals," said Faisal Mahmud, additional superintendent of police (Bogura Sadar circle).  
 "We have learnt from deceased family members, locals, and people undergoing treatment at hospital that the arrestees and the accused homeopathy labs used to mix other chemicals like methanol with the rectified spirit and sell alcohol to consumers," said the ASP.  
 When contacted, Md Shareful Islam Mollah, assistant director of the Bogura drug administration, said, "Khan Homeopath has licence to sell homeopathic medicine. They have no right sell rectified spirit."  
 On the other hand, Punam and Parul homeo labs cannot even keep rectified spirit as they did not renew their licences to import rectified spirit to manufacture homeopathic medicine since 2005 and 2015 respectively, Shareful said.  
 "We will cancel their licence and applications for renewal," said the assistant director.



Onions spilled over an open space in Dinajpur's Gor-e-Shaheed Boromath area as those, supplied by Trade Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB), were rotten from before. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: KONGKON KARKAMER

# Bangladesh moves four notches up

FROM PAGE 1  
 weaknesses are more prevalent than in flawed democracies – in political culture, functioning of government and political participation," the report mentioned as definition of hybrid regime.  
 "Corruption tends to be widespread and the rule of law is weak. Civil society is weak. Typically, there is harassment of and pressure on journalists, and the judiciary is not independent," the definition further said.  
 Bangladesh scored 5.99, out of 10, this year to be ranked 76th among 165 countries and two territories. Last year, Bangladesh ranked 80th with 5.88 points among the same number of states and territories.  
 Among six South Asian countries covered in the report, India and Sri Lanka are ahead of Bangladesh while Pakistan, Bhutan and Nepal are behind. India slipped down two notches on the index compared to previous year, while Nepal remained static and four other countries recorded improvement.  
 This is the 13th edition of the Democracy Index, which began in 2006. It records how global

democracy fared in 2020. It provides a snapshot of the state of democracy in 165 independent states and two territories.  
 The index is formed based on five categories: electoral process and pluralism, the functioning of government, political participation, political culture, and civil liberties.  
 Based on its scores on a range of indicators within these categories, each country is then itself classified as one of four types of regime: "full democracy", "flawed democracy", "hybrid regime" or "authoritarian regime".  
**WORST GLOBAL SCORE SINCE 2006**  
 As recorded in the Democracy Index in recent years, democracy has not been in robust health for some time.  
 Last year, its strength was further tested by the Covid-19 pandemic. The average global score in the 2020 Democracy Index fell to 5.37, down from 5.44 in 2019.  
 This is by far the worst global score since the index was first produced in 2006.  
 In 2020, a large majority of countries, 116 of a total of 167 (almost 70 percent), recorded

a decline in their total score compared with 2019. Only 38 (22.6 percent) recorded an improvement and the other 13 stagnated, with their scores remaining unchanged compared with 2019.  
 According to the report, only about half (49.4 percent) of the world's population live in a democracy of some sort, and even fewer (8.4 percent) reside in a "full democracy"; this level is up from 5.7 percent in 2019, as several Asian countries have been upgraded.  
 More than one-third of the world's population live under authoritarian rule, with a large share being in China.  
 In the 2020 Index, 75 of the 167 countries and territories covered by the model, or 44.9 percent of the total, are considered to be democracies.  
 The number of "full democracies" increased to 23 in 2020, up from 22 in 2019. The number of "flawed democracies" fell by two, to 52.  
 Of the remaining 92 countries in the Index, 57 are "authoritarian regimes", up from 54 in 2019, and 35 are classified as "hybrid regimes", down from 37 in 2019.

# Weak co-op a major barrier

FROM PAGE 12  
 global economy.  
 A WHO team searching for clues about the virus's origins went to the Wuhan Institute of Virology, one of the most-watched stops on a politically sensitive trip to the central Chinese city where the virus was first detected.  
 Peter Daszak, one of the experts, tweeted that the team had an "extremely important meeting today with staff" and a "frank, open discussion."  
 Nevertheless, top WHO officials, including members of the team, have played down the chances of finding definitive answers on the trip, including how the virus jumped from animals to

humans.  
 "It is very unlikely that (on) such a short mission, (we) would have a very advanced understanding or definite answers" about the origins of the virus, WHO team member Hung Nguyen-Viet told AFP from Wuhan.  
 Saudi Arabia on Tuesday suspended entry from 20 countries, ranging from some neighbouring states to the United States, in a bid to curb a jump in coronavirus infections.  
**SPUTNIK V BOOST**  
 Hopes for ending the pandemic were boosted by the publication of final-stage trial results showing that Russia's Sputnik V vaccine is 91.6 percent effective against symptomatic Covid-19 cases.

# Trump lawyers, Democrats spar

FROM PAGE 12  
 "There is no 'January Exception' to impeachment or any other provision of the Constitution," they wrote. "Presidents do not get a free pass to commit high crimes and misdemeanors near the end of their term."  
 The Democratic-led House impeached Trump on January 13 on a single charge of inciting insurrection with his speech to supporters before the attack. He is the first US president to be impeached twice and the first to face trial after leaving office.  
 "It would be perverse to suggest that our shared commitment to free speech requires the Senate to ignore the obvious: that President Trump is singularly responsible for the violence and destruction that unfolded in our seat of government on January 6," the

Democrats wrote.  
 Trump's defense team argued that not only does the Senate lack the authority to put Trump on trial but that the chamber also has no jurisdiction to prevent him from holding office again.  
 The Constitution states that conviction can lead to "removal from Office, and disqualification to hold and enjoy any Office of honor, Trust or Profit under the United States."  
 "The 45th President of the United States performed admirably in his role as president, at all times doing what he thought was in the best interests of the American people," Trump's defense team said.  
**'STOP THE STEAL'**  
 During his January 6 speech, Trump repeated false claims that the election was fraudulent and

exhorted supporters to march on the Capitol, telling them to "stop the steal," "show strength" and "fight like hell."  
 The rampage interrupted the formal congressional certification of Democratic President Joe Biden's victory, sent lawmakers into hiding for their own safety and left five people dead including a police officer.  
 "President Trump's conduct offends everything that the Constitution stands for," the House lawmakers, known as impeachment managers, wrote in their 80-page brief.  
 "He summoned a mob to Washington, exhorted them into a frenzy, and aimed them like a loaded cannon down Pennsylvania Avenue. As the Capitol was overrun, President Trump was reportedly 'delighted,'" they said.

# Prosecution seeks capital

FROM PAGE 12  
 Arafat Rahman Siam and Shafiur Rahman Farabi.  
 Law enforcers are looking for Maj (sacked) Zia and Akram.  
 Earlier, 28 prosecution witnesses, including Avijit's father Prof Ajoy Roy, who passed away on December 9, 2019, gave depositions before the tribunal.  
 On February 26, 2015, US-based Bangladeshi blogger Avijit Roy and his wife Rafida Ahmed Bonya were hacked near the TSC of Dhaka University by a gang of assailants when the couple was walking out of the Ekushey Boi Mela around 8:30pm.

Prof Ajoy filed the murder case accusing unidentified assailants with Shahbagh Police Station the next day.  
 Bonya is now living in the United States. She suffered severe injuries when she tried to protect her husband from the attackers.  
 Inspector Muhammad Monirul Islam of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit of police submitted the charge sheet to the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate Court in Dhaka on March 11, 2019.  
 On August 1 that year, the Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunal of Dhaka framed charges against the six accused.

# Punishment should be enhanced

FROM PAGE 12  
 The bench made the observation during hearing a bail petition of SM Shoabul Kabir, convict of a case filed against nine executives of Bismillah Group for laundering Tk 15.33 crore.  
 A Dhaka court on September 10, 2018, sentenced them to 10 years' rigorous imprisonment each in the case.  
 The convicts include Bismillah Group Managing Director Khaza Solaiman Anwar Chowdhury, his wife, and the chairperson of Bismillah Group Nowrin Hasib,

Shafiqul Anwar Chowdhury, Akbar Aziz Muttakin, Abul Hashem Chowdhury, Riazuddin Ahmed, and Akbar Hossain.  
 Of the convicts, Mustaque Ahmed Khan and SM Shoabul Kabir are now in jail and the rest are on the run.  
 Yesterday, the HC bench refused to grant bail to Shoabul Kabir and said it would hold a hearing on his appeal challenging the trial court verdict on him, Anti-Corruption Commission's lawyer Hassan MS Azim told The Daily Star.

He said no lawyer appealed for Shoabul Kabir yesterday.  
 Lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan informed the HC that the highest punishment under the Money Laundering Prevention Act is 12 years' imprisonment.  
 Deputy Attorney General AKM Amin Uddin Manik told this correspondent that the HC bench, earlier in February, last year, directed the authorities to arrest the absconding convicts of the case, and accordingly, a red alert has been issued against them.

**গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার**  
**নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলীর কার্যালয়, সওজ**  
**সড়ক বিভাগ, বরিশাল।**  
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**e-mail: eebar@rhd.gov.bd**

স্মারক নং- ৩৫.০১.০৬৪১.৪০০.০৭.০১৯.১৯ - ২৫৫ তারিখঃ ০২/০২/২০২১ খ্রিঃ।

**"সেতুর ইজারা কোটেশন আহ্বান বিজ্ঞপ্তি"**

০১।	ইজারা কোটেশন নং	: ০১ (ইজারা)/বিহার/২০২০-২০২১
০২।	ইজারার বিবরণ	: বরিশাল সড়ক বিভাগীয় ঢাকা (বাতাবাড়ি)-মাওয়া-ভাঙ্গা-বরিশাল-পূরানাবাদী জাতীয় মহাসড়কের ১৪৮তম কিলোমিটারে বীরশ্রেষ্ঠ ক্যাপ্টেন মহিউদ্দিন আহম্মেদ সেতু (পোয়ারিকা সেতু) ও ১৪৯তম কিলোমিটারে বেঙ্গল এম. এ. জলিল সেতুর (শিকারপুর সেতু) টোল আদায়ের জন্য ইজারা প্রদান।
০৩।	ইজারা কিস্তির মেয়াদ	: ৩ (তিন) অর্থ বছর (৩০৬৫ দিন)।
০৪।	ইজারা কোটেশনের সিদ্ধিষ্টি মূল্য	: টাঃ ৫,০০০.০০ (পাঁচ হাজার টাকা মাত্র)।
০৫।	বায়নার টাকার পরিমাণ	: উক্ত মূল্যের ১০% (শতকরা দশ ভাগ) ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডার আকারে।
০৬।	ইজারা কোটেশন বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	: ২০/০২/২০২১ খ্রিঃ তারিখ বিকাল ৫.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
০৭।	মুখবন্ধ অবস্থায় ইজারা কোটেশন গ্রহণের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	: ২৪/০২/২০২১ খ্রিঃ তারিখ দুপুর ১২.৩০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
০৮।	ইজারা ডাকে অংশ গ্রহণের যোগ্যতা	: ডাট্টা ও আয়বর সন্দর্ভাধী প্রতিষ্ঠান/নাগরিক, সরকারী/বেসরকারী/স্বায়ত্বশাসিত সকল প্রতিষ্ঠানের প্রকৌশলী।
০৯।	যে সকল কার্যালয়ে ইজারা কোটেশন ক্রেতার জন্য পত্রিকা যাবে	: বিভাগীয় কমিশনার, বরিশাল / জেলা প্রশাসক, বরিশাল / নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ, সড়ক বিভাগ, বরিশাল / ডাটা / বালকালী / পিরোজপুর / গ্রামিং বিভাগ-১, সড়ক ভবন, তেজগাঁও, ঢাকা / উপ-বিভাগীয় প্রকৌশলী, সওজ, সড়ক উপ-বিভাগ-১/২, বরিশাল।
১০।	যে সকল কার্যালয়ে ইজারা কোটেশন মুখবন্ধ অবস্থায় গ্রহণ করা হবে	: (ক) বিভাগীয় কমিশনার, বরিশাল। (খ) অতিরিক্ত প্রধান প্রকৌশলী, সওজ, বরিশাল জোন, বরিশাল। (গ) তত্ত্বাবধায়ক প্রকৌশলী, সওজ, সড়ক সার্কেল, বরিশাল। (ঘ) নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ, সড়ক বিভাগ, বরিশাল। (ঙ) জেলা প্রশাসক, বরিশাল।
১১।	ইজারা কোটেশন খোলার স্থান, তারিখ ও সময়	: স্থানঃ নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলীর কার্যালয়, সওজ, সড়ক বিভাগ, বরিশাল। তারিখঃ ২৪/০২/২০২১ খ্রিঃ। সময়ঃ বিকাল ০.০০ ঘটিকা।
১২।	ইজারা কোটেশন আদানকারী যে কোন সময় কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতীতকে যে কোন কোটেশন / সকল কোটেশন বাতিলের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।	

(মাসুম শাহেদুল সুলতান)  
 পরিচিতি নং-৬০২৯৬৫  
 নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী (৩৪ মাঃ), সওজ  
 সড়ক বিভাগ, বরিশাল।

# 32 killed in road pile-up in Uganda

AFP, Kampala  
 Thirty-two people died and five were injured on Tuesday when a truck carrying mourners collided with a car and three other vehicles in Uganda, the Ugandan Red Cross said.  
 The overloaded truck, carrying mourners and a coffin, collided with a car near Kasese in western Uganda shortly before midnight, according to Red Cross spokeswoman Irene Nakasiita.  
 "The road is small, it's under construction and it was dark," said Nakasiita.

**Dhaka Shishu (Children) Hospital**  
 Sher-e-Bangla Nagar  
 Dhaka-1207

Ref. No. 04(W)/e-GP/DSH/2020-21 Date: 03/02/2021

**e-GP: Re-Tender Notice**

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

Sl No.	Name of works	Tender ID	Publication date & time	Last selling and closing date & time
1	Construction of RCC surface Drain Development of Internal Bituminous Road and Development Car Parking Area at Dhaka Shishu (Children) Hospital.	543950	04/02/2021 10:00	17/02/2021-16:00 18/02/2021-12:00

# This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.  
 # To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal ([www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)) is required.  
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**Professor (Dr.) Syed Shafi Ahmed**  
 Director  
 Dhaka Shishu (Children) Hospital  
 S.B. Nagar, Dhaka-1207



Bangladesh opener Shadman Islam plays a shot through the leg side during his 154-ball 59 on the opening day of the first Test against West Indies at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Shadman shines on comeback

SPORTS REPORTER from Chattogram

Left-handed opener Shadman Islam is among the few cricketers who is labeled a Test specialist for the Tigers given his ability to stay at the crease for a long period of time.

He did prove his worth after his debut against the West Indies back in 2018, scoring 76 runs in the first innings. More importantly, he faced 199 balls for that knock.

But the scenario was totally different this time around as he struck a second Test fifty upon making a comeback to the side against the same opposition yesterday.

"Obviously it feels good to be back in the side and I tried to give my best for the team. It would have

great if I could have converted that into a big one," Shadman told the media after the end of the first day, with the hosts on 242 for 5.

The 25-year-old recovered from a wrist injury and missed two Tests against Pakistan and Zimbabwe last year following a string of failures in the couple of Tests prior to that.

The team management had to wait till the morning of the Test to decide whether they would add another opener, right-handed Saif Hasan who made his debut in the absence of Shadman.

He showed his hunger during this period and despite the glitz and glamour of the limited-overs domestic competitions that took place in that time, Shadman opted to work silently at Fatullah.

Shadman's hard work seems to be paying off and he faced

Obviously taking a review was on but I felt that the ball was in line and would go on to hit the stump. That is the reason I didn't take the review and obviously, I was disappointed once I went to the dressing room. I think it's part of the game and we have to accept it.

**SHADMAN ISLAM**  
BANGLADESH OPENER

the Windies pacers with a lot of patience.

Despite losing his experienced partner Tamim Iqbal early on the innings, Shadman displayed great maturity while facing short-pitched

deliveries angling into his body.

Shadman reached his second Test fifty off 128 balls and just when it looked like the left hander had the opportunity to make it big, he departed in an unfortunate manner.

Left-arm spinner Jomel Warrican trapped him leg before while he attempted a sweep. Replays later showed that the ball would go on to miss the leg stump by a distance, but Shadman opted not to take a review.

"Obviously taking a review was on but I felt that the ball was in line and would go on to hit the stump. That is the reason I didn't take the review and obviously, I was disappointed once I went to the dressing room. I think it's part of the game and we have to accept it," he said.

## Prolonged partnerships the missing ingredient

MAZHAR UDDIN from Chattogram



The saying that partnerships are key applies even more strongly for batting teams in the longest format and carrying on to make a big score after being set at the crease becomes even more vital.

But Bangladesh did the opposite as they returned to Test cricket after nearly a year's gap ever since skipper Mominul Haque won the toss and elected to bat on the opening day of the first Test against West Indies at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

The visitors will be satisfied to have sent five Bangladesh batsmen back on the first day while the hosts will be hoping that an unbeaten 49-run partnership between Shakib Al Hasan and Liton Das grows when Bangladesh resume on 242 for 5.

Shakib remained composed for his unbeaten 92-ball 39 while Liton was fortunate early in his innings but later settled and was not out on 34 off 58 balls.

The scenario was disappointing for the hosts ever since Tamim Iqbal's early dismissal when he chopped an incoming Kemar Roach delivery onto the stumps after scoring nine.

Left-hander Shadman Islam showed his talent on his comeback to the side as he occupied the crease well.

He and left-hander Nazmul Hossain Shanto started to build a partnership on a pitch that had very little for the Windies seamers. But a lapse in concentration after getting set at the crease was witnessed among all the batters who got dismissed on the first day despite getting starts.

It started with Nazmul, who had a terrible misunderstanding with Shadman after looking for the second run which was never there. He was run out on 25 to end a promising 43-run first-wicket stand. Bangladesh went to lunch on 69 for 2, with Shadman and skipper Mominul starting the rebuilding process.

And just when it seemed the hosts might have completed a session without

losing a wicket, there was a double blow.

Mominul fell first for 26, ending his partnership with Shadman at 53, after being unable to resist the temptation from a tossed-up delivery from left-arm spinner Jomel Warrican that was lofted to short mid-wicket.

The left-arm spinner was the pick of the bowlers for the visitors, scalping three wickets. He trapped Shadman leg before just after he had reached his second fifty in Tests.

However, the left-hander might have felt disappointed to not opt for a review once he returned to the dressing room and saw the replays of the ball missing leg stump by a huge margin.

### SCORES IN BRIEF

#### BANGLADESH

First innings-242 for 5 in 90 overs (Shadman 59, Tamim 9, Shanto 25, Mominul 26, Mushfiqu 38, Shakib 39 not out, Liton 34 not out, extras 12; Roach 1-44, Warrican 3-58)

The Tigers once again lost two wickets in a session and went to tea on 140 for four.

The third and final session arguably remained the most productive one for the hosts, as they added 102. It would have been even better had they not lost Mushfiqu Rahim for 38.

The experienced wicketkeeper-batsman was involved in yet another fifty-plus stand with Shakib but he too failed to cash in.

It was Warrican again denting the Tigers batting line-up as he managed to take an outside edge from Mushfiqu.

## No Bangabandhu Gold Cup; WC qualifiers in Qatar?

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) wants to complete the first phase of the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) before starting the national team's camp for the proposed matches of World Cup Qualifiers due to uncertainty over Bangabandhu Gold Cup.

As per the BFF calendar and BPL fixtures, the league was supposed to remain suspended from February 23 to late April for the preparation and engagement of the national team in Bangabandhu Gold Cup and World Cup Qualifiers and engagement of the clubs in AFC Cup. However, things have changed due to the unavailability of teams and sponsors for Bangabandhu Gold Cup.

"It is not possible to hold the Bangabandhu Gold Cup in March as we did not get positive feedback from the nations we communicated with. Some of them have travel restrictions, some have domestic commitments while some are not willing to spend a quarantine period," BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem told The Daily Star yesterday, adding they have managed only fifty percent of sponsors for the tournament.

The BFF is likely to officially announce the postponement of the tournament on Saturday.

"The league is supposed to be suspended from February 23 after the 10th round of matches, but I have been instructed to prepare the schedule for the last three

rounds of the first phase," professional league committee manager Zaber Bin Taher Ansari told The Daily Star.

Meanwhile, the BFF is mentally preparing to play the three remaining home matches of the World Cup Qualifiers -- against Afghanistan, India and Oman -- at a centralised venue overseas.

Even though the official schedule of the matches is yet to be disclosed, the game's local governing body is in an uncomfortable position as Afghanistan have expressed their unwillingness to travel to Bangladesh in March due to coronavirus concerns.

"The AFC has sent us a letter asking us to submit our opinion within February 10 regarding the remaining matches of the World Cup Qualifiers as it wants to complete the group stage by June if it can't arrange the matches in March due to travel restrictions, time-frame of quarantine period or worsening situation of coronavirus," Shohag said.

Qatar have already proposed to host the remaining Group E matches from March 24 to April 4.

BFF president Kazi Salahuddin had, on Saturday, told this reporter that they are likely to forego home advantage and agree on playing in Qatar as India, Afghanistan and Oman have already agreed to playing at a single venue.

Bangladesh coach Jamie Day wants to start the camp from the first week of March with an eye on friendly matches in March's FIFA Window, however, the BFF is still waiting to learn the fate of the World Cup Qualifiers.



## Still no country for pace bowlers

NABID YEASIN from Chattogram

While not very auspicious, the picture was also not ominous for Bangladesh at the end of Day One of the first Test against the West Indies at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

A few unfortunate incidents and lapses of concentration cost the Tigers five wickets but with premier all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan and the elegant Liton Das at the crease, the team management could somewhat relax as their plan for this game seemed to be working just fine.

If the form book holds, Bangladesh should get their first points in the World Test Championship (WTC) against a depleted West Indies missing many of their regular starters. It will only be a shock if Mominul Haque's troops fail in achieving that.

Another 2-0 series win over the Caribbean outfit, a significant leap in the Tigers' position in the WTC table, spinners bagging fifters or returning even better figures and batsmen reaching landmarks -- Bangladesh will probably be able to put tick marks beside all those boxes after the series and be hailed for a deserving Test series win that saw all of the team management's ploys come to fruition.

Amid all these success stories, the one aspect that may get swept under the rug is how the pacers were once again denied an opportunity in Tests. Bangladesh's 18-member squad

for the Test series included the spin quartet of Shakib Al Hasan, Mehedi Hasan Miraz, Nayeem Hasan and Tajul Islam alongside five pacers -- Mustafizur Rahman, Abu Jayed, Ebadot Hossain, Hasan Mahmud and Taskin Ahmed.

However, the team management stuck with the spinners as all four of them started in the Chattogram Test and the only paceman who got the nod was Mustafizur with the four other fast men left sulking on the sidelines. And the think tank's approach for the match will probably be proven right when the likes of Mehedi and Shakib start reaping the rewards from a slow and dry Chattogram pitch and have the Windies batsmen caught in their spin web.

But what happens on the periphery of the on-field spin-dominance? What is going on in the minds of young Hasan, Taskin, Jayed, Ebadot who were overlooked as the team management decided to heed to the need of the pitch's condition in order to fulfil the mission of winning? What is young pacer Shoriful Islam, an exciting prospect who was not in the Test squad but is probably watching the game on TV, thinking of his future in the Bangladesh team?

Are they wondering what difference a fourth spinner could possibly make that would outweigh the benefit of giving a pacer the much-needed experience of Test-match bowling?

It would not be irrational for the likes of young Shoriful and Hasan to wonder where they would have been had they chosen a different role in cricket. Even the one pacer that Bangladesh picked could just be doing his bit for the spinners. Ahead of the Test series, Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo had talked about Mustafizur's ability to create rough patches on the pitch that he said would help bring the spinners into play.

Bangladesh's first-choice Test pacer has been jayed for a while now. And even though Mustafizur has shown improvements recently as he learned and successfully implemented the skill of bringing the ball back into the right-handers, it would not be a surprise if he was considered ahead of the regular choice Jayed only for his ability to aid spinners.

If that is the case and pacers are either left on the sidelines or used just to make life easier for a spin quartet, Bangladesh may gain points and credit for winning matches at home against certain opponents but their long-term vision of developing a robust Test culture will remain just that -- a vision and something that sounds good during press conferences.

Maybe it is time to actually realise that the most crucial part of developing a Test culture is to find the right blend of spin and pace so that the team can overcome hurdles both home and overseas.

## Pakistan look to end 17-year wait

AGENCIES

Pakistan will look to end a 17-year wait for a series win against South Africa and leapfrog the Proteas in the rankings in the second Test starting Today.

Victory would be poignant for Pakistan, who are hosting their biggest Test series since the deadly 2009 militant attack on Sri Lanka's team halted international tours.

Pakistan, whose lone series win over South Africa was at home in 2003, start as favourites in Rawalpindi after last week's thumping seven-wicket win in Karachi.

They stand to rise two places to fifth in the rankings with a series



victory, while defeat would push South Africa down from fifth to sixth.

"The morale of the team is high. Our preparations have been great. We have spent a lot of time in the nets and the players look to be in good nick. Everyone has gained confidence from our victory in the first Test. We are focused on playing the next match in the same way we played the first match. We can't take the opposition easy because we know that they can bounce back. We are ready for it," said Pakistan captain Babar Azam.

"The wicket in Rawalpindi seems similar to Karachi. The weather might be a little different though. The conditions here are always different and we are keeping that in mind. I don't think four seamers can play here but we will see the conditions and decide what's best for the team," he added.



Juventus superstar Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates after scoring his first goal during a 2-1 comeback win over Inter Milan in the Coppa Italia semi-final first leg clash at San Siro on Tuesday. Ronaldo, however, appeared unhappy when he was substituted on the 76th minute. "I told him that he had to come off because we have an important game on Saturday (against AS Roma in Serie A), so it's right to let him catch his breath," coach Andrea Pirlo explained.

PHOTO: TWITTER

## DERADICALISATION PROGRAMME

# Rab gets warm response on hotline

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

People looking for a window to shun the path of militancy have been calling a hotline number and writing to an email address the Rab has dedicated for its deradicalisation programme.

Rab launched the hotline number and email for its Deradicalisation and Rehabilitation Program on January 18.

Officials said most of the callers first wanted to be sure that they are actually communicating with Rab officers.

Intelligence Director Lt Col Mohammad Khairul Islam told The Daily Star that several suspected militants have contacted the officials.

"The suspects from different militant outfits called the hotline and asked how they could surrender. They told us that they were wanted in different cases."

"We asked them for the case documents so that we could examine the papers and give them feedback," said the intelligence director.

People willing to go back to normal life will have Rab's cooperation. But those wanted in criminal cases must go through the legal procedure, he added.

Nine members of different militant outfits surrendered to Rab on January 14.

The Rab initiative is the first institutional deradicalisation programme in the country, officials said, adding that a team of 12 experts are running it.

Additional Director General (operation) Colonel Tofail Mostafa Sarwar is its chief coordinator and intelligence.

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The construction work of the first Dhaka Elevated Expressway is expected to end in December this year. The 47km expressway, with 19.73km main line, would have several exits between Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport and Tejgaon Rail Gate. The expressway is supposed to alleviate congestion. The photo was taken near Khilkhet.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HUQ

## COVID POSITIVITY

# Daily rate drops below 3 percent

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

The rate of daily positive coronavirus cases dropped to 2.92 percent yesterday, the lowest in more than nine months.

In 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, a total of 14,985 tests were performed in 206 Covid-19 testing centres across the country and 438 tested positive for the virus.

Thirteen people died with the highly transmissible virus over the same period, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) press release.

Now the overall positivity rate stands at 14.53 percent.

Experts, however, said it was too early to say that the virus transmission was under control.

Assuming the transmission may go up anytime, they stressed on maintaining health rules.

The percentage of positive cases is a critical measure because it gives

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## NUSRAT MURDER

# No offence in digging out info and publishing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalists have curious minds which dig out information and if they are given the scope to publish that information, they will surely do it since there is no element of offence in it, the High Court observed yesterday.

The observation was made by HC bench of Justice Md Habibul Gani and Justice Md Riaz Uddin Khan.

The bench made the observation while hearing a petition filed by convict Moazzem Hossain, former officer-in-charge of Feni's Sonagazi Police Station, seeking bail in a case filed against him for filming madrasa student Nusrat Jahan Rafi's statement and circulating the clip on social media without her consent.

During the hearing, Moazzem's lawyer Murad Reza told the court that the clip was not circulated by his client. He claimed that a journalist had collected the video clip from the mobile phone of Moazzem

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## WORLDWIDE COVID VACCINATION

# Weak co-op a major barrier

WHO chief warns nations as study says Oxford jab cuts virus transmission

AGENCIES

Covid-19 vaccine nationalism is harmful for all, World Health Organization Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Tuesday, and said weak cooperation between nations is a major barrier to achieving worldwide vaccination at the scale needed to end the coronavirus pandemic.

"Despite the growing number of vaccine options, current manufacturing capacity meets only a fraction of global need," the WHO director-general said in a piece published in Foreign Policy magazine.

"Allowing the majority of the world's population to go unvaccinated will not only perpetuate needless illness and deaths and the pain of ongoing lockdowns, but also spawn new virus mutations as Covid-19 continues to spread among unprotected populations," he wrote.

Countries around the world pin their hopes on vaccines as a way out of the pandemic, as WHO experts yesterday inspected a Chinese laboratory in Wuhan that some US officials said could have been the source of the coronavirus.

Russia is working to increase production of its Sputnik V jab in foreign countries after a report showed strong results for it.

And British pharmaceuticals giant GlaxoSmithKline and German biotech firm CureVac said they were teaming up to jointly develop a vaccine with the potential to counter multi-variants of Covid-19.

Vaccines are seen as the only way out of the pandemic that has infected nearly 104 million, left more than 2.2 million dead and devastated the

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## AVIJIT MURDER

# Prosecution seeks capital punishment for 6 accused

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Prosecutors yesterday sought capital punishment for six men accused of killing blogger and writer Avijit Roy in February 2015.

The accused are members of banned militant outfit Ansar-al-Islam, officials said.

Assistant Public Prosecutor Golam Sharuar Khan told the tribunal that the prosecutors were able to prove the charges against the accused.

Judge Md Majibur Rahman of the Anti-Terrorism Special Tribunal of Dhaka fixed today to hear arguments of the defence lawyers.

The six accused are Sayed Mohammad Ziaul Haque alias Maj (sacked) Zia, Akram Hossain Abir, Moazzem Hossain Saymon, Abu Siddiqi Sohel,

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## Mummies with golden tongues found in Egypt



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Mummies with "golden tongues" have been unearthed in Egypt, the country's tourism and antiquities ministry has said.

A team of Egyptian-Dominican archaeologists discovered 16 burials in rock-cut tombs at Alexandria's Taposiris Magna temple in western Alexandria.

Experts believe the tongues, made of gold foil,

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## TOXIC LIQUOR

# 4 homeopathy shop owners held after 13 die in Bogura

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

Police in Bogura yesterday arrested four homeopathy shop owners accused of selling toxic liquor that may have caused at least 13 deaths in the town since Saturday.

After talking to locals, family members of the deceased, and people who fell ill from ingesting the toxic liquor, our Bogura correspondent reported that at least 13 people died reportedly after having poisonous liquor (mainly rectified spirit mixed with methanol) in Bogura in that time.

A press release issued by the Bogura Sadar Police Station, however, said they have found that a total of eight people died in the town since last Saturday after consuming toxic liquor.

"We found that eight

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## MONEY LAUNDERING

# Punishment should be enhanced

OBSERVES HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A High Court bench yesterday observed that the punishment for money laundering should be enhanced from existing 12 years' imprisonment to life imprisonment considering the gravity of the offence.

Money laundering is a serious offence and its highest punishment of 12 years' imprisonment under the Money Laundering Prevention Act is insufficient, the bench of Justice Nazrul Islam Talukder and Justice Mohi Uddin Shamim said.

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A seasonal labourer spreads fish under the sun to turn those into dried fish while another person scatters salt on them to preserve them. Dried fish has huge demand in local and international markets and the lion's share is produced during winter and dry seasons. The photo was taken from College Street in Chattogram's Notun Bridge area.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## TRUMP IMPEACHMENT TRIAL

# Trump lawyers, Democrats spar at pre-trial brief

REUTERS, Washington

Former President Donald Trump's lawyers said on Tuesday the US Senate lacks the authority to conduct his impeachment trial now that he has left office, while the Democratic lawmakers due to serve as prosecutors called him singularly responsible for the deadly January 6 attack on the Capitol.

Trump's legal team and the nine House of Representatives Democrats set to prosecute him filed briefs with the Senate one week before the trial is scheduled to begin.

His lawyers focused on an argument that last week won the support of 45 of the 50 Republicans in the 100-seat Senate in a failed vote to dismiss the case because Trump is a private citizen, having left office on January 20.

Trump's team also denied he had fomented violence, saying in their 14-page brief that his remarks to supporters shortly before they stormed the Capitol that Democrats contend incited violence were protected under the US Constitution's First Amendment right to free speech.

Challenging the case against Trump on the grounds that the Senate lacks constitutional authority to put a former president on trial would enable his fellow Republicans to vote against conviction without directly defending his incendiary remarks.

The House Democrats, in their pretrial brief, anticipated that post-presidency argument and rejected it. The Democrats urged senators to convict Trump - which would require a two-thirds majority - and then bar him from again holding public office.

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**PRAYER TIMING FEBRUARY 4**  
 Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
 AZAN 5:30 12:45 4:15 5:52 7:15  
 JAMAAT 6:05 1:15 4:30 5:56 7:45  
 SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

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## Cancer care in Bangladesh A tale of scarcity and negligence

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

Due to overwhelming treatment costs, scarcity of trained professionals and unavailability of equipment, cancer care is still inaccessible to hundreds of thousands of cancer patients in Bangladesh.

Among 36 government medical college hospitals, which are the medical destinations for most of our country's low-income families, only 14 of them have oncology departments which are also undermanned and under-equipped.

Cancer patients in Bangladesh usually receive treatment in three ways: radiotherapy, chemotherapy and surgery. At present, only Chattogram, Rajshahi, Shahid Ziaur Rahman Medical College at Bogura and MAG Osmani Medical College at Sylhet have one unit of operational radiotherapy machine. Radiotherapy machines of Dhaka and Mymensingh Medical College Hospitals have been non-functional for years. There is not a single radiotherapy machine for the inhabitants of Khulna, Rangpur, and Barisal division.

According to Dr Qazi Mushtaq Hussain, professor of radiation oncology and director of National Institute of Cancer Research and Hospital (NICRH), Bangladesh needs at least 250 radiotherapy machines all over the country. At present, there are around 37 radiotherapy machines. However, the number fluctuates constantly due to frequent damage of these life-saving instruments.

Medical oncologists treat cancer by applying chemotherapy. In Bangladesh, facilities where chemotherapy is applied accurately are rare.

According to Professor Dr Zafar Md Masud, head of the oncology department of Bangladesh Medical College Hospital, "Safe handling of chemotherapy drugs is extremely important for accurate treatment and personal safety. These cytotoxic drugs must be prepared in biosafety cabinets equipped with high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filtration system to prevent contamination and inhalation. If the drugs get contaminated, efficacy of the treatment will be severely compromised." However, none of the government chemotherapy facilities and very few private clinics have this biosafety cabinet.

Moreover, there are only around 25 medical oncologists in the entire country. As a result, often radiation oncologists also treat patients with chemotherapy. Cancer patients who require surgery also have a hard time finding a reliable surgical oncologist.

According to Professor Dr AFM Anwar Hossain, one of the handful of trained surgical oncologists of Bangladesh, "There are around 30 surgical oncologists in the entire country. There is no surgical oncology department in the medical colleges which means almost all of them are based in Dhaka. Surgical oncology has only recently been introduced in oncology education in the country and currently provided only by NICRH."

As a result, most of the cancer surgeries are done by general surgeons who do not have oncological orientation.

"Cancer surgery is very complex in nature. Before conducting a surgery, a surgical oncologist must consult with radiation, medical and patho-oncologists about the type and nature of the tumour. Unfortunately, we cannot maintain this coordinated approach most of the time," adds Professor Dr AFM Anwar Hossain.

Bangladesh also lags behind in cancer diagnosis. Molecular tests such as Estimated Glomerular Filtration Rate (EGFR) and BRCA are not available in Bangladesh which are essential for treating certain types of cancer.

Very few diagnostic centres conduct immunohistochemistry tests and PET-CT scans which are very expensive but essential for accurate diagnosis of cancer.

According to a 2020 report of International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), there are only 0.3 PET-CT scanners, 2.1 radiotherapy machines, 12.1 CT scanners, 4.6 MRI scanners, and 9.9 mammographs per

10,000 cancer patients in Bangladesh.

Due to a lack of these facilities, most of the cancer patients have to come to Dhaka for treatment and in Dhaka, NICRH is the apex government hospital where patients can go for comprehensive cancer treatment. Burdened with tens of thousands of patients, NICRH is far from providing quality treatment due to acute manpower and resource constraints.

According to Professor Dr Qazi Mushtaq Hussain, director of NICRH, "We have around 100 beds in chemotherapy day care section. However, we are providing chemotherapy to around 250 patients daily. Our doctors and nurses are working day and night without any extra allowances."

In December 2020, this hospital treated 46,883 patients with only 181 doctors. There are 45 vacant posts for doctors and 230 vacant posts for nurses, ward boys, and other support staff.

"We are suffering from manpower and equipment shortage. Many of our instruments are very old. We have asked for more manpower and modern equipment," adds the director of NICRH

According to experts, it is vital to monitor heart, liver, and kidney condition of cancer patients who receive chemotherapy or radiotherapy because cancer patients who receive chemo or radiotherapy often suffer from kidney, heart, and liver complications due to side effects of the cytotoxic drugs.

However, NICRH does not have any cardiology, hepatology, nephrology, or even palliative care departments.

Professor Dr Qazi Mushtaq Hussain said, "We do some primary monitoring but in case of any complication we have to send them to other specialised hospitals."

Patients have to go through a painful ordeal to receive treatment and care due to overcrowding and lack of essential services. At NICRH, hundreds of patients and their attendants were seen standing in long queues to buy tickets for treatment. Many patients who are too weak to stand were seen lying



Shahana Akhter, an inhabitant of a remote village of Netrokona district has to wait for hours at NICRH to get an appointment to treat her emaciated mother who has been suffering from colorectal cancer. Hundreds of patients like her were seen lying on the dirty floors and waiting for long hours to receive treatment. The photo was taken on January 31, 2021.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

on the dirty floor as all the chairs were occupied.

Firoza Begum has been suffering from colorectal cancer for five years. Her daughter Shahana Akhter was holding her emaciated body and waiting for hours to buy a ticket.

Shahana said, "My mother is getting radiation therapy here. When we come to Dhaka for

Aftab Ahmed was diagnosed with kidney cancer in 2019. His right kidney had to be removed surgically which cost 200,000 taka in a private clinic. Despite the surgery, the cancer spread to his abdominal wall and liver. Now, he has to take a drug called Everolimus which is highly expensive.

"A strip of 10 Everolimus tablets costs around 17,000 taka. I have to take one tablet a day. Besides, I have to conduct weekly tests of my liver and kidney which are also very expensive. The treatment cost is literally unbearable," said Aftab.

Professor Dr Zafar Md Masud said, "Every cancer patient has to go through medical check-up before and after each cycle of chemo or radiotherapy. Besides, if there are complications, the patients have to get admitted to hospitals which incur additional expenses. Expenditure can be reduced if we provide all sorts of treatment and tests in a single hospital so that patients do not have to move from one place to another."

"We need time and large-scale investments to develop such all-under-one-roof cancer hospitals. So, the best way to treat cancer now is to prevent it," he adds. However, according to experts, preventive cancer treatment in Bangladesh is in its rudimentary stage due to lack of population-based cancer registry (PBCR). According to IARC, an estimated 156,775 new cancer patients were diagnosed in 2020 and the number of cancer deaths so far is around 108,990.

Nevertheless, these numbers are based on the cancer prevalence in neighbouring countries because there is no source of cancer related data in Bangladesh.

According to Dr Habibullah Talukder Ruskin, a cancer epidemiologist and an associate professor of NICRH, "PBCR is a database which preserves detailed information about all cases of cancer that occur in a specific population. Even Nepal and Pakistan have their own PBCRs. India has 30 PBCRs which are centrally coordinated."

"Without PBCR, we actually cannot know how many patients develop cancer each year. We don't know how many patients die of cancer every year and what the most frequent types of cancer are among Bangladeshis. We don't have any data about the most common causes of cancer and district-wise prevalence. Without this basic information, how can we prepare for cancer prevention and treatment?" he states.

As a consequence, Bangladesh does not have any cancer control strategy and national cancer treatment protocol.

Surprisingly, Bangladeshi patients are treated according to the cancer protocol for US citizens called Evidence-Based Cancer Guidelines, developed by the US's National Comprehensive Cancer Network (NCCN) for their own citizens.

When asked why PBCR could not be developed in Bangladesh, director of NICRH

*According to Professor Dr AFM Anwar Hossain, one of the handful of trained surgical oncologists of Bangladesh, "There are around 30 surgical oncologists in the entire country. There is no surgical oncology department in the medical colleges which means almost all of them are based in Dhaka. Surgical oncology has only recently been introduced in oncology education in the country and currently provided only by NICRH."*

said, "I don't know why it could not be developed. When I heard about developing PBCR I was a student. Now, I am on the verge of retirement. It is unfortunate that we still have not been able to develop it."

When asked what the government is doing to improve the country's dilapidated cancer care system, Professor Dr Qazi Mushtaq Hussain said, "The government is developing eight cancer centres in eight divisional medical colleges where there will be all the required departments, surgery facilities, and modern equipment. It will take some time but once this project is completed, cancer treatment will be decentralised and the situation will improve a lot. NICRH will also be transformed into a 500-bed hospital in the near future."

LET'S BE AWARE  
LET'S STAND STRONG  
TOGETHER  
WE CAN FIGHT  
CANCER

**Fresh**  
Drinking Water  
SAFEST DRINKING WATER  
OF 160 MILLION



treatment, we have to rent a house because we have to wait for weeks to get an appointment. Every time we have to spend at least two to three months in Dhaka."

"Moreover, we have to conduct many tests and most of these tests are not available in this hospital. In the private clinics, cost of the tests is almost double. We have spent at least 30 lakh taka for my mother's treatment so far. We have sold all our properties except our home to bear the expenses," she added.

Cost of treatment in the private hospitals is even higher.



## A small initiative bringing a big difference



TAHMINA MOSTAFA, Director, Meghna Group of Industries (MGI)

Cancer cases are on the rise in Bangladesh and it is one of the main causes of increased mortality rates. To battle this unpleasant scenario, MGI has joined hands with Bangladesh Cancer Aid Trust (BANCAT) which is an association that helps individuals fight against cancer.

The high cost of cancer treatment has financially afflicted many families. This is why MGI comes forward with an initiative titled Warriors Club. Warriors Club, getting launched by BANCAT, is an initiative that supports the survival of cancer patients in their unpleasant fight against cancer by providing mental support throughout the whole process.

It is an immense pleasure for MGI and Super Fresh Drinking Water to work along side BANCAT in helping cancer survivors. This small step may help the survivors get closer to achieving their dreams as well as uplift their spirits in the middle of a dreary battle with cancer. It is our privilege to support this initiative. Together, we can and we will strive.

## An ordinary man with an extraordinary story

After conquering acute myeloid leukemia, Najmus Ahmed Albab started a cancer aid trust for his countrymen

SUPPLEMENT DESK

It started out as a high fever that would not subside. So, Mr. Najmus Ahmed's family had him admitted to a hospital in Bangladesh. Thinking it was just dengue, he remained optimistic. But a few days later, in March 2011, he was transferred to Parkway Cancer Centre (PCC) in Singapore.

He awoke in a haematology ward and he said recalling, "I was clueless when I met Dr. Teo. But he informed me that I had the 'best' type of leukemia possible as it was the most treatable."

It was only after his first round of chemotherapy that reality sank in. "It finally hit me," he said. "I had leukemia. It was a shock." But Dr. Teo allayed his fears. "Dr. Teo was very open with me. He told me I was strong and that I could fight it. He said at 45 years of age, I would probably survive," Mr. Ahmed shared.

Although his treatment was going smoothly, it was not without side effects. The drugs also caused insomnia. He had depression midway through the treatment, but with the support of his son and his father, both of whom had travelled to Singapore to accompany him for the duration of his treatment, Mr. Ahmed pulled through. In fact, their support was so invaluable that he wrote a book about it – titled When Time Stops – where Mr. Ahmed talks about his heartfelt gratitude for his family's support and the fact that cancer can be beaten.

When his chemotherapy concluded in August 2011, Mr. Ahmed returned to Bangladesh. Taking the advice of Dr. Teo to lead a less stressful life, he left his previous job in a manufacturing firm and started his own corporate consulting firm where he is now able to have more relaxed hours.

Driven by a deep desire to see others battle cancer successfully, Mr. Ahmed started I Beat Cancer. What prompted the birth of the initiative was a newspaper clipping he had seen on his flight back to his home country.

"There was a small notice in the newspaper," Mr. Ahmed shared. "A young girl was asking for funds to battle the exact same kind of leukemia I had just recovered from." A deeply spiritual man, he did not take it to be mere coincidence. So he began speaking to friends, asking for donations, and finally, he raised enough money to purchase the drugs the girl required for a year's worth of treatment.

"Now she's married with her first child!" he said.

That's how a cancer survivor turned his weakness into strength and used that strength to help other cancer patients in need. Najmus Ahmed Albab is now the founder and trustee of Bangladesh Cancer Aid Trust (BANCAT).



## It Takes One to Save One



SUPPLEMENT DESK

Buoyed by his first attempt of supporting a leukemic patient in need of funds, Mr. Najmus Ahmed Albab lobbied harder for more donations and turned this personal initiative into a foundation, the Bangladesh Cancer Aid Foundation (BANCAF), in 2011.

As the foundation's impact on the society grew bigger and greater, Mr. Ahmed realised that it needs to be turned into a formal organisation and accordingly, the foundation was legalised as a trust and Bangladesh Cancer Aid Trust (BANCAT) was born in 2019.

BANCAT is a nationwide, community-based, voluntary organisation dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by prevention and diminishing suffering through education, advocacy, and service. Mr. Ahmed brought 14 other like-minded individuals on-board as trustees, many of whom had been indirectly affected by cancer. BANCAT provides financial assistance and emotional support to underserved cancer patients of society. It also works towards raising awareness about cancer through a variety of social activities at different levels of society. Some of these activities include Cricket for Cancer, walkathon, cancer awareness campaigns, and cancer screenings.

As of 2020, BANCAT has served more than 200 patients with BDT 10 million, supported by over 100 individuals and organisations. The movement has been possible by the 200 volunteers who work uncompromisingly in the fight against cancer and has given hope to the people in need.

People from different walks of life and various business organisations directly help BANCAT to manage and serve its patients



through financial and other assistance.

BANCAT has a patient adoption programme under which an individual/organisation can take responsibility for treating a cancer patient by contributing BDT 10,000/month. The treatment ranges from the patient's doctor visiting fee, chemotherapy, radiotherapy, medicine purchase, hospital admission to operation and such. BANCAT keeps the donors posted about the patient's updates on a monthly basis.

BANCAT acts as a bridge between the affluent and underserved people of the society, working tirelessly and relentlessly to prevent cancer.

If you know of any cancer patient in need of support, contact BANCAT at +8801938830002.

To support cancer patients in need kindly forward your contribution to: bKash: +8801612226223 (Merchant Account)

BANCAT - Bank Asia, Scotia Branch Account Number: 00733004894  
BANCAT - Prime Bank, Banani Branch Account Number: 2132111021363



BANCAT Cricket for Cancer



BANCAT Eid Meet



BANCAT Inauguration



BANCAT Winter Smile

## Sukhi's Fight to Win Her 'Sukhi' Life Back

Sukhi, aged 30, lives in Kazipara, Barishal. She is a housewife and her husband is a tailor master in the village. Sukhi's life was 'sukhi' until she figured that she was experiencing mild fever every now and then.

Coming from a humble background, Sukhi initially didn't pay much heed to the recurring fever, considering it to be just generic random fever. Within six months, Sukhi started feeling irritation on her



breast skin. This became alarming when she started feeling pain on her right breast. That's when she went to Barishal Medical College for a check-up.

The doctor suggested a mammogram which clearly showed that Sukhi had a tumour in her right breast. They operated on the tumour and it appeared to have cancerous cells indicating stage one breast cancer.

A devastated Sukhi came back home baffled,

wondering how she will manage her family of three children and husband with the illness or whether she will even survive the deadly disease.

Right after finding out about the cancer, Sukhi's middle child fell ill as well. Upon medical examination, it was discovered that Sukhi had an autoimmune thyroid disease which was passed on to her children, making her children's chances of survival very slim. She lost her middle child in this battle.

But Sukhi didn't give up. She continued her treatment.

Cancer treatment is expensive and Sukhi's family was running out of the financial means to support her treatment. In those dark times, one of her relatives took her to Mr. Najmus Ahmed Albab, founder of Bangladesh Cancer Aid Trust (BANCAT), seeking his support.

BANCAT financially assisted Sukhi for a year for her radiotherapy at National Institute of Cancer Research & Hospital (NICRH) and also provided mental support to help her cope with all the unforeseen incidents she was going through.

The cancer cells never came back and today, Sukhi volunteers to raise awareness about breast cancer in her neighbourhood. She believes that every one of us is susceptible to cancer and maintaining a healthy lifestyle and being aware of cancer is the only way to fight it.



## The fall that turned her life upside down

Sharmin, aged 16, lives in Mymensingh and is the only daughter of her farmer father, Abdus Samad.

Sharmin is the beloved sister of her five brothers. One day, when she was in Grade nine, Sharmin slipped on mud and hurt her waist badly. After a week, the pain was gone and Sharmin was fine. After a month however, the pain came back with higher intensity and swelling.

The wound didn't heal internally and resurfaced with pus. The local doctors operated and cleaned the wound but the pus kept on coming back. At one point no one was willing to clean her wound anymore and her brother, Jahangir, used to do it for her. The wound reached her pelvic bone



and Sharmin got diagnosed with Ewing sarcoma.

Ewing sarcoma is a rare type of cancer that occurs in bones or in the soft tissues around the bones. Her father did not have the means to treat his daughter's expensive illness. Bangladesh Cancer Aid Trust (BANCAT) came to their assistance. Sharmin got treatment for a year at National Institute of Cancer Research & Hospital (NICRH) and was cured completely.

Sharmin appeared for her SSC examination in 2019 and passed with a CGPA of 4.28.

# Pandemic and the state of cancer care in Bangladesh

In conversation with Mohammad Faizur Rahman, Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer, United Hospital Ltd.

Ten months have passed since COVID-19 was detected in Bangladesh. What challenges have you faced at United Hospital and how have you addressed the needs of your patients, especially cancer patients?

We were plagued with uncertainty when COVID-19 was first detected in Bangladesh. At United Hospital, we were still able to grasp onto things and respond quickly. Starting from ensuring the supply chain and resource mobilisation to educating ourselves and organising a central committee, everything was done to ensure the total safety and care of patients. We really wanted to ensure overall knowledge enhancement through engagement with international bodies such as United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and World Health Organization (WHO).

Cancer patients already have a compromised immune system due to nature of the disease and also because of the side effects of the treatments. So, we took it upon ourselves to prioritise raising awareness among them. In the past ten months, we have performed almost 20,000 radiation therapies, around 800 positron emission tomography-computed tomography (PET-CT) scans, 5,500 oncology consultations, and nearly 500 oncology patients were reached through telemedicine.

In the backdrop of the COVID-19 crisis, was there hesitation and/or fear among cancer patients or their caregivers? How did you address their concerns?

From quite early on, we had two completely segregated zones for COVID-19 patients and non-COVID-19 patients. The sixth and seventh floors were converted to negative pressure zones. All of that was achieved in only a few weeks, at an expense of several million dollars. Many of our patients who usually go abroad to seek treatment, had to come to us due to travel bans. We made sure that they were provided with the level of service they would expect overseas.

In our country, the casualty rate among caregivers was higher in the



early days of COVID-19. Thus there was some justifiable apprehension. Since we have been maintaining separate units at our hospital, it felt like we were running two parallel hospitals. Our senior consultants kept themselves updated and helped the central committee organise various programmes. Our hospital management was also significantly productive.

We ensured that our caregivers were given treatment free-of-cost. Wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) and working long hours must have been difficult for our doctors and nurses. However, they duly carried out

their duties and I thank all of them for their service. We ensured that our caregivers were compensated in a timely manner, despite the financial crunch.

Do you think that the fear of COVID-19 has delayed cancer diagnosis and treatment? How would you address the pandemic going forward?

Unlike other patients who could delay their elective treatment, diagnosed cancer patients could not opt to do the same. We had to ensure that cancer patients not infected with COVID-19 were tended to in an entirely different

zone due to their compromised immunity.

When it comes to cancer patients who were not diagnosed, it is very likely that the diagnosis may have been delayed due to the fear of catching COVID-19 at hospitals. Being under proper screening and adaptation of preventive measures usually ensure diagnosis of cancer at earlier stages.

We had a two-time cancer survivor recover from COVID-19 at the age of 80. We took every step necessary to ensure the wellbeing of our patients.

Has there been any recent upgrade to cancer care therapy in your hospital that you would like to mention?

We are a tertiary care hospital, and our cancer centre is of the utmost priority. In Bangladesh, cancer is mainly diagnosed through histopathology. However, for appropriate diagnosis, PET-CT scan is necessary. Our ingredient for PET-CT, fluorodeoxyglucose (FDG), is produced by the cyclotron machine. This machine is only available here at United Hospital in Bangladesh. Installed back in 2011, almost 100 crore taka was invested into this. Each equipment and machine required for PET-CT scan and radiotherapy costs 14 to 17 crore taka for maintenance every year. Even this year, we invested an additional half a million dollars to ensure proper planning, recording, and storing of the data of all the services provided to our patients.

Cancer treatment is very specialised and protocol-based. A cancer patient requires mental healthcare as well. For World Cancer Day this year, our message is "Cancer screening and awareness; let it start from the family."

Tell us about United Hospital's plans and goals for the near and distant future.

United Group is highly committed to healthcare. In the next three years, three more hospitals will be run by the United Group, which will equate to 1,700 available beds. For our medical college in Madani Avenue, we are constructing a 500-bed hospital. We will also build a 100-seat medical college and 500-bed hospital in Chattogram. The former

will be the first project under Public Private Partnership (PPP) Authority in Bangladesh, in the healthcare sector. We are constructing a 200-bed hospital in Jamalpur, our Chairman's home district. United Trust is funding this hospital and it will be run through cross subsidisation.

When it comes to plans for the distant future, we want to be the best hospital, and not in terms of profitability or revenue. We want the same service to be provided to our patients that we would provide for our immediate families consistently. Our country is populous and mass-treating patients in hospitals is not a feasible solution to our collective health problems. We want to raise awareness and advise people to lead a healthier lifestyle. Despite all this, if medical attention is still needed, we will ensure the support required.

In a way, COVID-19 has been a blessing in disguise because it has highlighted our shortcomings. The pace at which the physicians caught up despite COVID-19 gives us hope that a developed healthcare system is possible in the country.

Do you have any message for cancer patients and oncology professionals of the country on World Cancer Day?

In most cases, the cancer patients who had higher comorbidity could not survive COVID-19. Thus, cancer patients and their families cannot compromise their hygiene. I would also urge them to remain hopeful, happy, and always under proper treatment. A cancer patient is the best teacher for ten other cancer patients. We regularly organise programmes with cancer patients and the strength they exude blows our minds. Thus, I really hope they take on this responsibility willingly.

I am not an oncology professional, but I humbly believe that we need to be united in our efforts to develop the sector. We need to prepare good clinicians and technologists and expand our institutes to meet the needs of our patients.

The interview was taken by Aysha Zaheer of The Daily Star.

## "I don't want to die before my time comes – I want to live my life fully"

Firoza Afroj Subarna, 43, a homemaker in Dhaka, had no idea her world would be upturned at the end of 2013 when her seemingly healthy body began to show signs of something sinister. One of the most common urinary tract cancer symptoms is blood in the urine, which led to Firoza's diagnosis of transitional cell carcinoma (TCC) in her kidney. Her family was left devastated. Her daughters had difficulties adjusting to this new reality while her husband, Md. Mokhlusur Rahman, struggled to balance being her primary caretaker while also maintaining his job.



Firoza's story is one of overcoming many adversities. In 2014, she had her right kidney removed in an effort to contain the TCC, an aggressive cancer that spreads rapidly across the body. However, in 2015, the cancer attacked her lungs and her bones. Doctors tried to keep her condition stable through chemotherapy and radiotherapy. While these treatments are known to be painful and invasive, Firoza remained optimistic: "I was only in pain during the chemo and radiotherapy; the rest of the time I felt completely healthy and led a normal life." In 2016, a liver cyst appeared, and after careful observation, doctors decided to operate. Traces of cancer were still left behind, so doctors opted for oral chemotherapy.

While seeking treatment in India in 2018, Firoza's doctor suggested a treatment a bit different than chemotherapy, named immunotherapy. Firoza was initially apprehensive of the suggestion since spending four lakh taka monthly on immunotherapy was not feasible for her family. But she soon bit the bullet and began the therapy, and she hasn't regretted it since. "I know how daunting and expensive immunotherapy can be, especially for people from the middle-class or lower, but I couldn't recommend it more," shares Firoza. She has been receiving the treatment from United Hospital from 2018 till present. Firoza and her husband's only demand is that the governments reduce cancer drug costs and make it more accessible.

Even after almost eight years of fighting cancer, Firoza has never once given up. "I used to be in constant fear of my life suddenly ending. The emotional turmoil was immense, both on me and my family. My willpower soon began to get stronger, and I realised that I don't want to die before my time comes – I want to live my life fully. And that is exactly what I'm doing now."

Interviewed and written by Mayabe Aramya of The Daily Star.

## Grit and determination are enough to win over cancer

Right before M R Chowdhury found out about his cancer, he had smoked ten cigarettes in a row. Those ten were his last.

Former businessman M R Chowdhury has shown tremendous spirit and determination in his battle against cancer. He recalled that the first time he was diagnosed with lung cancer back in May of 2016, he shed no tears and simply made the necessary phone calls. He attributed a part of his firm resolve to his experiences with cancer patients at home. "My mother and all three of my sisters were diagnosed with cancer. My mother and one of my sisters have already passed away, but I refuse to think that they lost." He mused and further added, "My cancer cannot be completely genetic; it must have been a result of my incessant smoking."

In August of 2016, his first operation had taken place in Singapore, after which he was declared cancer-free. However, in August of 2017, during his second postoperative visitation with the oncologist, he was told he had relapsed, the cancer having spread beyond lungs. Apart from radiotherapy and chemotherapy, he has received immunotherapy in India and in Bangladesh. He is now under treatment at United Hospital, where he claims he has received the best service so far. However, in March of 2020, he relapsed for the second time and underwent radiation therapy. In December, he relapsed again, his cancer having spread to the bones. "I was told after my third relapse that I was done for. I replied, 'You're not God!'"

Even at the age of 68, Mr Chowdhury lives his life with fortitude and hope. "In the past five or so years I've spent with cancer in my body, I did not feel entirely hopeless for even a moment. When asked if his family has been supportive in his journey, he said, "Cancer causes extreme pain and discomfort, but you're not the only one who has to tolerate it, your family has to as well." He added that his wife has been extremely understanding and supportive, whilst two of his three children are here with him to show solidarity.

When asked if he has any message for other cancer patients, he said, "Death is inevitable, with or without cancer. One cannot think that they are going to die the moment they receive their diagnosis. There's treatment and with enough determination, cancer can be won over." Mr Chowdhury's grit is an inspiration to everyone.

Interviewed and written by Aysha Zaheer of The Daily Star.

## No compromise on happiness

"My spirits have not been broken the slightest. I was only briefly scared and confused in the first 24 hours of receiving the news," says 53-year-old Sabina Kabir while recalling the moment when she was first diagnosed with cancer.

For the past one and a half years, she had been experiencing heavy and irregular bleeding but none of the gynaecologists she visited were able to identify her condition. On October 22, 2020, her situation rapidly aggravated. "I tried to make appointments with multiple doctors but no appointments were available for the next two to three weeks. Due to the pandemic, the doctors were also opting for virtual treatment. But, I knew virtual treatment would not help me," shares Sabina. This is when she was suggested to go to United Hospital where she underwent dilation and curettage (D&C) test which is a procedure to remove tissues from inside the uterus to cure conditions of heavy bleeding. The biopsy results of the test revealed that she had stage one endometrial cancer.

"I could not be happier about the diagnosis. What if the cancer had progressed to stage four before the doctors could identify it?" mentions Sabina gratefully. Her positive outlook is further reinforced by the unwavering support of her friends and family. She recounts her friends donating blood for her and constantly checking up on her. There was never a moment where she felt hopeless and continuous support was pouring in from everywhere.

Dealing with cancer in the middle of a pandemic is even more challenging but Sabina was not scared to visit the hospital for her treatment. Neither was she scared of undergoing intensive treatment. "I was laughing in the chemotherapy room chatting with the nurses and the patient in the bed next to me had to draw the curtains and take a look at me because nobody ever laughs in the chemotherapy room," narrates Sabina amusingly.

Sabina's story is one of positivity and strength. Although the regular treatments and therapies have caused gradual weight loss and has made her weaker, she has not let it stop her from enjoying life. She even celebrated the start of this new year right after undergoing a huge operation. She is determined to keep on fighting and has no intent on compromising her happiness.

Interviewed and written by Tasnim Odrika of The Daily Star.



# United Hospital Cancer Care Centre

## A Centre of Excellence witnessing MANY FIRSTs in the country

**2021**  
January  
to  
**2020**  
March

**Maintaining un-interrupted cancer service in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic**

- 17,600 Radiation Therapy
- 1,800 Chemotherapy Daycare
- 5,500 Out-patient Consultation
- 500 Telemedicine Consultation
- 1000 PET-CT Scan

**2019**

**December**

Milestone of 7400 Radiotherapy patients & 1800 Brachytherapy patients

**2018**

Milestone of more than 100 Stereotactic (SRS, SBRT) Radiation patients

**2017**

Milestone of more than 5000 Radiation patients

**2016**

**February (1st time in Bangladesh)**

DIBH (deep inspiration breath holding) based SBRT provided in lung tumour patient

**2015**

**February (1st time in Bangladesh)**

Respiratory Gated Cardiac Sparing Radiation provided in Breast Cancer patient

**2014**

**February (1st time in Bangladesh)**

- Stereotactic Radiotherapy (SRS & 4D CT based SBRT) started
- SRS-Stereotactic Radiosurgery
- SBRT-Stereotactic Body Radiation Therapy

**March**

Radiation provided to 94 year old patient who is doing reasonably well till date

**2013**

**November**

TrueBeam (high precision linear accelerator) launched

**2012**

**May**

Radiation provided to child Medulloblastoma patient of 4 years of age (craniospinal irradiation) who is doing reasonably well till date

**2011**

**February**

Linear Accelerator became operational;

**1st time in Bangladesh**

- Volumetric Modulated Arc Therapy (VMAT) launched to deliver radiation using a cone beam that continuously rotates around the patient
- CT scan based anaesthesia-covered IRIDIUM 29 Brachytherapy launched

**May (1st time in Bangladesh)**

- Medical Cyclotron (only one in the country) to produce radioactive isotopes to be used for imaging to diagnose presence & spread of cancer
- PET CT Scan launched to diagnose presence & spread of cancer

**2010**

**September**

United Hospital Cancer Care Centre Inaugurated

**United Hospital**  
Vanguard in shaping the  
cancer care of Bangladesh



**United Hospital**  
Cancer Care Centre

Plot 15 Road 71 Gulshan Dhaka 1212  
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**Appointment**

**0191 400 1382**

**Hotline**

**10666**

