



The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION

www.thedailystar.net

PLUS 32 PAGES 30TH ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT SEGMENT-2

REGD. NO. DA 781

VOL. XXXI No. 31

MAGH 30, 1427 BS

Your Right to Know

JAMADIUS SANI 30, 1442 HIJRI

12 PAGES PRICE : Tk12.00



MASS VACCINATION GETS MOMENTUM

First month's target may be revised

Top hospitals in Dhaka see huge demand

MOUJIB AHMED SUJAN

The health authorities are now thinking about revising the target of vaccinating 35 lakh people in the first month of mass inoculation against Covid-19.

They are considering the expansion of the vaccination target as more and more people are showing interest in taking the jabs, said health officials.

"People in their numbers are thronging the vaccination centres and we've no problem in vaccinating them. We've enough stock [of vaccine] in hand and are thinking about expanding the target," Prof ABM Khurshid Alam, director general of Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), told The Daily Star yesterday.

The government had initially planned to vaccinate 60 lakh people in the first month, but later revised the target to 35 lakh following a lukewarm response to the online registration.

The mass inoculation campaign began on February 7.

Since then, the number of people showing up at the centres, especially those in Dhaka, to take the first dose of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine has increased every day.

Till Thursday night, around 5.5 lakh people had been given the shots and the number of those who did the registration on www.surokkha.gov.bd reached around 14 lakh.

The centres remained closed yesterday since it was a Friday.

Officials at several key vaccination centres in the capital said they had administered almost all the doses which they received.

Progressing slowly ahead of the campaign, the registration gained momentum after the government announced that people aged 40 and above could also register for the vaccination, they said.

The authorities also introduced on-spot registration and inoculation, but have stopped it later after receiving a good

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



Workers unload vegetables from a boat in the capital's Shyambazar area yesterday. Prices of vegetables have witnessed a sharp fall across the country in recent weeks, thanks to abundant supplies of winter crop. Wholesalers are selling cauliflowers for about Tk 5 a piece, depending on size.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

The Daily Star CELEBRATES

GLORIOUS

50 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

COURAGEOUS

30 YEARS OF JOURNALISM

The second part of our special supplement series which is out today, focuses on the digital transformation of the country. Today we have a look at the ways we have fast adapted to the new normal. From private sector to govt initiatives, digitisation has been the way forward from survival to rapid growth and innovation.

MAKE SURE YOU GRAB A COPY FREE OF CHARGE FROM YOUR HAWKER!

ROHINGYAS IN BHASAN CHAR

Govt plans tour for diplomats

PORIMOL PALMA, back from Bhasan Char

The government is planning a foreign diplomats' visit to Bhasan Char. Over 7,000 Rohingyas have already been relocated to the island from Cox's Bazar and more will be joining them in the coming days.

"We are planning, especially for our friendly ambassadors who want to support us, a visit to Bhasan Char soon," Commodore AA Mamun Chowdhury, project director of Ashryan-3 at Bhasan

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Over 100 aided PK Halder in scams

Most of them bank officials, his close associate tells court

COURT CORRESPONDENT

PK Halder's close associate Sukumar Mridha told a Dhaka court that over 100 people, mostly bankers, had helped Halder execute financial scams.

Those people included a former chairman and a managing director of two private banks.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit yesterday directed all banks to freeze for one more month

the accounts of 64 people, including PK Halder, who was the managing director of NRB Global Bank.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Ashek Imam recorded Sukumar's statement at his chamber after the latter was taken there on February 11 by Anti-Corruption Commission [ACC] Deputy Director Salahuddin, investigation officer of a money laundering case against PK Halder.

The magistrate sent Sukumar to Dhaka

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

ASA founder passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Shafiqul Haque Choudhury, founder and president of the Association for Social Advancement (ASA), a leading microfinance institution serving millions of borrowers across the country, breathed his last at a city hospital early yesterday.



Shafiqul Haque Chy

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

SIKDER GROUP MANAGING DIRECTOR

Arrested on arrival, gets bail in 5 hours

Probe of case over torturing 2 bankers on

STAFF CORRESPONDENT


Ron Haque Sikder, managing director of Sikder Group, got an interim bail yesterday five hours after his arrest upon arrival at Dhaka airport in a case filed over abducting, torturing and opening fire on two Exim Bank officials over a loan permission.


A Gulshan division team of Detective Branch of police arrested Ron soon after he landed at the Hazrat

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3




Ron Haque Sikder





Across Bangladesh

 foodpanda

Just a tap away!

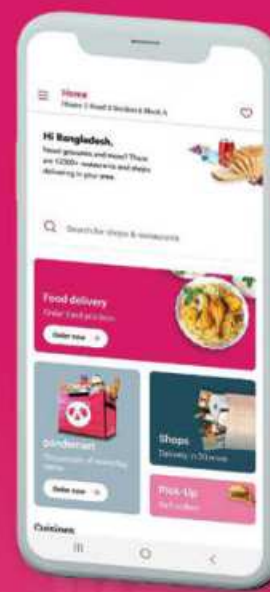
With over **12,000+** restaurants & grocery stores across **64** districts, foodpanda is at your service, anytime, anywhere.

Everything you need, want or desire is now just a tap away!

PANDA64

For **Tk. 64 off*** your first order!

*On orders over Tk. 200



GET IT ON Google Play
Download on the App Store
foodpanda.com.bd

BANGLADESH UPDATE

404
New cases in 24hrs

5,39,975
Total cases

8,253
Deaths

4,86,393
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE

2,380,990
Deaths

108,395,485
Total cases

Conflicting versions of Wari murder crop up

Quoting accused, cops say she committed the murder to protect her daughter; victim's family claims it was a crime of passion

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Family members of a man whose body was found by police by chance on Thursday said the woman with whom he had an affair had killed him because he wanted to break up.

A police team looking for the woman in connection with a general diary unexpectedly ended up at the scene of the gruesome murder of Sajib Hasan, 35, at an apartment near Sayedabad Bus Terminal in the capital.

Naznin Akter, an aunt of Sajib, said Sajib met Shahnaz Parveen, 52, in a bus 11 years ago while returning to Dhaka from his village home in Kushtia.

Not long after they met each other, Sajib took her to a relative's house in Gazipur and introduced her as his wife. During the visit, Shahnaz identified herself as an officer of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID), said Naznin while talking to this correspondent at Sir Salimullah Medical College (SSMC) morgue yesterday.

She added that couple said they lived in Chattogram because Shahnaz worked there.

Sajib's uncle Nazrul Islam filed a case accusing Shahnaz of killing Sajib with Wari Police Station yesterday, said Officer-in-Charge Azizur Rahman.

At the scene of the murder on Thursday, police found transport worker Sajib's body cut into five pieces.

Earlier last week, Shahnaz's husband, who is a wealthy businessman, lodged a diary with the police station stating that his wife went missing with gold ornaments.

Policemen found that Shahnaz's phone was last used in an apartment of a building on KM Das Lane near Sayedabad Bus Terminal and located her there.

Cops were talking to her at the door of an apartment when one of the officers noticed parts of a human body by the side of a bed in the living room. She then admitted to police that she had killed the man that morning.

SSMC morgue employees told this newspaper that Sajib was killed by a sharp weapon and that his limbs were cut at the joints.

Sajib's uncle Nazrul said, "Shahnaz and Sajib visited our house a dozen

times in the last 11 years. Around three to four months ago, Shahnaz told us to buy Sajib's land and house in Kushtia for Tk 20 lakh.

"But they left when we demanded that the land be registered to us. Actually, Sajib's mother Surjo Banu would not agree to sell the property."

Nazrul claimed that Sajib wanted to break up with her at least twice before. She once went to Sajib's village home in Kushtia and brought him back to Dhaka.

On the day of the killing, Shahnaz called Sajib's mother around 11:30am and said she and Sajib were leaving for Canada and sent her Tk 1,000 and asked her not to worry, Nazrul said.

But Shahnaz didn't let Surjo Banu speak to Sajib and switched off the phone instead.

Surjo Banu learnt about her son's death around 2:00pm from police, Nazrul added.

During interrogation, Shahnaz told police that Sajib convinced her to leave her home with money and gold ornaments so that they can settle somewhere and start a business.

When Shahnaz went to the apartment on KM Das Lane with around 20 vori of gold, Sajib tried to take the gold away from her, she said.

Around 10:00am on Thursday, Sajib first attacked Shahnaz with a hammer and then with a knife, she said, adding that she was somehow able to get hold of the knife and in self defense stabbed Sajib on the stomach, Shah Iftekhar Ahmed, deputy commissioner of Wari Division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, who was present during the interrogation, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Shahnaz also told police that Sajib used to stalk one of her two daughters. Shahnaz first contacted him to ask him to stop the stalking. But eventually Sajib seduced her and later blackmailed her into having a relationship with him, said the DC.

"We saw marks of injuries caused by a hammer and a knife on Shahnaz's body. She said those were from Sajib's attack."

Shahnaz confessed to killing Sajib before a court yesterday evening after she was placed on a 10-day remand.

Vaccination gives UK hope of lifting curbs

AGENCIES

Britain yesterday closed in on a mid-February target to offer coronavirus vaccinations to 15 million of the most vulnerable people in the UK, raising hopes it could lead to restrictions being eased.

More than 13.5 million people have been given a jab since the country's biggest-ever immunisation programme began in early December, with a daily average of 431,232 receiving a vaccine last week.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has vowed to offer jabs to all those in its top four priority groups -- which includes over-70s, care home residents and some key workers -- by the end of this week.

The devolved government in Wales, which controls its own health policy, said it will reach its target of vaccinating the top four categories.

Figures showed nearly 22 percent of people in Wales have been vaccinated, compared to 20.3 percent in England, 19.2 percent in Scotland and 18.7 percent in Northern Ireland.

The UK government in London,

which is responsible for sourcing vaccines, is next aiming to have offered jabs to all over-50s by May and the entire adult population by September.

Wales' First Minister Mark Drakeford said the successful vaccine rollout combined with falling infection rates could soon allow for some restrictions to be lifted "carefully and cautiously".

"We can see a path into the spring where it will be possible for us to go back to doing some of the things that we're all missing so much," he told the BBC.

REOPENING 'ROADMAP'
Infection rates have dropped markedly across Britain over recent weeks, as strict lockdown measures have curbed previously spiralling case numbers, hospitalisations and deaths.

That has prompted calls for the stay-at-home rules to be lifted in early March. Johnson has vowed to review all relevant data next week, ahead of setting out the government's "roadmap" for reopening the following week.

Ministers have said ensuring the return of in-person schooling for some students will be the immediate priority.

ASA founder passes away

FROM PAGE 1

He was 72.

An adviser to a former caretaker government, Shafiqul died at Square Hospital due to a cardiac shock, ASA said in its website.

He left behind his wife, three sons and a host of friends and relatives to mourn his death.

Born in Habiganj in 1949, he obtained a master's degree in sociology from Dhaka University in 1969 and worked as a trainer for the Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARAD).

In the volatile days of the country, Shafiqul founded ASA in 1978 in remote Tapra village under the then Manikganj sub-division with a mission of welfare of the poor, marginalised and disadvantaged and the vision to establish a poverty-free society.

ASA provides several microfinance products to its members, including savings, insurance, loans tailored for agri-business and the information technology (IT) sector, and a free-of-charge health assistance programme for "major/critical diseases," according to microcapital.org.

Shafiqul was well-known for his insistence on preserving the slim, low-cost nature of ASA's operations through standardisation of products, simplification of procedures, and a zero-tolerance rule on late repayments, and has been compared to Henry Ford by the Asian Development Bank's quarterly Finance for the Poor, as a result.

Different organisations, including Gonoshasthaya Kendra, and dignitaries, including Nobel Laureate

Dr Muhammad Yunus and Planning Minister MA Mannan, expressed deep shock at his demise.

Recollecting the ASA founder's immense contributions to lifting people out of poverty through microcredit, Dr Yunus said, "He entered the microcredit sector rather abruptly, without having any relevant institutional or academic preparation. Yet, he never considered this as a barrier. He was resolute in his decision and worked relentlessly to meet his aspirations. His limitless courage was his true strength."

In the message from Yunus Centre, he said, "Although he joined in this sector late, he made his institution to become one of the top two microfinancing entities in the country within a short time by merit of his courage, leadership and managerial skills."

"Besides leading ASA's vast operation in the country, Shafiqul Haque Choudhury also expanded the services to many other countries. He collaborated with various international organisations to help microcredit reach different countries. He encouraged a host of academics, donor organisations, and leaders of international organisations, who were not interested in microcredit, to join him and believe in this sector," he said.

"The people of the country will be forever indebted to Shafiqul Haque Choudhury for his contributions," Dr Yunus added.

Shafiqul was buried at Martyred Intellectual Graveyard in Mirpur around 2:50pm after a namaz-e-janaza at the Shishu Palli Jame Mosque in Shyamoli.

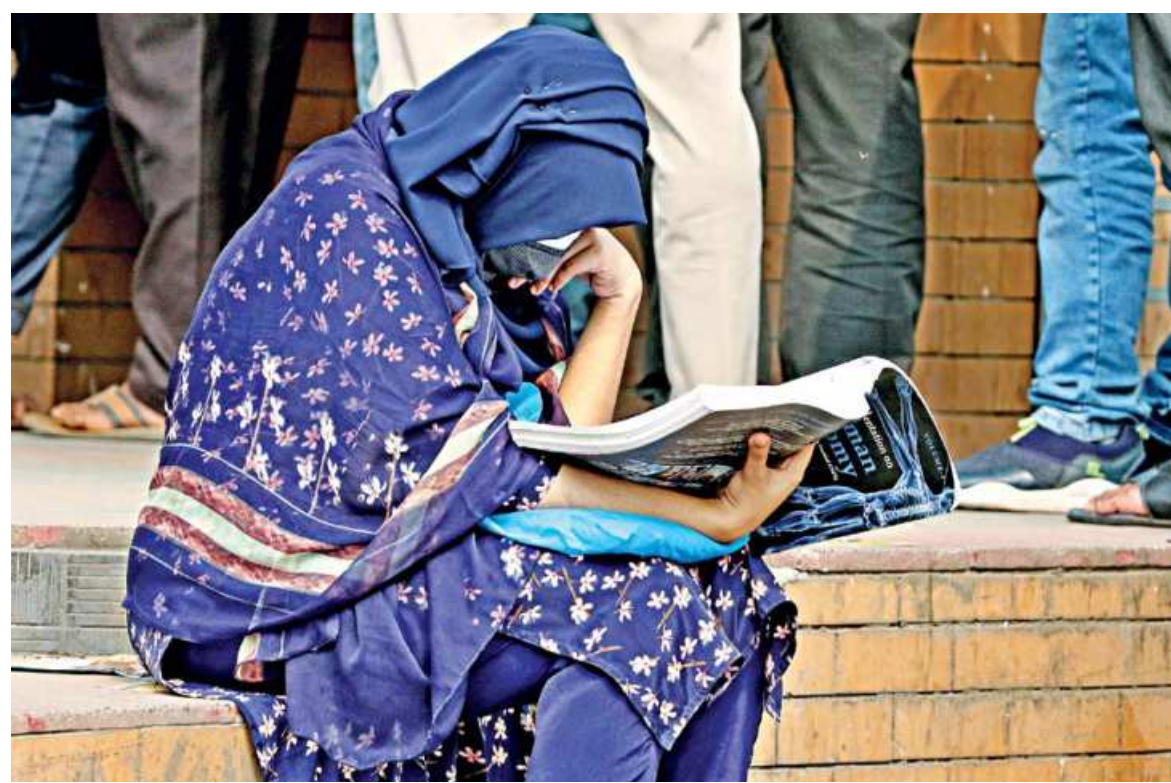


PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Sabrina Islam, an MBBS student of Dr Sirajul Islam Medical College, makes good use of her time reading a course book while waiting to be tested for novel coronavirus at Mugda General Hospital yesterday. To be able to take the second year final exams of her MBBS course on February 22, she must have a Covid-19 negative test.

First month's target may be revised

FROM PAGE 1

response to the online registration, they added.

The government launched the vaccination campaign with 70 lakh doses in hand. It is expected to get the second instalment of 50 lakh shots from Serum Institute of India (SII) later this month. Around the same time, another 1.31 lakh doses under the COVAX programme are scheduled to arrive here.

The government has purchased three crore doses of the vaccine from SII.

In Dhaka, several vaccination centres, including those in Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) and Kurmitola General Hospital, have almost completed administering their allocated doses, DGHS officials said.

"We will send additional shots from our existing stocks to the centres which need them. We have directed the centres to increase their capacity to vaccinate more people," Prof ABM Khurshid Alam said.

According to DGHS officials, the National Immunization Technical Committee (NITAC) would sit today evening to decide on the new target for the first month of the vaccination.

After the government lowered the minimum age ceiling to 40 from 55 for the vaccination, the number of people in its priority list has gone up.

The government has also reduced the interval period between the administration of two doses to four weeks from eight.

A DGHS official, wishing not to be named, told this newspaper that the NITAC meeting today might also discuss whether the interval period could be increased.

AstraZeneca on Thursday said the key to the success of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine is a longer gap between the two doses, reports The Telegraph newspaper of the UK.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) also recommended extending the time between the first and second dose to improve efficacy.

"In light of the observation that two-dose efficacy and immunogenicity increase with a longer inter-dose interval, WHO recommends an interval of eight to 12 weeks between the doses," it said.

There are 2,400 vaccination centres across Bangladesh and they have the capacity to inoculate 3.6 lakh people every day.

On the first day of the mass campaign, on February 7, some 31,000 people were given their first shot of the vaccine. More than two lakh people took the jabs on Thursday, which took the total number of vaccine recipients in the country to 5,42,309.

Of them 68,901 received the shots in

46 centres in Dhaka city, show DGHS data.

For Dhaka district and Dhaka city, the DGHS allocated six lakh vaccine jabs. Ahead of the campaign, the government had distributed 50 lakh doses among 61 districts.

The rush for vaccine has resulted in many failing to find a date for taking the jabs even after they received confirmation of their registration.

More than nine lakh people were waiting to get vaccinated as of yesterday afternoon after completing the registration.

"We are observing that people have been rushing to some certain vaccination centres. As we allowed on-spot registration, there are backlogs in many centres. For this reason, many of those who registered are not getting their confirmation SMS. This will be solved soon," Dr Shamsul Haque Mridha, member secretary of the National Covid-19 Vaccination Campaign of the DGHS, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"There were several technical complexities people were reporting. Almost all of them have been fixed. The process is getting smoother every day contributing to the rising number of registrations," Md Toufiq Hassan Shawon, medical officer at the management information system (MIS) at the DGHS, told The Daily Star.

Arrested on arrival, gets bail in 5 hours

FROM PAGE 1

Shahjalal International Airport around 10:00am, Golam Saqlain, additional deputy commissioner (Gulshan division) of DB police, told The Daily Star.

He came to Dhaka from Dubai due to the death of his father, he added.

Later in the day, DB Sub-inspector Md Ripon Uddin, also the investigation officer of the case, produced Ron before the court of Metropolitan Magistrate Md Ashek Imam.

The court granted him bail at 3:15pm upon a bond of Tk 5,000 with two guarantors after he was produced before the court with a forwarding report.

In the forwarding report, the IO said the accused along with his brother Dipu Haque Sikder left the country on May 25 last year to avoid arrest.

So, he appealed to the court to keep him in jail until the investigation is completed, the IO added.

General Recording Officer SI Md Alamgir Hossain told the court that Ron is an accused in an attempted murder case and went abroad to evade arrest and so should be sent to jail.

The defence lawyer, on the other

hand, submitted a petition seeking bail on grounds that his client's father died recently and his namaz-e-janaza will be held tomorrow. Moreover, Ron is ill and so his bail petition should be granted on humanitarian grounds, the lawyer added.

The magistrate granted bail to the accused until the next scheduled date set on March 10.

On May 19 last year, Exim Bank Director Lt Col (retd) Serajul Islam filed the case accusing Ron and his brother Dipu of torturing and trying to kill the bank's Managing Director Mohammed Haider Ali Miah and Additional Managing Director Mohammad Feroz Hossain.

The two top officials were attacked after they refused to falsely inflate the value of Sikder brothers' property that would be mortgaged for a loan of Tk 500 crore, according to the case statement.

The brothers also tortured the two officials while confining them to a house in Banani and forced them to sign on a blank paper at gunpoint, reads the case.

On May 25 last year, six days

after the case was registered, the two brothers fled to Bangkok on an air ambulance that left Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport with government permission.

Police on June 1 last year seized Ron's Range Rover which was allegedly used during the attempted murder.

A team of Gulshan division police seized the white SUV from Sikder house on Banani Road-11 of Dhaka.

On July 20 the same year, the High Court fined Ron and his brother for seeking anticipatory bail from abroad in the case.

Rejecting their bail petition, an HC virtual bench ordered the siblings to give 5,000 personal protective equipment (PPE) each as fine to the Prime Minister's Relief and Welfare Fund in two weeks to contain the Covid-19 pandemic.

Ron and Dipu have also been asked to file a report with the Supreme Court registrar general's office after submitting the PPE to the fund.

The HC bench of Justice Md Ashraf Kamal passed the order after holding hearing on the anticipatory bail petition filed by the two brothers.

Action against Al Jazeera if HC directs govt

Says information minister

Bss, Chattogram

Information Minister Hasan Mahmud has said the government will take action against Al Jazeera if the High Court directs it to this end.

He said the present government is media-friendly and it firmly believes in freedom of press.

The minister was responding to queries from journalists during a briefing on current affairs at his residence in the port city yesterday evening.

"We could have shut down Al Jazeera in our country if we wanted it. Even in India it was closed for a while. The telecast of Al Jazeera is still closed in six to seven countries in the world. But the government, led by Sheikh Hasina, did not take such initiatives as it believes in freedom of press," he added.

Hasan said independence is needed for any organisation, but it also needs such responsibility. "Freedom does not mean airing wrong, false, biased and motivated news items which deprive others of freedom."

MUNICIPALITY POLLS

Jubo League leader jailed over threat to mayoral candidates

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

A mobile court has jailed a local Jubo League leader and two of his associates for different terms for threatening mayoral candidates in tomorrow's Jibannagar municipality polls in Chuadanga.

Jummat Mandal, president of Hashanah Union Jubo League and also a former UIP member, was handed two months' imprisonment, while Ayub Mandal and Pannu Mandal were jailed for six and two months respectively.

After they were produced before the judicial magistrate's court in the district yesterday afternoon, it sent them to jail.

Members of the mobile court, led by Executive Magistrate Firoz Hossain, said on Thursday night they, along with police personnel, rushed to local Tentulia Bazar on information that Jummat, Ayub and Pannu were threatening mayoral runners from rival parties while seeking vote for "boat", the electoral symbol of the ruling Awami League-nominated mayor candidate Rafiqul Islam.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Over 100 aided

FROM PAGE 1

Central Jail in Keraniganj after recording his statement, an ACC official told The Daily Star.

Sukumar, a lawyer who owns Sukumar & Associates, told the magistrate that he used to file tax returns for PK Halder and his family members.

"PK Halder established over 50 companies that existed only on papers. Owners of these companies were his relatives. He borrowed 100 crore Taka in the name of those non-existent companies," he said in the statement.

The ACC official said Sukumar bought over 4,000 decimals of land in Narayanganj's Rupganj, Bagerhat, Dhaka's Purbachal, and Pirojpur while PK Halder bought over 10,000 decimals of land in his village home of Pirojpur.

Sukumar built a two-story building on five katha of land at Ashoke Nagar in 24 Parganas of India for his daughter. He also laundered money in the name of those non-existent companies, according to the statement.

Sukumar's daughter Anindita Mridha, one of the directors of Wintel International, told a magistrate on February 11 that a total of Tk 80 crore was taken from FAS Finance and International Leasing in her name without her knowledge.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Sadrir Yasir Ahsan Chowdhury recorded her statement.

She also claimed that her father took her signature on various documents at different times. But she did not know why he was doing that.

She was also sent to Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj.

ACC Deputy Director Salauddin questioned the duo at his office before arresting them on January 21.

Later, they were placed on a three-day remand each.

According to the remand petition, Sukumar and Anindita acquired assets by using aliases in collusion with PK Halder.

Sukumar and Anindita looked after PK Halder's illegal assets after he fled abroad. Sukumar also looked after several organisations linked to PK Halder, according to ACC officials.

Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU), the state's anti-money laundering agency, asked all banks that the accounts of 64 persons, operated in their own name or in their interest should remain blocked for the next 30 days.

On August 12, 2020, the accounts of 83 people were frozen for the sake of investigation into a money laundering case. The accounts of 19 people were later dropped from this list.

"For this, we need to make a plan.

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

RATITES

On a grey morning three years ago in northern Queensland, Australia, I boarded a microbus with several other birders. After exiting the highway we drove a long, winding road through the rainforest. It ended at a two-story country house. This was Cassowary House, a dedicated birdwatchers' lodge for observing rare birds such as the Cassowary and Victoria's Riflebird.

We were led to a long balcony on the second floor. The dense, lush forest lay in front of us. As we watched, various birds flew in to eat at bird feeders. Then something on the ground caught our eye. A plump black bird with a blue head and a red wattles wandered in and out of the forest. It was round and stocky, about five feet tall and weighing well over a hundred pounds, with a large growth, called a casque, on its head. Its body was covered with long black hair but no feathers. Its feet had three plump toes; the inner toe had a long, sharp claw.

The unusual bird is called the Cassowary. It can run at thirty miles per hour on its long legs, but it cannot fly. It belongs to a bird group known as ratites - large, terrestrial birds found in many parts of the globe. Having weak flight and wing muscles, ratites are flightless. Their breastbones are flat and lack a keel where flight muscles of normal birds attach to. Their feathers are unsuitable for flying.

The largest living ratite is the Ostrich which lives in open plains of Africa. It can reach nine feet in height and can exceed three hundred pounds. Despite its bulk it can run at thirty five miles per hour. The Ostrich is also farmed for feathers and meat.

Found in the grasslands of South America, the Rhea is another member of the ratite group. At less than six feet tall and weighing up to eighty eight pounds, it is smaller



Clockwise from top left: Elephant Bird egg in Madagascar, Ostrich in Kenya, Cassowary in Australia and Rhea in Brazil

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

than the Ostrich. I have seen them both from afar; they look strikingly similar as they wander through open fields and grasslands.

The Emu of Australia is another large ratite at six feet and one hundred pounds. The smallest ratite is the Kiwi of New Zealand which is about a foot tall.

Several ratites have become extinct. Most remarkable was the Elephant Bird of Madagascar, the largest bird ever. It stood nine feet tall, weighed over a ton, and was alive until about a thousand years ago. In a museum in southern Madagascar I saw its reconstructed egg, over two feet tall.

Another extinct ratite is the Moa of New Zealand. It reached twelve feet and weighed five hundred

pounds. It became extinct during the 1400s, a century or two after humans landed in New Zealand. With it went the large Haast's Eagle - twice the size of a Harpy Eagle - whose primary diet was the Moa.

How did these flightless birds come to be? Scientists once thought that ratites had descended from a common ancestor in the supercontinent Gondwana. However, there is now evidence to suggest that different species evolved into flightless birds independent of one another. The story of these similar birds is indeed mysterious.

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

AIR QUALITY INDEX

Dhaka world's second most polluted city

UNB, Dhaka

The densely populated capital of Bangladesh continues to rank high in the list of cities with the worst air quality.

Yesterday, Dhaka was second in the list. Delhi in neighbouring India was first, while third and fourth spots were grabbed by Lahore in Pakistan and Beijing in China, respectively.

Dhaka's air quality index (AQI) at 9am read 312, which is considered "hazardous".

An AQI between 201 and 300 is considered "poor", while 301-400 is hazardous, posing serious health risks to city residents.

AQI, an index for reporting daily air quality, is used by government agencies to inform people how clean or polluted the air of a certain city is, and what associated health effects might be a concern for them.

In Bangladesh, the overall air quality index is based on five criteria of pollutants: particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5), nitrogen dioxide (NO2), carbon monoxide (CO), sulphur dioxide (SO2) and ozone (O3).

Bangladesh has a subtropical monsoon climate characterised by wide seasonal variations in rainfall, high temperatures and humidity. Generally, Dhaka's air starts getting fresh when monsoon rains begin in mid-June.

The air remains mostly acceptable from June to October.

In February last year, Bangladesh's Environment, Forests and Climate Change Minister Md Shahab Uddin admitted that air pollution levels in the capital "has reached an extreme level".

"This is mainly due to uncontrolled discharge of dust from construction projects, and smoke from vehicles and brick kilns," he told the news agency.

"Brick kilns are responsible for 58 percent air pollution in the capital. Plans have been taken to shut [traditional] kilns currently in operation," he added.

We are planning to stop burning bricks at all kilns by 2025 and use block bricks to construct buildings under government projects," the minister said.

Besides, on January 31, the High Court (HC) directed authorities concerned to shut down all illegal brick kilns by February 18.

Another feather in Kumudini's cap

PM to lay foundation stone of cancer research institute by philanthropic org in Narayanganj tomorrow

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Kumudini Welfare Trust, one of the most prestigious philanthropic organisations in Bangladesh, is set to lay the foundation stone for Kumudini International Institute of Medical Sciences and Cancer Research (KIIMS CaRe) on Sunday, at a ceremony to be held at Kumudini Complex, Narayanganj.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is expected to unveil the foundation stone plaque of KIIMS CaRe virtually on the day, said a statement from the trust. KIIMS CaRe will be established in Narayanganj on its own land.

The institute will have a 300-bed general hospital, a 50-bed cancer hospital, cancer research centre, nursing institute and medical technology institute including a women's medical college. It is expected that, after setup, by 2030, KIIMS CaRe will be able to serve more than 3.5 million patients.

Kumudini Welfare Trust of Bengal (BD) Limited comprehends the need for rapid establishment of more hospitals, particularly specialised cancer hospitals, and health workforce development institutes, for example nursing college and medical technologist institutes, said commander (retired) Rizaul Karim, general manager (admin and ops) of the trust.

In line with the philosophy of the trust's founder Ranada Prasad Shaha, poor people will be served with high quality treatment, including cancer treatment, at a low cost at KIIMS CaRe.

Renowned international medical universities, competent doctors and medical experts will provide lectures there to train the health workforce, as well as render services at the hospital.

"In brief, KIIMS CaRe will be a one-stop place for low-cost, high-quality healthcare service provision and health workforce development, thereby becoming a complementary force beside the government's efforts," he said.

Treatment of cancer is very costly for middle- and low-income people. There are examples of families becoming extremely poor due to the high cost of treatment of cancer.

Kumudini Welfare Trust of Bengal has been serving humanity for more than 88 years now. The trust mainly concentrates on health, education, and women's empowerment.

During his lifetime, R P Shaha had set up the free Kumudini Hospital at Mirzapur, Tangail in 1944; educational institutions Bharateswari Homes for girls in 1938; Debendra College in 1942; Kumudini Girls College in 1943, and other institutions.

RP Saha and his son were abducted from their home in Narayanganj by the Pakistan Army and their collaborators on May 1971 and since then, they have been listed missing.

The institute will have a 300-bed general hospital, a 50-bed cancer hospital, cancer research centre, nursing institute and medical technology institute including a women's medical college. By 2030, KIIMS CaRe is expected to serve more than 3.5 million patients.

Woman, daughter tortured by lenders

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Alleged moneylenders tortured a mother and her teenage daughter after tying them against a tree in Gazipur's Kaliakair on Thursday, although the family agreed to repay the loan on a stipulated time.

The mother, Momtaz Begum, filed a case against eight persons with Kaliakair Police Station. Police arrested the mastermind Sabuj, said OC Monwar Hossain of Kaliakair police.

Momtaz, a widowed single mother, works at a garments factory. She borrowed money from some locals including Gafur and Monir.

She failed to repay it within the initial deadline and was given a month's extension after a mediation done through UP member Ibrahim Shikder. Momtaz said there was still time left for repayment.

Informed by locals, police rescued them, said the OC. Shikder also said he rushed to the victims' house once he found out about the incident.

Safe society for women a far cry after 50yrs of independence: speakers

Anti-rape rally held in capital's Shahbagh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In the 50 years of Bangladesh's independence, those in power have claimed of many developments in the country but they still could not ensure a safe and secure society for women, speakers said at an anti-rape rally yesterday.

Citing data, speakers held the government responsible for the rise of rape incidents in the hills and on plainlands, when the country is celebrating 50 years of its birth.

"Rape is a crime where the criminals, in most cases, are close aides of people in power - like ruling party men and police. Not only rape, these people are also involved with land grabbing and extortion. These are all linked to power," Anu Muhammad, a professor of Jahangirnagar University and also member secretary of National Committee to Protect Oil, Gas, Mineral Resources, Power and Ports, told at the rally in the capital's Shahbagh.

He said the number of incidents reported in media are only based on the cases filed after the incidents. "The real number of rape incidents are much higher than we get in data," he said.

Under the banner of "Bangladesh against Rape and Impunity" led by different leftist parties and cultural

organisations, protests against rape and violence against women have been going across the country since the beginning of October, after the incidents of gang-rape in Noakhali's Begumganj upazila and Sylhet's MC College.

Since then, the platform has been protesting across the country to press home their nine-point demand, including reformation of the Evidence Act, implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) charter, exemplary punishment for those involved in gender-based violence, and an end to repression of women in the hills and on plain land.

Urging the government to take steps to make the country more women-friendly, speakers at the rally demanded speedy trial of rapists and culprits involved in violence against women.

They said most of the victims don't get justice in the long run, mentioning the case of Tufan Sarkar in Bogura where he got bail recently.

Nasir Uddin, central general secretary of Samajtantrik Chhatra Front chaired the session, conducted by Md Foyezullah, central president of Bangladesh Chhatra Union.



The illegal "market" occupying Dhaka's AGB Colony Bazaar Road's footpath has now spilled over to the road in front, adding to the already existing traffic woe of the area. This photo was taken yesterday.



A little girl sits on her father's lap on a rickshaw, eyes fixated on a red rose as bright as her cardigan. Flower shops are teeming with petals of all colours and kinds as February, a month of many occasions such as Pahela Falgun, Valentine's Day and Int'l Mother Language Day, progresses. This photo was taken yesterday at Shahbagh.

ADMISSION TEST FRAUD DU to expel seven students

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka University authorities have recommended expulsion of seven students for their alleged involvement in admission test forgery and digital fraudulence.

DU's Disciplinary Council has also recommended suspension of 147 other students of the university, and its affiliated colleges and institutions, in connection with the same offense.

The decision was taken at a meeting on Thursday evening. The programme was chaired by Vice-Chancellor Prof Akhtaruzzaman, said Proctor AKM Golam Rabbani.

However, the final approval has to come from the syndicate at its next meeting, the proctor added.

According to the allegations, the students were enrolled in the university through fraudulent means in the academic sessions from 2013-14 to 2016-17. Earlier, two of them were served show cause notices to explain their stand.

Meanwhile, the council has barred three teachers from evaluating examination papers for the next three years in the wake of allegations of "inappropriate" checking against them.

Earlier in August 2019, DU authorities suspended 69 students for adopting unfair means during admission tests.

EU for lasting solution to Rohingya crisis

UNB, Dhaka

President of the European Council Charles Michel has reaffirmed European Union's continued support to Bangladesh for a lasting and peaceful solution to the Rohingya crisis.

He said this when Ambassador Mahubb Hassan Saleh, the newly-appointed Head of Mission of Bangladesh to the EU, met him to present his Letters of Credence in Brussels on Thursday.

Ambassador Saleh stressed the need for Myanmar authorities taking credible measures to generate confidence among the forcibly-displaced Rohingyas, temporarily sheltered in Bangladesh, for their safe, dignified and sustainable return to the Rakhine State.

President Michel recalled his previous meetings with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, including the last one held in Madrid in December 2019.

Ambassador Saleh also conveyed the greetings of the president and the prime minister of Bangladesh to the president of the European Council.

The European Council president acknowledged Bangladesh's

preoccupation with climate change, and noted the current presidency of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF).

Saleh suggested establishing a dedicated bilateral platform between Bangladesh and the EU for exchanging views and working more closely to address the challenges of climate change.

He also suggested holding a CVF-EU leaders' meeting, during the lead-up to UNFCCC COP-26 in the UK later this year.

Michel responded positively to these suggestions. The Bangladesh ambassador also underscored the need for expanding the scope of Bangladesh-European Union partnership.

He also conveyed Bangladesh prime minister's invitation to the European Council president to visit the country at his earliest convenience.

The meeting took place following the existing health regulations in Belgium.

The ambassador was accompanied by Md Safiul Azam, counsellor (commerce) and Kaniz Fatema, first secretary (political) of the mission.

Calls grow louder for UN

FROM PAGE 12
UN Special Rapporteur Thomas Andrews said there were "growing reports and photographic evidence" that security forces had used live ammunition against protesters since seizing power almost two weeks ago.

"Security Council resolutions dealing with similar situations have mandated sanctions, arms embargoes, and travel bans, and calling for judicial action at the International Criminal Court or ad hoc tribunals," he told the Council. "All of these options should be on the table."

The 47-member forum met at the request of Britain and the European Union to consider a resolution calling for the release of ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi, and for UN monitors to be allowed to visit.

300 MPS URGE UN TO PROBE RIGHTS ABUSES
The elected Myanmar parliamentarians called for UN investigations into the "gross human rights violations" that they said the military had committed since its coup, including arrests.

In a letter read out by Britain's ambassador Julian Braithwaite, they said: "The military also shot people protesting, invaded the ruling party's offices, confiscated documents, records, and property."

They said a telecommunications bill being prepared by the junta was intended to restrict access to the Internet and mobile services.

US Chargé d'Affaires Mark Cassayre said: "We ask all Council members to join the United States and others to ... join us in promoting accountability for those responsible for the coup, including through targeted sanctions."

But China and Russia - which have close ties to Myanmar's military - said they opposed holding the session at all.

"What happened in Myanmar is essentially Myanmar's internal affairs," said Chen Xu, China's ambassador.

Russian ambassador Gennady Gatilov said: "Attempts to whip up hype around the situation in Myanmar need to cease."

VIOLENT CLASHES
Yesterday's mostly peaceful protests were the biggest so far.

Three people were wounded when police fired rubber bullets to break up a crowd of tens of thousands in the southeastern city of Mawlamyine, a Myanmar Red Cross official told Reuters.

Footage broadcast by Radio Free Asia showed police charging at protesters, grabbing one and smashing him in the

head. Stones were then thrown at police before the shots were fired.

"Three got shot - one woman in the womb, one man on his cheek and one man on his arm," said Myanmar Red Cross official Kyaw Myint, who witnessed the clash.

In the biggest city Yangon, hundreds of doctors in white duty coats and scrubs marched past the golden Shwedagon pagoda, the country's holiest Buddhist site, while in another part of town, football fans wearing team kits marched with humorous placards denouncing the military.

Other demonstrations took place in Naypyitaw, the coastal town of Dawei, and in Myitkyina, the capital of northern Kachin state, where young men played rap music and staged a dance-off.

Social media giant Facebook said it would cut the visibility of content run by Myanmar's military, saying they had "continued to spread misinformation" after seizing power.

US SANCTIONS
The protests came a day after US President Joe Biden announced imposing sanctions that would prevent the generals who engineered a coup in Myanmar on February 1 from gaining access to \$1 billion in funds their government keeps in the US.

He threatened additional sanctions, and demanded that the generals restore democracy and release Aung San Suu Kyi, the nation's civilian leader, whose party won the national elections in November.

The military took power through coup, alleging massive vote fraudulence. The generals said they are taking control of the country for one year and promised to hand over power after elections. No date has yet been set for elections.

Meanwhile, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) on Thursday said it is immediately redirecting \$42.2 million of assistance away from work that would have benefited Myanmar's government after conducting a review of its programs following the coup in the country.

"Rather than supporting the military, we will redirect these funds to support and strengthen civil society," the aid agency said in a statement, adding that it will continue to support the people of Myanmar with approximately \$69 million in bilateral programs.

The junta remitted the sentences of more than 23,000 prisoners yesterday, saying the move was consistent with "establishing a new democratic state with peace, development and discipline" and would "please the public".



A Palestinian demonstrator returns a tear gas canister fired by Israeli troops during a protest against Israeli settlements, in Beit Dajan in the Israeli-occupied West Bank yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Land lost, so is livelihood

FROM PAGE 12
Protection Movement.
A FALSE CASE, FEAR OF REPRISAL
"In 2017, Arif Hossain, manager of the rubber company, filed a fabricated case against five of us, including Johon Tripura, headman of Daluchhari mouza, to harass us and grab our ancestral land," said Rengyan Mro, karbari of Rengyan Mro Para.

Living in fear of also being evicted from their homes, these Mro families have not visited the police station or filed a case over grabbing of their land, said the community leaders.

Headman Johon Tripura said, "Members of law enforcement agencies help the land grabbers grab our ancestral land. Sometimes, these agency members call us to their offices and threaten us."

"When we protested, they filed a false case against us."

Mizanur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Lama Police Station, denied the allegation and said on Monday, "When the Mro people contacted us, we suggested they go to court to solve the problem."

In 2017, an investigation was conducted by Sayed Iqbal, the then assistant commissioner (land) of Lama, into the plots the rubber company claims as theirs.

The Daily Star obtained the copy of his investigation report.

Signed in October 2017, it stated the Mro people of Daluchhari mouza had been using this jhum land for generations and if the

land was allotted for use as rubber plantation, the Mro indigenous people would be left with no means for their livelihood.

If the land is not taken over by Lama Rubber Industries, there is no danger of peace being disturbed in the area, the report also stated.

The Daily Star contacted Sayed Iqbal, now UNO of Alikadam upazila, for comment on Monday but he said as it was several years ago, he couldn't recall the instance.

When asked if he would like to look over the document in question and then comment, he declined.

Refuting all allegations, Lama Rubber Industries Limited Manager Arif Hossain said they did not grab any jhum land but Mro and Tripura people had illegally entered their rubber plot area instead.

"We didn't threaten anyone," he said.

Arif said Lama Rubber Industries has 375 acres of land in Sarai mouza and 1,225 acres of land in Daluchhari mouza.

In 1994, the company shareholders took out a lease on these plots for a rubber plantation for a period of 40 years from the district administration, he added.

However, one of the conditions of the lease agreement -- as noted in another investigation report by the kanungo (revenue clerk) of the

Lama upazila land office in October 2017 -- is that the leaseholder must complete the project work within five years of getting the allotment.

When asked about no cultivation on their leased land for at least 26 years, violating this condition of the lease agreement, Arif claimed, "We don't know if there is any condition like this in the agreement."

Dhaka, Beijing

FROM PAGE 12
ancient festival transcends borders and races. So, join us to welcome a joyful 'niu' year."

He added that this was the most important holiday in China and this year marks the year of the ox or cow.

"Mind you, when I say 'new', I actually mean 'niu', the Chinese word for ox or cow, which happens to have the same pronunciation as the English word new," he said.

Ox or cow is generally perceived as an animal that's hard working, tough and reliable, which are some very useful traits in a prolonged pandemic.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh launched a massive countrywide vaccination drive on Feb 7, for which the government procured five million doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine from the Serum Institute of India Pvt Ltd last month.

India also gifted two million doses of the vaccine.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina last week ordered reducing the age limit from 55 years to 40 to get registered for vaccination to expand and accelerate the drive.

Jubo League

FROM PAGE 2
The mobile court found the information to be true and handed the punishment for threatening the mayor candidates and violating the electoral code of conduct, the members added.

In tomorrow's municipal polls, BNP-nominated mayor candidate Shahjahan Kabir is running with "sheaf of paddy" symbol, and Khokon Mia from Islami Andolan with "hand fan".

AL CANDIDATE CLEARED
Hassan Qadir, AL-nominated mayor runner in the district's Alamdanga municipality polls slated for tomorrow, has been cleared of the charges involving threatening voters and a plan to rig votes.

Returning Officer and District Election Officer Tareq Ahmed confirmed the development to The Daily Star yesterday.

On Wednesday, Hassan was served a show-cause notice after Delwar Hossain, president of AL in the municipality, allegedly threatened to prevent anyone from voting for rival party candidates in the polls and planned to rig votes.

Hassan said he replied to the notice and that he was cleared based on the reply.

He said he informed the local election office that he would be careful so that such incidents were not repeated.

'We're dying'

Audio calls of migrants trapped in truck prompt US investigation

REUTERS, Washington

US authorities are investigating reports that about 80 migrants may have been trapped in a tanker truck on Monday and were struggling to breathe, an official with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) said on Thursday.

The official said ICE's Homeland Security Investigations unit was looking into 911 calls placed on Monday around San Antonio, Texas.

"We're dying," a male caller said in Spanish as he pleaded for help on one of the calls, according to recordings obtained by Reuters. Moans of others could be heard in the background.

The ICE investigative unit is seeking to learn if the incident may have been human trafficking, the official said.

"At face value, it's at least human smuggling," said the official, who requested anonymity to discuss the matter.

Request for Proposal (RFP)

International Labour Organization (ILO) Dhaka invites proposals from interested Firm/Organization for developing audio-visual products to capture the impact of skills 21 project initiatives and voices of the beneficiaries through short documentaries & still pictures. The bidding documents can be downloaded from the ILO Dhaka website under Procurement Notices at https://www.ilo.org/dhaka/WCMS_367536/lang-en/index.htm

The deadline for submission of proposal is Sunday, March 14, 2021, by 04:30 PM (BST time).

USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

USAID/Bangladesh is seeking Concept Papers from eligible local organizations to fund an activity titled Rights for Persons Living with Disability (PLWD) Activity. Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) Number: 72038821RFA00006, Addendum # 8 to Locally Led Development (LLD), Annual Program Statement (APS) No.: 7200AA19APS00007. Please visit www.grants.gov for detailed information or send an email to mmhussain@usaid.gov, and amuyama@usaid.gov.

D-30

Hamdard Laboratories (Waqf) Bangladesh
Rupayan Trade Cente (12-13th floor), 114 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Banglamotor, Dhaka-1000

Job Opportunity

Hamdard is the pioneer and frontrunner institute in this subcontinent, manufacturing Unani, Ayurvedic & Herbal medicine and food products, currently looking for the enthusiastic and professionally vast experienced Civil Engineer to contribute in accomplishing overall organizational goals.

Name of the Post: Civil Engineer

Job Requirements

- Bachelor of science in Civil Engineering from reputed university.
- At least 10 years working experience related to pharmaceutical manufacturing plant.
- Age limit up to 40 years.
- Candidate having experience in Structural Design will be given priority.

Interested candidates are requested to apply related post with detail bio-data within 18 February 2021 to the following address. Copies of all academic & experience certificates, NID, three (03) copies of passport size recent photographs must be sent with the application.

Director
Human Resource Development
Hamdard Laboratories (Waqf) Bangladesh
Rupayan Trade Cente (12-13th floor),
114 Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue, Banglamotor
Dhaka-1000.

Vote for AL candidate

FROM PAGE 12
symbol], Nur Uddin Chowdhury Nayan, general secretary of Lakshimpur district AL, said while addressing an election rally in Ramgati on Wednesday.

He was campaigning for AL mayoral nominee Mejbah Uddin, also the incumbent mayor.

This newspaper has obtained the video clip of Nur's speech.

The AL leader also said those who would not vote for "boat" would "realise the situation" the day after the polling.

Following the remarks of Nur, panic has spread among the other mayor candidates and voters.

Enquired about his comments, Nur last night denied that he asked voters to cast ballots in public.

He claimed that BNP-Jamaat men changed his statement by editing the video footage.

"BNP-Jamaat talk against holding elections using Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) and run propaganda against its use," he told The Daily Star.

Lakshimpur District Election Officer Nazim Uddin, also the returning officer of the municipality polls, said he could not understand in what context the AL leader made the remarks.

He said there are 10 polling centres in nine wards of Ramgati municipality. An executive magistrate, seven policemen and nine Ansar men will be deployed in each voting centre on the polling day, the RO added.

Six mayoral and 49 councillor hopefuls, including 12 for reserved councillor posts for women, are contesting the polls.

Tigers fighting

FROM PAGE 12
the visitors score a further 186 runs for their last five wickets. Left-arm spinner Taijul Islam took four, as did lone pacer Abu Jayed, but they came at a cost of too many runs.

Nkrumah Bonner, Joshua Da Silva and even bowler Alzarri Joseph filled their boots against a listless attack, taking the score past 400.

ফ্ল্যাট বিক্রয় হইবে

বারিধারা ডিপ্লোমেটিক জোনে ৩৫২৫ বর্গফুট দক্ষিণমুখী ৪র্থতলা সিঙ্গেল ইউনিট ফাইভস্টার মানের ইন্টেরিয়র সহ ব্র্যান্ডনিউ ফ্ল্যাট বিক্রয়। ০১৭১৯-৪৫৭৭৩৩

Power Plant Sale

A running and valid contracted with BDPDP power plant will be sold. Capacity: 110 MW

01799880033
bdproperty.com

TO LET

GULSHAN 2 ROAD 79 NEXT ITALIAN NEAR OTHER EMBASSIES, 2600 SFT 4 BED 4 BATH, LARGE DRAWING / DINING UPTODATE AMENITIES. Contact # 01712180378

Land For Sale

South Facing 5 katha Land for sale @ Block -L Bashundhara

Contact: 01799880033

To-Let

Baridhara DOHS, Residential accommodation, 2800sqft. 4 bedrooms with attached bath, servant room, servant toilet, fully finished, fully air-condition with all modern amenities; ideal for foreigners. **Please contact: 01721098659**

ব্র্যান্ড নিউ ফ্ল্যাট বিক্রয়

নর্থ গুলশানের অভিজাত এলাকায় ব্র্যান্ড নিউ ৪৭৯৬ বর্গফুটের একটি অত্যাধুনিক ফ্ল্যাট (তিতাস গ্যাস সংযোগ) ২টি পার্কিং সহ বিক্রয় হবে।

যোগাযোগ: ০১৯৪৯ ১১১ ৯৯৯

College Name: Narsingdi Govt. College

Address: West Bramondi, Narsingdi
Website: www.ngc.gov.bd

Memo No. CEDP/2020-21/01 Date: 12/02/21

e-Tender Notice 01/2020-2021

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

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Name of works	Last date and time of tender security submission	Tender closing date & time
1.	547338	Repair & Renovation of Classroom	01-Mar-2021 13:00	01-Mar-2021 14:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches up to **28-Feb-2021 16:00**. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Prof. Md. Habibur Rahman Akand
Principal
College Name: Narsingdi Govt. College
Phone: 029462438
E-mail: principalingcollege@yahoo.com

GD-299

Dhaka South City Corporation
Office of the Chief Store & Purchase Officer
Store & Purchase Department
Nagar Bhaban, Dhaka

Memo: 46.207.007.17.02.2021-415

e-Tender Notice

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

Sl. No.	Method of Tender & Tender ID, Ref. No.	Procurement item descriptions	Publishing date & time	Last selling date & time	Closing, opening date & time
1.	OTM Tender ID. 546147 Ref. 46.207.007.17.01.2020-162	Triple supply work for garbage trucks in the cleaning pool controlled/operated by the Department of Transport.	14 Feb 2021 09.00.00	28 Feb 2021 17.00.00	01 Mar 2021 14.00.00
2.	OTM Tender ID. 546150 Ref. 46.207.007.17.01.2020-149	Supply of various types of seats angle and flat bars for the Engineering Department Mechanical of Dhaka South City Corporation in the FY 2020-2021.	14 Feb 2021 09.00.00	28 Feb 2021 17.00.00	01 Mar 2021 14.00.00

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. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal.

Alimul Kabir
(Deputy) Chief Store & Purchase Officer
Store & Purchase Department,
Dhaka South City Corporation
E-mail: csco@dhakasouthcity.gov.bd

DSCC/PRD/99/20-21
GD-298



During a planning session for Chobi Mela.

PHOTOS: COURTESY OF CHOBIMELA

Raisal Islam Asad on receiving the Ekushey Padak

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Freedom fighter and six-time National Film Award winner Raisal Islam Asad is one of the recipients of the Ekushey Padak this year. He has entertained audiences for decades with his brilliant performances on the stage and television. He has also played notable roles in films. Currently, the actor is busy shooting for Shyam Benegal's film on Bangabandhu, a joint venture from Bangladesh and India. In a candid chat with *The Daily Star*, he talks about his hopes, experiences and more.

How do you feel about receiving the Ekushey Padak this year?

As a freedom fighter, receiving the Ekushey Padak is truly prestigious for me. Our fight for liberation was spearheaded by Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. I feel blessed to be receiving this award at a time when his daughter, Sheikh Hasina, is the Prime Minister of our country.

Receiving such an award brings about a sense of responsibility for any artiste. What are your views in this regard?

I have always tried my best to fulfill my responsibilities towards not only acting, but also other forms of art. It is not just my achievements that motivate me to be devoted to my work. I love and respect my job with all my heart, and I hope that I continue to do so, for as long as I can.

You are currently working with renowned director Shyam Benegal for his upcoming film on Bangabandhu. Tell us a bit about your experience of working in this project.

I am playing the character of Maulana Bhashani in this film. We have already finished our first schedule in Mumbai. So far, it has been a wonderful experience. This is the only project that I have taken up, since the start of the pandemic.

How else have you been spending your time, since the coronavirus outbreak?

I have been listening to music, reading my favourite books, and watching shows and movies. Other than that, I have been talking to my friends and loved ones over the phone regularly.

You have been involved with theatre since 1972. Do you miss being on the stage?

I certainly do. Being one of the founding members of Dhaka Theatre, I have worked in musicals, dramas, and other kinds of plays. I was also an active member of different drama clubs and circles. At the time, we had the Guide House Auditorium for plays. There were very few female actors. Now, I see Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy providing a platform for theatre troupes. I came across many new and promising actors, both male and female. I wish them all the best for their future.



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDIMORSHED

What to expect from this year's Chobi Mela

PRIYANKA CHOWDHURY

This year's iteration of the much-anticipated Chobi Mela, mounts a self-reflective display of innovation, at the time of a global pandemic. The socio-political discourses of our neighbours are connected to our own existence -- as defined by this year's theme.



A temporary studio was set up for 'Baba Betar', to be hosted by Arfun Ahmed.



During a planning session for Chobi Mela.

Titled 'Chobi Mela Shunno', the festival can be interpreted as an amorphous infinite space, or a home that runs parallel with all others.

This special edition will offer a range of narratives from different parts of home and neighboring states, bringing in 'performative democracy' to the present time - to understand its value and experience its intensity

in an art space. With three in-house and three guest curators, this is also the very first time that Chobi Mela is curating all their projects.

In its limited arrangement, curators and artists took the opportunity to explore the 'non-spaces' for exhibitions, working in and around the premises of DrikPath Bhubon. The opening rally that usually goes around the city will limit its circumference within the building.

Artist and curator Najmun Nahar Keya, with five multigenerational artists from varied art practices, will explore the diversity of material and transformation of the DrikPath building, designed by one of the most critically acclaimed contemporary architects of South Asia, Bashirul Haq. The artists will engage in historical memories, light, space, and the visionary language of modern architecture.

Cheragi Art Show, a celebrated street exhibition from Cheragi Pahar, Chattogram, will re-imagine its elevated space within the stairways

of the DrikPath building. Fourteen homegrown practitioners from varied disciplines under Chobi Mela Fellow section curated by artist Zihan Karim, will present their works in re-reading Jibonananda Das's poem "Bodh", in an attempt to explore the multitude of its meaning.

Some fascinating works addressing language and voices will be presented in this year's Chobi Mela.

Samari Chakma, a lawyer and advocate for Bangladesh's indigenous Chakma community who was forced into exile in Australia and Naem Mohaiemen, who makes films, installations, and essays about socialist utopia, unstable borders, will collaborate.

Curator Anushka Rajendran will present "Anatomies of Tongues", a congregation of testimonies that become critical assertions of inherently plural flows and voices encompassed by the category that is citizenship and have been lost to collective amnesia imposed by parochial attitudes and majoritarian decrees.

Mostly captured on mobile phone, Chobi Mela will exhibit the works of Kolkata-based photographer Ronny Sen's "Portrait of a Protest", images of anti-government street demonstrations in India from 2006 to 2020 that have become a vital document of history.

The programme will also incorporate sound and web-radio show 'Baba Betar', featuring open and intimate conversations with contemporary thinkers and artistes. Exclusive interviews are lined up in the Chobi Mela podcast series. Celebrated and rare works of Bashirul Haq and Sayeeda Khanum will be on display in the 'Tribute' section.

With informal *addas* addressing issues such as workplace safety for female journalists and freelance photographers, concerts, recreation of Bihari Camp's Pappu studio, 'Chobi Mela Shunno' will be a culmination of physical and digital public festival to kick start 2021 amid the pandemic.

Solo exhibition 'Voice of Colors' organised virtually

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

"Voice of Colors", a virtual exhibition by artist Nur Munjerin Rimjhim, is currently available to viewers on EMK Center's website.

Rimjhim, the champion of Berger Young Painters' Art Competition 2019, intends to capture architectural and scenic beauty through her work. The 42 featured artworks from "Voice of Colors" revolve around gender norms and societal roles, among other thought-provoking themes. The exhibition, which started on February 6, will be available online till December 31, 2021.

Rimjhim is a student of Faculty of Fine Art, Dhaka University (DU), fondly known as Charukola. The inauguration ceremony was attended by her professors from the Department of Drawing and Painting, Faculty of Fine Art, DU. "Rimjhim uses a remarkable tone while working with pencil sketches and that has paved the way towards her academic success," said Abdus Sattar Toufiq, Assistant Professor, Department of Drawing and Painting, Faculty of Fine Art, DU.

Art is a way of preserving memories for Rimjhim. "I started working on a painting, titled 'Renaissance', when my brother was diagnosed with cancer, and went to India for his treatment," she shared. The acrylic painting summarises the valiant journey of her brother, who is seen to be sitting on a throne. The crabs at his feet denote the astrological sign of cancer. "Since his treatment was completed in India, I used their national flower, Lotus, as a way of acknowledging the country," she added. Another painting, called 'Internal Existence', is also dedicated to her brother and highlights his journey of defeating the disease.

Her painting, "Blockage", is a part of a series that intends to address the everyday lives and struggles of women. "I have used my experiences as a Bangladeshi woman in



Artworks featured in the exhibition.

this painting. The male gaze signifies the invisible vigilante faced by women in this country," she said. Her work also shows how people often use religion as a tool to discriminate against women.

During Inktober 2019, she worked on various sketches revolving around the architecture of Charukola. The 31 pictures of this series are done on a mount board with black and white gel pens.

Rimjhim's pen sketches cover Dhaka University extensively, from the entrance gate to the Raju Memorial Monument. Metro rail authorities cut down trees near the adjacent area to the TSC boundary from the Raju Memorial Monument to Doyel Square to widen the road for construction of a station. Several students of Dhaka University protested this move. "Development is necessary, but it should never compromise the cultural heritage of a country. Although the monument will never be the same again, it will remain eternal through my art," Rimjhim said.

Be it the bylanes of Old Dhaka or moments from her India tour, the artist tries to hold on to things that are close to her heart. "My art has helped me share my stories and express my opinions. It is a part of who I am," she added. She also appreciated the efforts of EMK Center in encouraging young artists.

"Voice of Colors" is EMK Center's fourth virtual exhibition. The organisation aims to explore the scope of augmented reality and spread the technology to educational institutions, for students to participate in virtual science and art fairs. "Creativity is a blend of art and science, and it must be encouraged at all levels," said Asif Uddin Ahmed, Acting Director, EMK Center.

The author is a freelance journalist. mislammonamee@gmail.com.

SEVERE MALNUTRITION IN WAR-TORN YEMEN

At least 400,000 children under 5 could die this yr

REUTERS, Dubai

At least 400,000 Yemeni children under 5 could die of starvation this year without urgent intervention amid soaring rates of severe malnutrition driven by war and the coronavirus pandemic, four UN agencies said yesterday.

The warnings come nearly six years after the outbreak of war that rendered 80% of the population reliant on humanitarian aid.

In a report published on Friday, the agencies projected a 22% increase in severe acute malnutrition among children under 5 in Yemen, compared to 2020.

Severe acute malnutrition means there is a risk of death from lack of food. Aden, Hodeidah, Taiz and Sanaa are among the worst-hit areas, the report said.

"These numbers are yet another cry for help from Yemen where each malnourished child also means a family struggling to survive," World Food Program (WFP) Executive Director David Beasley said in a joint statement with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), UNICEF and the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Another 2.3 million under 5s are expected to suffer acute malnutrition in 2021. Around 1.2 million pregnant or breastfeeding women are projected to be acutely malnourished this year.

Famine has never been officially declared in Yemen. The UN says the country is the world's largest humanitarian crisis. Along with conflict, economic decline and the pandemic, a shortfall of donations last year is also contributing to the worsening humanitarian crisis.

The agencies said they had only received \$1.9 billion of the \$3.4 billion required for the country's humanitarian response.

A Saudi-led coalition intervened in Yemen in March 2015 to restore the Yemeni government ousted from power in the capital Sanaa by the Houthis movement in late 2014. The Houthis say they are fighting corruption.



A demonstrator stands with a placard while protesting against the military coup in Yangon, Myanmar, yesterday. Supporters of ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi clashed with police yesterday as hundreds of thousands joined nationwide pro-democracy demonstrations in defiance of the junta's call to halt mass gatherings.

PHOTO: REUTERS

NEWS IN BRIEF

China's Mars probe sends back video of Red Planet

China's space agency released video footage from its spacecraft circling Mars yesterday, two days after it successfully entered the planet's orbit in Beijing's latest ambitious space mission. In the video, published by state broadcaster CCTV, the surface of the planet is seen coming into view out of a pitch black sky against the outside of the Tianwen-1, which entered the orbit of the Red Planet on Wednesday. White craters are visible on the planet's surface, which fades from white to black through the video as the probe flies over the course of one Martian day, said official news agency Xinhua. The five-tonne Tianwen-1 -- which translates as "Questions to Heaven" -- includes a Mars orbiter, a lander and a solar-powered rover and launched from southern China last July. It is the latest step in Beijing's space programme, which aims to establish a crewed space station by 2022 and eventually put an astronaut on the moon.

Pandemic woes seen swelling global ranks of child soldiers

More children could be pushed into joining armed groups in conflict zones as families face increasing poverty due to the Covid-19 pandemic, a top UN official warned yesterday. The exact number of child soldiers is unknown, but in 2019 alone about 7,740 children -- some as young as six -- were recruited and used as fighters or in other roles by mostly non-state armed groups, according to United Nations data. Girls and boys are still forced to join armed groups, as fighters or in roles such as cooks or for sexual exploitation, in at least 14 countries including the Democratic Republic of Congo, South Sudan and Somalia, the UN said.

Turkey says it will not turn back from Russian S-400s



Turkey will not turn back from its acquisition of Russian S-400 defense systems despite US sanctions, it said, but added it would seek to resolve issues with its Nato ally through dialogue. In December, Washington imposed sanctions on Ankara for acquiring the S-400s on grounds they threaten its F-35 fighter jets and are incompatible with shared Nato defences. Turkey rejects this and says the systems will stand independently from Nato defences. Since Joe Biden was elected US president, Ankara has said it wants better ties and again proposed an S-400 joint working group. But Washington has repeatedly rejected that and says sanctions will remain until Turkey no longer possesses the missiles. The US has also removed Turkey from its F-35 jet programme. Turkey has said its purchase of the S-400s was a necessity, as it had no suitable alternatives from Nato allies.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

Ready to cut EU ties if hit with sanctions: Russia

REUTERS, Moscow

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has said Moscow is ready to sever ties with the European Union if the bloc hits it with painful economic sanctions, according to extracts of an interview posted on the ministry's website yesterday.

Three European diplomats told Reuters on Thursday that the European Union was likely to impose travel bans and asset freezes on allies of Russian President Vladimir Putin, possibly as soon as this month, after France and Germany signalled their willingness to move ahead.

Pressure for sanctions has grown since Moscow infuriated European countries last week by expelling German, Polish and Swedish diplomats without telling the EU's foreign policy chief, who was in Moscow for a visit. Paris and Berlin now say there must be a response.

"We don't want to isolate ourselves from global life, but we have to be ready for that. If you want peace then prepare for war," Lavrov said when asked whether Moscow would now move towards cutting ties with the EU itself.

'He can do this again'

Prosecutors' impassioned plea to convict the former president fails to woo Republicans

AGENCIES

House prosecutors wrapped up their impeachment case against Donald Trump on Thursday with an impassioned appeal to the Senate to convict the former president of inciting the deadly January 6 attack on the US Capitol and bar him from holding office again.

They warned that if Senate fails to convict the former president, "he can do this again."

"We humbly, humbly ask you to convict President Trump for the crime (of) which he is overwhelmingly guilty," said Democratic Representative Joe Neguse, one of the nine impeachment managers from the House of Representatives.

"Because if you don't, if we pretend this didn't happen -- or worse, if we let it go unanswered -- who's to say it won't happen again?" The House impeachment managers rested their case after two days of arguments that included Trump's own words and hours of graphic video from the assault on the Capitol by Trump supporters who were seeking to halt certification of Democrat Joe Biden's November 3 election victory.

Trump's lawyers were set to begin their defense yesterday, arguing that the former president cannot be held personally responsible

TRUMP'S IMPEACHMENT TRIAL



for the storming of Congress.

They have also argued that the trial itself is unconstitutional because Trump is now out of office, although the Senate rejected that argument earlier this week.

Earlier, Biden said the video evidence against his 74-year-old predecessor presented at the Senate trial may change "some minds."

But despite what even some Republicans have said was a strong prosecution case, Trump retains an unshakable grip on the party, making conviction highly unlikely.

It would take a two-thirds majority in the 100-member Senate, meaning 17 Republicans would need to join the chamber's 50 Democrats.

The mayhem on January 6 erupted after Trump held a large rally near the White House,

insisting falsely, as he had done since losing to Biden in November, that he was cheated.

Instructed by Trump to march on Congress, where lawmakers were at that moment certifying Biden's election, the crowd smashed through police lines, then went on a rampage.

The chaos left five people dead.

Video footage played by impeachment managers showed the mob hunting down opponents of Trump, as well as senior figures, including then vice president Mike Pence, having to flee to safety.

The defense will stress that Trump did not expressly tell his supporters to commit violence, but Jamie Raskin, the lead House manager, pointed out that the Republican president had been stoking anger and encouraging extremism since Election Day -- and even before.

Raskin said it was imperative the Senate convict Trump and bar him from running for the White House again in 2024.

Republican Senator Bill Cassidy of Louisiana said video footage shown by House managers on Wednesday was "powerful," but "how that influences final decisions remains to be seen."

Other Republican senators have clearly already made up their minds and do not intend to break with Trump, who has threatened to derail their careers.

ORION GAS

22mm

20mm

12 KG LPG

45 KG LPG

35 KG LPG

15 kg

12 KG LPG

A Product of ORION Group

www.orion-group.net

www.facebook.com/Oriongasltd

Helpline: +8801880080008

ORION GAS

The Daily Star

CELEBRATES

GLORIOUS

50 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE

COURAGEOUS

30 YEARS OF JOURNALISM

Bhadra and Hori rivers are on their deathbeds

How can public representatives be part of this crime?

THE picture on *The Daily Star's* front page yesterday said it all. The Bhadra, a once, free-flowing river, mercilessly cut up and occupied to make way for brick kilns turning it into a narrow canal that may also be gobbled up by greed. This systematic murder—the High Court has declared rivers as legal entities—has been possible as the report found out, due to a nexus of local influential people that include elected representatives with the local administration allowing this crime to go on for years on end.

According to a report prepared by Bangladesh Water Development Board (BWDB) Khulna, nine brick kilns on one bank of the Bhadra were listed last December. They included those operated by a lawmaker and chairman of a upazila and a union parishad. So far a total of 18 brick kilns along the Bhadra and Hori rivers have been named in the list with more to be added. Unsurprisingly, such indiscriminate encroachment has completely stopped at least three connecting canals of one of the branches of the Bhadra river whose width has narrowed from 500 m to 16-30 m.

What is surprising is that although grabbing land is a criminal offence, these brick kilns have been running for the last 12 years with impunity. Apart from sending notices to the brick kiln owners from time to time no attempts have been made to shut down the kilns or hold the owners accountable. The Brick Making and Establishment of Bricks (control) Act 2013 states that setting brick kilns on government or privately owned forests, sanctuaries, agricultural land, gardens and wetland areas is a punishable offence. How ironic then is that a member of parliament and an upazila chairman, both of whom are government representatives, would be setting up brick kilns on river land?

The UP chairman who owns brick kilns that occupies huge areas of the Hori and Bhadra riverbanks claims that they were set up with official approval when asked by this paper's correspondent whether this had been done with the Department of Environment's go ahead.

As usual everyone concerned is shifting blame on someone else. While the brick kiln owners claim that these are not part of the rivers, the director of Department of Environment in Khulna evaded the question by saying it was not possible to say which brickfields have been built occupying the two rivers or whether they are destroying the environment. So the conundrum of why a river can be killed so easily is not so difficult to solve. It is because the law is merrily flouted by everyone concerned including elected officials. It is because the local administration gives mere lip-service to accountability, sending notices that continuously remain unheeded and for no further action to be taken beyond that. It is because of the apparent lack of information or interest plaguing the DoE in the area. Finally, it is the total lack of accountability of individuals who are either public officials or connected to influential people or whose job it is to monitor activities that pose threats to the environment and that constitute a crime such as killing a river. Unless the chain of accountability and enforcement of the law is ensured by the government, we will continue to see such blatant grabbing of river banks, destroying agricultural land and the ruthless butchering of rivers.

How can we open schools safely?

The collaborative project is promising

WITH schools being shut for almost a year creating a huge education gap, the government is facing the formidable challenge of how to open schools safely. We welcome the launching of "Safe Back to School" project by 15 international NGOs including Save the Children, Brac, World Vision and Plan International with the objective of working with the government in the next six months to ensure the safe return of students to school. Given our reality of how most schools in Bangladesh are—with overcrowded classrooms, lack or dearth of hand washing facilities and toilets, among other impediments—this is a prudent move. The wide experience these organisations have in the field as well as expertise knowledge on how to implement safety guidelines will be a great support for the government in tackling this challenge.

The project aims to address mental health issues related to Covid-19, ensuring proper facilities such as soap, disinfectant, masks and water supply as well as having mass awareness campaigns to bring girl children who have dropped out during the pandemic, back to school.

There is also the challenge of how to make up for the education gap that has occurred due to the pandemic despite efforts by the government to introduce alternative learning methods such as remote learning through the national TV channel, online classes and assignment-based assessments. This is because many children live in remote areas where TVs, smart phones and Internet are inaccessible. Most children come from poor families already struggling to put food on the table and simply cannot afford TVs or smartphones. Thus opening up schools seems to be the only way for these children to continue learning. The impact on their mental health at being deprived of social contact with friends and teachers and the anxiety brought on by the loss in education are also significant.

But safety of course must take priority and this is something the government has stressed on. It is therefore commendable that this project will work with schools and communities to make the schools ready to take back the students while ensuring their safety. Needless to say this will be a hard task but not an impossible one. Getting all teachers and staff vaccinated would be a smart move in this endeavour. We are not sure when the schools will be able to implement all the measures and it would have been prudent to start the process long before. But it is crucial that schools are not opened in haste without ensuring the health protocols. We are now at a point when the death rate has been reduced and vaccines have begun to be rolled out. The last thing we need is a massive outbreak of the infection because schools have opened without such protocols being properly implemented.

Toxic spirit and sensationalism



BLOWN' IN THE WIND

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

FIVE students of a private university went to a restaurant at Uttara to get a drink. Little did they know that their youthful venture would turn out to be national headlines: two died, while others got arrested! The cause of death was probably adulterated alcohol. Doctors who attended one of the patients in her dying hours mentioned alcohol poisoning. The police knew all too well that before the availability of the viscera report the cause of death could not be ascertained. A section of the newspapers and the electronic media cried rape citing the allegations made by the father of the victim. The victims were named, the institution to which they belonged were slandered, and the friends who tried to help were taken on police remands.

On the same day, members of a "reputed" PR house went out on a similar retreat in an upscale suburban resort. Adulterated alcohol took the lives of three employees, blinded one and a few others are still in critical conditions. Media blurred the names and downplayed the incident. The first incident was sensationalised because an aggrieved father, who probably could not process the fact that his daughter was going out with a boyfriend resulting in her death, filed a rape case. The second incident was muffled by the same media probably because the PR house is a great source of their ad revenues. Something is toxic

The irony is, more and more private channels are coming up, to make the private public. In a rat race, all are trying to become trendsetters and norm-breakers, soliciting likes and subscriptions.

here! There have been about 30 deaths caused by toxic liquor in the country in January alone. The most number of casualties are from Bogra where 11 people died after consuming spurious spirit. The last news evaporated as is the fate of most news from outside of Dhaka. But the first one refuses to go away, perhaps because "rape" sells. Even when there was no act of forceful violation of the body, the media knows that the very idea titillates the imagination of the public. The media knows their public all too well. They keep on pouring stuff they like. They are filling up the glass of imagination for their audience and readers so that the punters get intoxicated with ideas. Let's unpack



the situation, and try to discern who or what is toxic in this situation!

Everyday people die all over the world from the consumption of adulterated alcohol. "The magnitude of this issue is unfortunately huge considering that 25 percent of the alcohol consumed around the world is counterfeit" ("Food Fraud", *Neogen*). There is a growing tendency all over the world to distil methanol (the spirit normally used in industrial and household products such as pesticide, varnish etc.) and mix it with some cheap products such as burnt sugar and colour to pass it as ethanol—the edible spirit. To make and save a few takas, the spirit makers indulge in a dangerous business.

Then there are the people drawn to this spirit for recreation purpose, for chemical dependency, or for social bondage. I am not in a position to make a judgement call to label it as right or wrong. There are cultural and religious gatekeepers to

do so. Some may find such a culture of alcohol consumption toxic; others may find it sociable. And both stand on solid grounds to defend their stances.

In Bangladesh, I have been told, you need to carry an official license (i.e. medical certificate) in order to drink legally. I guess such certificates too can be easily doctored for regular club goers and habitual drinkers. I do not know whether the two students of a private university and the three employees of a private firm who died from adulterated alcohol are regular drinkers or not. I am rather intrigued by the representation of their deaths in the media.

Let's begin with the word "private", for instance. The word roots back to

14th century, meaning, "pertaining or belonging to oneself, not shared, peculiar to an individual only;" of a thing, "not open to the public, for the use of privileged persons;" from Latin *privatus* "set apart (from what is public), belonging to oneself (not to the state), peculiar, personal."

The purpose of these two groups was to partake in a "private" activity of leisure. It was not meant to harm anyone or any institution. But the moment their "private" affairs took one wrong turn, different institutions got involved (e.g. police, hospital, media, lawyers and so on). And the moment the private and the public collided, bang, there was news! Now, the question arises, why use "private" as a modifier? Isn't "a student" a student irrespective of her institutional public/private affiliation? Or is there another ore that can be mined to make it a lucrative mineral commodity. Power

Is the government doing enough for small firms?

What more can be done?

TASMIAH T RAHMAN

SADAT Rahman (not his real name) has a small photocopy shop right beside a renowned university in Rongpur. Since schools are closed, there is hardly any business. He was sitting quietly at a corner of a school classroom when I entered the room. As a development practitioner, working with skills development and entrepreneurship, I was eager to learn from a few micro and cottage businesses whether they were able to avail the recent loans that GoB has set to disburse to support businesses like his. His answer was quite grim. He said after multiple attempts he gave up the effort as the paperwork that is required to avail such loans are beyond his understanding. He particularly mentioned that the loan required him to provide a letter of recommendation from a government official, and he didn't know anyone who could provide that.

Marufa said the same thing. Even though her beauty salon started getting clients again, she is struggling to make ends meet for a family of three. As a single mother, she recalls how hard it was to afford the basic necessities even during Covid-19 crisis, as her business would have no customer for days. She already has a substantial loan and did not know what she would do with more loan. She asked for support on what she could do to diversify her business, especially about how she could sell things on facebook, as many of her friends are doing in order to earn more. She started a small food business on the side, but didn't know how to advertise for it. Marufa requested for a business recovery plan so that she could get back to earning a decent living.

Marium started a small tea stall four years ago. As a person with disability, she is cared for by her family and community. But during the pandemic, she struggled to keep her business afloat as for months no one came to drink tea at her store. She started using disposable cups, and that had generated some customers. She also started selling basic grocery items. Now that business is going back to normal, she liked the idea of receiving a low interest loan. But she would also like to receive training on how she could keep proper records of her expenses and a steady cash flow.

There are millions like Sadat, Marufa and Marium who are in need of not just loans, but guidance to recover and diversify their business after the crisis

period. Many like Marufa are indebted and are unclear about how to plan, execute and scale their businesses.

It is commendable that the government announced a Tk 15 crore stimulus package for small traders, entrepreneurs and farmers who have no access to finance from banking channels, to receive loan at 4 percent. After Covid-19 hit, the cottage, micro businesses had been the worst hit. So it is important for GoB to recognise that unless these small traders and informal sector businesses are given "business guidance" on how to utilise their loan, they risk falling into more debt. A comprehensive support package would be necessary so that these loans are put to the right use.



PHOTO: MOKSUMAL HAQUE/CGAP

From business to bank handholding" services

Most cottage and micro businesses owners come from disadvantaged communities. These owners need guidance to run and expand their businesses. Loan comes as a secondary tool for expanding their business, but 9 out of 10 do not even keep records of their expenses or know how they would diversify their business. They also need assistance to prepare documents to be loan ready. GoB's financial institutions could partner with grassroots level NGOs and community led organisations, set up support services for businesses where these establishments can get easy access.

Currently, many like Sadat do not even know where to go and where to collect these documents from, or even how to proceed further.

Specific targets and services for women and marginalised groups
There needs to be special "handholding" services for women and girls, and other disadvantaged population who want to move forward with their businesses. Again GoB has announced a Tk 428 crore project to enhance the skills for women entrepreneurs, develop 256,000 unemployed and disadvantaged women and hone them as entrepreneurs, it is crucial to influence women to grow their businesses. Our culture still does

not support women and girls to run and expand their businesses, and many struggle to even convince their own families. Often people like Marium fall behind in the crowd, and local organisations who work closely with people with disability can support girls like Marium to move ahead as self-sustained human beings.

Digital literacy for businesses that will avail the loan

As per South Asian Network on Economic Modelling (SANEM)'s study that came out in August 2020, about 50 percent of urban households and only 30 percent homes in rural areas have access to the internet. This number is even lower

and money are two steering forces that transform the face of the private in the public.

Again, the general perception is, the private is the locus of the privileged: private schools, private universities, private banks are placed where stakes and perks are higher. The reality perhaps is far from it. Yet the perception persists that only the rich people's children go to private institutions. Therefore, any "public" opportunity to cerebrally berate them can be self-gratifying for those outside the "private" realm. They get more traction when the private walls are eroded and the public eyes can pry. I am reminded of the American writer William Faulkner's short story "A Rose for Emily" where the whole town shows up after the death of an aristocratic woman who lived a private life. Her privacy was intruded, and her secret affair was revealed at the expense of her previously well-guarded reputation, and it became a source of juicy gossips.

The news media is well known for spreading gossips. Editorial choices as well as selective and manipulated representations are responsible for spin-offs, maximising content reach via algorithmic manipulation. The supply-demand nexus change the mindset of the audience. The editors know that there is a demand for sensational news; by the same token, they supply news that will create a niche for such news. The irony is, more and more private channels are coming up, to make the private public. In a rat race, all are trying to become trendsetters and norm-breakers, soliciting likes and subscriptions.

Mainstream news channels too are morphing to walk the walk and talk the talk. Some are curating their contents for an online audience. Images are used to spice up the news. Visual clues are given to guide the perception of the audience in one direction. For instance, images of the private party in which the students had their drinks are recreated to excite the imagination of the audience. The media trial influences the other legal agencies and public bodies to address such toxic behaviour. They looked for something extra. They found something extra in the words of an involved party who was not in the right frame of mind to see through things. Victim shaming goes on as the dead cannot speak.

Now tell me, of all the spirits in which the news was tabled, which one do you find toxic?

Shamsad Mortuza is Professor of English (on leave), University of Dhaka and Pro Vice Chancellor, University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB). Email: shamsad71@hotmail.com.

when it comes to women and girls, which is only 10 percent. Apart from this, the smart phone penetration would have to be increased, and taught, especially for women who would want to diversify their businesses online. Without addressing the digital divide systematically, it will not be possible for small businesses to sustain in the long run.

Rethink "documents" while dealing with micro and cottage businesses

As most businesses in this space are running informally, the banks may need to re-think documentations. Documentations can be set based on the socio-economic profile. For example, Brac's microfinance and skills development unit has jointly developed a loan package that is only geared towards the youth, that have technical skills (like mobile phone servicing, tailoring, ICT services, etc.). The skills unit ensures that the youth are aware of basic business acumen, while the microfinance unit ensures that youth are able to repay the loan by visiting them regularly. Such low interest rates for loans can be put to more effective use if basic entrepreneurship knowledge is given to these young minds.

Keeping a database

A dynamic database management system to track people from various socio-economic backgrounds is essential—data collected from all financial institutions on not only loan repayment schedule but also to ensure that they receive guidance on their businesses development. For example, if Marufa is part of a database and it is updated on a yearly basis by tracing her, it will be easier to track her progress. This can be done in a decentralised manner in each upazilla level. However, GoB would need the support of a tech based organisation that would be able to support them. Currently, the data that is collected is not used much to analyse the trends of these cottage and micro businesses and to up their abilities.

While 37 percent people are employed in the micro and cottage businesses, they have the potential to grow and be job creators of the country. It will be good to see organisations coming forward to guide the youth like Sadat, Marufa and Marium to take the country forward.

Tasmiah T Rahman is the current In Charge of the Skills Development Programme at Brac. The case studies and recommendations are from learnings of the Promoting Incubation Support to Enterprises (PROMISE) project, a Brac initiative.

Intellectual property cause of death, genocide

JOMO KWAME SUNDARAM and ANIS CHOWDHURY

REFUSAL to temporarily suspend several World Trade Organization (WTO) intellectual property (IP) provisions to enable much faster and broader progress in addressing the Covid-19 pandemic should be grounds for International Criminal Court prosecution for genocide. Making life-saving vaccines, medicines and equipment available, freely or affordably, has been crucial for containing the spread of many infectious diseases such as tuberculosis, HIV-AIDS, polio and smallpox.

Jonas Salk, who developed the polio vaccine, insisted that it remain patent free. Asked who owned the patent 65 years ago, he replied, "The people I would say. There is no patent. You might as well ask, could you patent the sun?"

Intellectual property induced scarcity
However, cross-border enforcement of intellectual property rights (IPRs) is relatively recent. The 1994 WTO Agreement on Trade Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) greatly strengthened and extended IP transnationally. IPRs have effectively denied access to patented formulas and processes except to the highest bidders.

Recognising the extent of the pandemic threat, vaccine developers expect to be very profitable, thanks to national and transnational IP laws. Thus, IP has distorted research priorities and discouraged cooperation and knowledge sharing, so essential to progress.

As Covid-19 infections and deaths continue to rise alarmingly, rich countries are falling out among themselves, fighting for access to vaccine supplies, as IP profits take precedence over lives and livelihoods.

"Vaccine nationalism" involves cut-throat contests responding to scarcity due to limited output. Facing vaccine wars, multilateral arrangements, such as Covax, have not adequately addressed current challenges.

Vaccine nationalism has also meant that among the rich, the powerful—Trump's US—came first. Consequently, most developing countries and most of their people will have to wait longer than necessary for vaccines, while the powerful and better off secure prior access, regardless of need or urgency.

Lethal combination
This lethal combination of IP and vaccine warfare is responsible for more avoidable losses of both lives and livelihoods. Developing nations, especially the poorest and most vulnerable, have been left far behind, even in most programmes for Covid-19 prevention, containment, treatment and vaccination.

The deadly duo are unnecessarily delaying the end of the pandemic, causing avoidable infections, deaths and related setbacks. World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General (DG) Tedros warns "the world is on the brink of a catastrophic moral failure... the price of this failure will be paid with lives and livelihoods in the world's



At current rates, more than 85 poor countries will not have significant access to Covid-19 vaccines before the end of 2023.

PHOTO: REUTERS

poorest countries". He advises that "the international community cannot allow a handful of companies to dictate the terms of the timeframe for ending the pandemic"; "vaccine nationalism combined with a restrictive approach to vaccine production is in fact more likely to prolong the pandemic... tantamount to medical malpractice on a global scale".

While over 39 million vaccine doses had been given in 49 richer countries, only 25 doses had reached one poor country! At current rates, more than 85 poor countries will not have significant access before the end of 2023! In 70 lower income countries, only one in 10 will be vaccinated.

Of the 7.2 billion confirmed sales of Covid-19 vaccine doses, 4.2 billion have gone to the wealthiest nations.

With only 16 percent of the world's population, high income countries have secured 60 percent of available doses. Meanwhile, the African Union has only procured 670 million for the continent's 1.3 billion people.

Public health exception
Following strong advocacy led by South African President Mandela, a 2001 WTO Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health affirmed countries' right to protect public health by enabling access to medicines, even without a health emergency.

Although TRIPS now allows such government public health efforts, developing countries remain constrained by compulsory licensing's complex rules, procedures and conditions. Threats

national laws. Some rich countries even increased such provisions with the pandemic.

South African TRIPS negotiator Mustaqeem Da Gama has debunked the waiver opponents' claim that even if "approved tomorrow, there are no companies in the developing world that can produce any number of products relevant to Covid-19, including mRNA vaccines".

In fact, the Serum Institute of India is acknowledged as the only facility in the world with the mass vaccine production capacity to rapidly greatly scale up output. Furthermore, 72 of the 154 vaccines "pre-qualified" by the WHO are already being manufactured in developing countries.

and inducements by transnational corporations and their governments limit its use.

Hence, use of compulsory licensing by developing countries has been largely limited to several more independent middle-income countries and HIV/AIDS medicines.

TRIPS waiver
The TRIPS waiver proposal to the WTO—led by South Africa and India—seeks temporary suspension of several TRIPS provisions to greatly scale up production of and access to Covid-19 vaccines, medicines and equipment to contain the contagion.

The US administration, the European Union (EU) and their allies have so far blocked the waiver proposal, although its measures are allowed by their own

Such production in developing countries is subject to very restrictive IP regulations and licensing agreements with stringent conditions. Hence, existing capacity in India, China, Brazil, Cuba, Thailand, Senegal and Indonesia, among others, remains underutilised, primarily due to such legal barriers.

IP main barrier
Despite growing support for the waiver, the proposal was rejected by the TRIPS Council on February 4. The EU insists that IP will "ensure the publication and dissemination of research results, when otherwise they will remain secret".

But everyone knows the IP system discourages, rather than encourages cooperation and sharing, both essential for accelerating progress. Although IP requires sharing research results, no

vaccine developer has done so yet. Nonetheless, waiver opponents insist the system is working well.

Rich countries opposing the waiver have quietly, even secretly bought up vaccines. Even as the EU has lost vaccine wars despite furthering pharmaceutical company interests, it has claimed the moral high ground as a major Covax donor. The recent EU export authorisation scheme, restricting exports, is bound to trigger retaliatory restrictions by others.

Incredibly, rich countries opposed to the TRIPS waiver proposal, particularly the EU, now want WTO members to instead accept its trade and health initiative for further trade liberalisation and removal of export restrictions—to address a problem of its own making!

Biden can still lead
The Biden administration has shown renewed commitment to multilateralism by rejoining the WHO, but still needs to offer leadership beyond funding the ineffective Covax scheme and lifting Trump's embargo on exports of vaccines, vital medicines and equipment.

One "people's vaccine" proposal involves sharing research results in return for public financing. This can affordably, quickly and greatly scale up generic production, enabling "vaccines for all" in the world at little additional cost.

As rich country governments have already spent to accelerate vaccine development, they can make this happen. As vaccine developers do not expect to profit much from the poor, this will benefit many at little added expense.

Depriving and delaying vaccines for those with less means has to be seen for what it is. Such avoidable behaviour is, frankly, nothing less than genocidal, for causing many people to die needlessly for IP profit.

At the forthcoming February 23 TRIPS Council meeting, US President Biden can secure consensus support for the waiver proposal, thus providing the Rooseveltian leadership internationally that he seems to be emulating in the US.

Jomo Kwame Sundaram, a former economics professor, was United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development, and received the Wassily Leontief Prize for Advancing the Frontiers of Economic Thought in 2007. Anis Chowdhury is adjunct professor at Western Sydney University and the University of New South Wales, Australia. He held senior United Nations positions in New York and Bangkok.

Copyright: Inter Press Service

Corporations should be at the forefront of fighting inequality



ISMAIL ALI

VACCINES might ultimately save us from the coronavirus, but the damage that it left behind will last for generations.

Worldwide, poverty has increased for the first time since 1998. The World Bank predicts that the pandemic will increase the number of extreme poor—living on less than USD 1.90 a day—by up to 150 million. The number of people experiencing crisis level hunger would rise to 270 million by the end of 2021, an increase of 82 percent in a year, according to the UN World Food Program.

Although it is too soon to see the full picture, most initial studies indicate that the pandemic has worsened one of today's great scourges: inequality. According to a newly published Oxfam report, the pandemic has hurt people living in poverty far more than the rich. Globally, billionaires' wealth increased by a staggering USD 3.9 trillion between March 18 and December 31, 2020. Yet, millions of low-paid employees like domestic workers, street vendors, taxi drivers, retail and construction workers have lost their jobs.

Moreover, with unprecedented support from governments, stock markets have been booming, driving up billionaires' wealth, while the real economy faces one of the deepest recessions in a century. Even in the UK, thousands of small businesses are either struggling to survive or have been closed permanently.

This exposes a collective frailty and the inability of our deeply unequal economy to work for all. When the pandemic hit, billions of people did not have any resources or support to weather the economic and social storm that it created. Over three billion people did not have access to healthcare, three-quarters of workers had no access to social protection like unemployment benefits, and in low- and lower-middle income countries over half of workers were in working poverty.

The best efforts of governments, multilateral institutions, and non-governmental organisations are undoubtedly helpful for fighting

inequality. However, corporations need to be in the lead. There are many pressing societal issues where important decisions can't be made by presidents and prime ministers, but by corporate chief executives.

Therefore, some scholars emphasise that multinational corporations (MNCs) are among the most powerful transnational actors to address this problem. 79,000 MNCs and its 790,000 affiliates control our economic system. Given the amount of their resources and operational efficiencies, they have the power to significantly improve the lot of the poor by stimulating economic development in the world's poorest countries.

In their book, "The role of business in fostering peaceful societies", Fort and Schipani argue that MNCs that promote economic development and build a sense of community both within the company and in their local areas make a great contribution to building a more harmonious culture. Likewise, my dissertation, explores a Switzerland based MNC's significant contribution in reducing inequality in Moga (Punjab-India) by providing jobs and buying milk from hundreds of thousands of farmers in the region.

It is true that Transnational Corporations (TNCs) cannot provide a complete solution for inequality. But if they behave responsibly towards the society from which they generate profit, they can make meaningful contributions in a number of ways.

First, many empirical studies provide evidence that TNCs pay higher wages than locally owned companies which is an important criteria for reducing the wage gap.

Second, by paying higher taxes, corporations are at the forefront of governments' initiatives that alleviate the gap between the rich and the poor. Although George Osborne, former British finance minister, was unable to force Facebook, Google, and Starbucks to pay fair taxes, Unilever is one of the highest tax payers in Bangladesh, employing 10,000 people including those working in the supply chains.

Third, when a country opens up to international trade, competition between TNCs increase significantly which helps reduce prices. This in turn increases the buying power of those in the lower income segment.

Fourth, informal economic

activity still commands large parts of developing countries' economies which in fact cost those who are poor the most. This is due to rent seeking and unnecessary involvement of middleman in the process of buying products and services. Corporations are increasingly discovering ways to eliminate this leakage, thus improving the purchasing power of the poor.


Fifth, the poor suffer not only from low incomes but a disparity in purchasing power compared to the rich. They pay more for comparable products, even for essentials such as water. My article, "The inextricable links between water scarcity and poverty", published in this newspaper explained how the poor living in Dharavi (Mumbai), the world's largest slum, pay a higher price for meeting their everyday water necessity compared to the rich living nearby Warden Road. MNCs penetration in the area empowers the poor by providing choices of buying water from various sources.

To create a more equal and sustainable economy that benefits all, not just the privileged few, businesses should be redesigned to prioritise society, rather than ever greater pay-outs to rich shareholders. Corporations have a duty not only to address any adverse impacts of their activities, but also to move towards business models that are sustainable and inclusive.


Antonio Guterres, secretary-general of the United Nations, writing for *The Economist*, urged governments to ensure that the private sector takes its responsibility towards putting people and the planet at the centre of their business models and encourage green economy that generates three times more jobs than investments in fossil fuels. A recent review of global polling data collected by the New York University also reveals that the pandemic has changed people's priorities.

A society can't exist peacefully if there is high inequality. It is in the self-interest of the governments' elite to create a more equal and sustainable world by putting pressure on MNCs to invest in healthcare, education, and other public services. As the Oxfam report insists, extreme inequality and poverty are not inevitable when governments choose to make taxes fairer, invest in public services and ensure fair wages for everyone.

Ismail Ali is a London based freelance journalist.



Office of the Rangpur City Corporation



Memo No. 46.18.0000.500.09.001.21-255

Invitation for Tenders (Works)
e-Tender Notice No. 08/2020-2021

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

Sl. No.	Package No.	Description	Tender last selling (date & time)	Tender closing & opening (date & time)
1.	ICGP B2 RpCC-27 (Tender ID: 544323)	a) Maintenance of road from Kopat Bridge to Station Road. W-27 (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 0+880) & Link 01 (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 0+330). b) Rehabilitation of road, post office to Muslim Para. (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 0+370). c) Construction of RCC U drain & RCC road at Banani Para from H/O of Munnaf to H/O Mamun. w-27 (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 0+125) & Link 01 (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 0+035). d) Construction of RCC road from Babupara Rail Gate to Helal Press via Aziz Councillor. w-27, 28 (Ch. 000-500m). e) Rehabilitation of road Tazhat School Para. (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 0+400) & Link 01 (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 0+310), Link 02 (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 0+150), Link 03 (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 0+100). f) Rehabilitation of road from Abdus Salam More to Courtpara Mosque. (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 0+450). g) Rehabilitation of road RK Road to Farmgate. (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 0+380). h) Maintenance of road, Dimla Kali Monir & Link. W-28, 29 (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 2+160). i) Rehabilitation and widening of Taltoa Masjid to RK Road. W-29 (Ch. 000-450m). j) Construction of RCC top slab Mahigonj Rothbar to Mahigonj Graveyard Road. (Remaining work) w-29 (Ch. 000-620m). k) Construction of RCC road starting from Goshibari Road up to Rothbari Road. w-29 (Ch. 000-700). l) Construction of RCC road starting from Dewantoli Road up to Kashoytoli Road. w-29 (Ch. 000-500m). m) Rehabilitation of road from Roghur Bazar to Dewantuli Road (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 2+000). n) Maintenance of Mahigonj Boro Madrasa Road. W-29 (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 0+160).	14/03/2021 (16:00)	15/03/2021 (12:00)
2.	ICGP B2 RpCC-32 (Tender ID: 544324)	a) Maintenance of road from Kopat Bridge to Former Councillor house (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 0+900). b) Maintenance of road from Sataronji via Badargonj road (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 0+350). c) Widening of Road from Lalkuti Moor to Checkpost (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 0+380). d) Maintenance of road from Shop of Azam to Baniapara (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 0+960). e) Maintenance of road from Khalifatari Madrasa to Shah Alam's house. (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 0+830). f) Maintenance of road from Parbatipur Moor to Sultan Moor (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 0+250). g) Rehabilitation & Maintenance Road from Motiner More to 2 No. Checkpost (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 1+260). h) Rehabilitation & Maintenance Road from 2 No. Checkpost to Rampura Bottola More & Link Road. (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 1+450). i) Rehabilitation & Maintenance Road from Katkipara to R.K. Road. (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 0+250). j) Rehabilitation & Maintenance Road from Chorakbari to Bodorganj Road byline. (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 0+650). k) Rehabilitation & Maintenance Road from DC More to Keranipara Chourasta via Bodorganj Road. (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 2+500). m) Rehabilitation & Maintenance Road from Sodapir Majar to Nilkontho Mosque via Dhap Chikli Vata via Medical More. (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 2+000). n) Rehabilitation & Maintenance Road from Uttam School to Baniapara via Antordighi. (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 2+550). o) Rehabilitation & Maintenance Road from Radhaballav Bangladesh Bank More to Bangladesh Betar. (Ch. 0+00 to Ch. 0+550).	14/03/2021 (16:00)	15/03/2021 (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. Interested person/firm can see details in the website: <http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>.

Md. Amdad Hossain
Superintending Engineer
Rangpur City Corporation, Rangpur
Phone: 0521-55902
Fax: 0521-64858
E-mail: se@rpsc.gov.bd

GD-300

Khwabnama: The Bangladeshi Epic

HASAN AL ZAYED

A few months ago, during the height of the pandemic, my teacher and mentor who is now a UGC professor called me up one morning to convey to me that he has finally finished reading Akhtaruzzaman Elias' novel *Khwabnama*. His voice exuded both excitement and elation. What he told me afterwards is even more fascinating. He said that Elias' last novel is among the finest he has ever read and should be ranked among the twentieth-century's very best. It took me some time to process what I heard. It was not like I was surprised. I had long held the view that *Khwabnama* ranks among the greatest Bengali novels ever written and is a classic in world literature. It was, for me, a case of feeling vindicated, for I have heard contrarians claiming otherwise and suggesting that *Khwabnama's* difficult prose undermines its greatness. Now that a distinguished

Tagore who has attracted commentators from many different parts of the world, there is hardly any engagement with the vast and immensely rich body of work available in Bengali language. When it comes to Bangladeshi literature produced in Bengali and other languages, the lack of attention is even more telling and visible. While the disconnect between Bangladeshi English departments and Bengali literature is illustrative of these departments' alienation from the nation and culture they are located in, the complete silence in the Bengali departments about an immensely talented and globally acknowledged poet like Kaiser Haq or a writer of the caliber of Zia Haider Rahman is symptomatic of a different kind of prejudice reeking of close-minded linguistic nationalism. I feel time has come for our English



baffle its readers. In an academic essay published in 2007, I argued that Elias' last novel falls within the perimeter of what Palestinian-American critic and activist Edward Said has described as "late style." *Khwabnama's* maze-like narrative, its thematic structure, and, of course, its immensely creative as well as inaccessible prose point towards its radical stylistic organization that Said calls late style. However, late work or not, *Khwabnama* remains Elias' most challenging work and, in every sense, his finest as well.

One distinctive feature of the novel comes into view right away: while most novels depend upon the development and struggles of individuals to tell their stories, *Khwabnama* relies on the shared experience of people to tell its own. At the heart of the novel's thematic structure stand the dreams, struggles and bafflements of the ordinary folks, mostly comprised of fishermen and landless farmers, who find their lives upended by Tebhaga Uprising on the one hand and the independence movement on the other. How the book of dream, *Khwabnama*, changes hands and, from the custody of dreamers and poets, eventually ends up in the possession of the opportunistic *nouveau riche* (the national bourgeoisie) is what the novel describes by using intricate yet extremely creative narrative strategy. An in-depth discussion about how the novel deploys metaphors, symbols and magic realist techniques to create a myth-ridden and mysterious world is not possible here, so let me quickly offer the justifications for calling *Khwabnama* a Bangladeshi epic.

The first thing that one needs to notice about *Khwabnama* is how it elevates rural Bangladeshi life to the epic stage, mythologizing the space and its way of life in the manner in which Garcia Marquez has mythologized Macondo/Columbia in *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Yet, while *Solitude's* circular temporal arrangement is evocative of a pessimistic worldview, narrating the saga of a family destined for self-destruction and tragedy, *Khwabnama*, in a dialectical fashion, apprehends not only the tragic circularity of life but also its potential for transgression, its conditions of possibilities. Nevertheless, one can notice elegiac undertones in both novels because they both mourn the loss of historical possibilities ushered in by radical uprisings. It is here, in the way that these novels explore the depth of

collective trauma and possibility, the somber tone with which they recount the losses of their nations and communities, that these novels elevate themselves to the level of epics, for an epic is, after all, a grand saga of collective human struggle that stretches beyond immediate history and communities.

The collective struggle that *Khwabnama* narrativizes resonates far beyond its fictional time and space. Although it tells the stories of Girirdanga and Nijgirirdanga, two communities located on the banks of Katlahar Bil [Katlahar Marsh], the themes that it engages with and the problems that it addresses remain pertinent to our era as well. The novel's critique of the national bourgeoisie is even more relevant today than it was in the mid-nineties, when it was first published. Likewise, the expropriation of the rural subaltern and the social/existential cost of ecological destruction are as compellingly present in our late neoliberal era as they were in the late 1940s, when urbanization and capitalization of rural communities were in their nascent stage. In many ways, this novel is a brilliant illustration of how the past mirrors onto the present and how the present continues to shape the way we look at our historical past. More importantly, this novel allows us to navigate the pre-history of our nation, showing how many of the themes and issues that emerged during the Tebhaga uprising and the partition riots still continue to mold our history today. One has to only look into the return of fascism and religious extremism in the mainframe of politics to understand how the unresolved past casts its shadows on life today. The grand canvas of *Khwabnama* accommodates the antinomies and polyphonies of life. That this novel does not suppress life's contradiction, that it declines to sanitize its narrative canvas by purging out unresolved mysteries and irrational desires, turns it into an enormously enriching *tour de force*. *Khwabnama's* epic stature, therefore, also emanates from its generous handling of reality, from its ability to pry open the external shell of reality to construct out of its carefully hidden soil and filth a narrative as broad as life itself.

Hasan Al Zayed teaches English and Cultural Studies at the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh.

One distinctive feature of the novel comes into view right away: while most novels depend upon the development and struggles of individuals to tell their stories, *Khwabnama* relies on the shared experience of people to tell its own. At the heart of the novel's thematic structure stand the dreams, struggles and bafflements of the ordinary folks, mostly comprised of fishermen and landless farmers, who find their lives upended by Tebhaga Uprising on the one hand and the independence movement on the other.

days. Bangladeshi literature, in the past seventy-years, has produced some of the finest specimens of aesthetic works. Time has come to take proper notice of the generative capacity of Bangladeshi culture and life as we also take an honest look at its shortfalls.

The reason why I wish to go back to *Khwabnama* is because it makes me immensely proud of the Bangladeshi literary tradition each time I read this novel. As a student of world literature, one who has spent decades reading and discussing both canonical and non-canonical literature, I get to understand that this work marks the height of our creative potential. Only a handful of novels written in the past century can measure up to Elias' last work. It is a milestone in world literature and as the citizens of this land we should all take pride in its excellence, just as we should be proud of the working people of this country who have earned this hapless nation, sucked dry by the lumpen ruling elites, some degree of respectability on the world stage.

Akhtaruzzaman Elias, who is now considered an institution within the Bangladeshi literary tradition, was not as popular or well-known when he was alive. His life was cut short in January 1997, a month before his fifty-fourth birthday, by cancer that had been diagnosed just a year before. This novel, which was serialized in a national daily before being published as a book, was its author's last major work. Published first in 1996, *Khwabnama* still continues to both fascinate and

departments to shake off their colonial mindset and engage more solidly with the culture and politics of this nation and its people. The colonial inferiority complex that has taught us to scoff at anything that is local and slavishly extol cultures and commodities that are foreign needs to be uprooted from our culture and education. Unless we address our own slavish mentality, we will never learn to locate any goodness in us, let alone appreciate our literature which people take little interest in these

professor who is among the foremost scholars of our era—one who has researched on novels for more than half-a-century and whose understanding of the genre goes far deeper than anyone I know—has unequivocally espoused similar views about *Khwabnama*, I feel I should rearticulate some of my earlier views and explain why I think so highly of this 352-page-long work. Academics who study English literature barely ever show interest in Bengali literature. Except Rabindranath



POETRY

Megasthenes' Grin

JEWEL MAZHAR

TRANSLATED FROM BANGLA BY SUBRATA AUGUSTINE GOMES



You are stuffing gunpowder into the silent cannon
All by yourself. Now that the winter is over

Why do you stuff gunpowder
Into the silent cannon?

I wonder:
Is Megasthenes' grin also
Megasthenes'?

Within this power-operated
Charade
Brown horses fly

—Engines rumbling and robots
coughing by.

Are you still stuffing gunpowder
into the silent cannon?

Jewel Mazhar is a poet and translator.

INFRACTION

RONNY NOOR

The police flagged down our driver, who ran a red light on the flyover one cloudy December afternoon. "Didn't you see the STOP sign?" one of them yelled, as soon as the driver rolled down the window. "Are you rowing a boat or driving a car?" The driver begged, "Forgive me, Brother. It was a blunder." Irate, the portly cop jerked his head in my direction in the back seat, "The boy could have been killed, or you could have hit someone." The gainly driver slapped the palms of his hands together, breaking into a flurry of entreaties, "Last time, Brother. It won't happen again. I will lose my

job if my sir learns of it. Please! I have a family to feed." But his words met with a stern glance as the cop cried out for his license. "Come with us for a talk, bumpkin," he trailed his partner back to their station.

When he returned minutes later, I asked as the driver fired up the engine, if he would be charged for his infraction. "I've bought them a light meal," he said, looking straight at the road ahead, "You know, a little bakshesh for tea-biscuits."

The writer is an English professor and educator at the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, USA.



Vignettes of a Guitarist

SAEED RAHMAN SAMIN

As the guitar strikes
And we enjoy its dulcet tunes,
My mind wanders someplace else, slowly jamming.

Flowers and a lone tippet,
The vague sky and a dim visage,
Feathery birds caged on the top, softly cooing.

Soft strums fill the air
And a faint noise stirs and hides
The way does a little child, lowly humming.

Things I thought in the dark,
Taught to people in a delirium
Kindle a melancholy tune, gently whirring.

Beseeching a soul to temper,
A heart to render mellow and warm
The guitar plays on in a loop, too stubborn and sweet.

Saeed Rahman Samin is a student at Notre Dame College, Dhaka.

T SPORTS

Bangladesh vs West Indies
Second Test (Day 3)
Live from 9:30 am

T SPORTS

Bangladesh Premier League
Saif Sporting vs Sheikh Russel
Live from 6:00 pm

STAR SPORTS 1

India vs England

Second Test (Day 1)
Live from 10:00 am

TEN 1

Pakistan vs South Africa
Second T20I
Live from 7:00 pm

TEN 2 & SONY SIX

Australian Open 2021
Fourth Round
Live from 6:00 am (Sunday)

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1

English Premier League
Leicester City vs Liverpool
Live from 6:30 pm

T SPORTS & STAR SPORTS SELECT 1

English Premier League
Crystal Palace vs Burnley
Live from 9:00 pm
Manchester City vs Tottenham

Hotspur
Live from 11:30 pm
Brighton vs Aston Villa
Live from 2:00 am (Sunday)

TEN 2

Serie A
Napoli vs Juventus
Live from 11:00 pm
Spezia vs AC Milan
Live from 1:45 am (Sunday)

Tigers in another bind

'We didn't plan for this sort of pitch'

SPORTS REPORTER

Forgetting the equation of rescuing a draw in the two-match Test series after losing the first game, Bangladesh are now desperate to avoid defeat in the second game too, struggling on 105 for four in their first innings in reply to the West Indies' 409.

Mohammad Mithun (6*) and Mushfiqur Rahim (27*) brought some stability with a fifth-wicket stand but the pair will have a daunting task on the third day, with the hosts needing another 105 runs to avoid a follow-on.

Questions about ability to adapt to the longest version of the game by the Bangladesh batsmen were raised once again when they came out to bat with 37 overs to negotiate in the final session.

It was neither the pitch, nor any exceptional bowling. Instead, the batsmen were guilty of playing too many shots that proved costly.

Soumya Sarkar opened the innings but failed to open his account as the left-hander gifted a simple catch to short mid-wicket to an incoming Shanon Gabriel delivery in the very first over of the innings.

It was a 12th consecutive innings where the Tigers' openers were unable to go past



West Indian players celebrate the dismissal of Bangladesh captain Mominul Haque as the visitors tightened the screws on the home team with an excellent bowling display after scoring 409 runs in the first innings of the second Test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Dhaka yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

drive and was caught at gully after playing away from his body.

At the other end, the experienced Tamim Iqbal tried to remain positive and continued to play his strokes.

He struck six fours and a six, with skipper Mominul Haque at the other end trying to rebuild the innings.

It seemed the hosts might go on to recover from the early damage after the pair added 58 for the third wicket.

But the visitors struck back again as off-spinner Rahkeem Cornwall dismissed Mominul for 21 with some extra bounce.

The left-hander was caught behind trying to play a shot that could have been left.

On 44, Tamim was required to stay till the end but soon handed a simple catch at short mid-wicket off Alzarri Joseph and Bangladesh were left on 71 for four.

Earlier, the West Indies resumed the second day on 223 for 5 with Nkrumah Bonner on 74 and Joshua Da Silva on 22. The pair picked up where they left off on the first day.

Both batters looked positive and utilised scoring opportunities after some indiscipline bowling from the hosts.

Bonner, who was eyeing a maiden Test hundred, departed after Mehedi Hasan Miraz managed to provide the breakthrough and break the 88-run sixth-wicket stand.

The right-hander was caught at leg-slip on ninety but Joshua then continued to re-build another big partnership with Alzarri Joseph for the seventh wicket.

The pair continued to frustrate the hosts with Joseph starting to score runs quickly and dispatching the Bangladeshi bowlers all over the ground. The pair added 118 for the seventh wicket.

Da Silva registered his second fifty and was also eyeing a maiden ton but he too departed in the nineties.

Taijul's delivery went straight through Silva's defense and struck timber with him just eight runs short of his century.

Pacer Abu Jayed then removed Joseph after he had made a career-best 82 but he made sure the West Indies went past the 400-run mark in their first innings.

The lone specialist pacer for the Tigers, Jayed, then joined Taijul as the pair went on to remove the Windies lower order to end with up four wickets each.

SPORTS REPORTER



The team selection, the approach with the ball, the listless body language on the field and the obvious lack of patience and adaptability with the bat --

Bangladesh has been below par in all aspects till the end of the second day of the second Test against the West Indies.

Bangladesh is fighting to avoid the follow-on at their home of cricket in Mirpur on 105 for four in reply to the sizeable 409 from the West Indies.

The likes of Soumya Sarkar, Nazmul Hossain Shanto, skipper Mominul Haque and even the experienced Tamim Iqbal all have themselves to blame for playing rash strokes and surrendering the opportunity to take on the just when it mattered after the hosts started batting in the final session.

Many questioned the temperament of the Bangladeshi batsmen against a rather inexperienced West Indies side who are now on top of the hosts and are looking to seal a 2-0 series win that was unthinkable before the visitors' stirring triumph in the first Test in Chattogram.

"First of all, the wicket was really good to bat on and all our four wickets that fell were not related to the pitch or even a brilliant delivery. All four were because of the batsman's error. I think it's our fault and if we had not lost more than two wickets, we could have been in a better position. I have to say they [West Indies] are on top," Tamim told the media yesterday.

West Indies, resuming the second day on 223 for five, capitalised on undisciplined bowling

Joshua Da Silva's 92 drove the West Indies innings on the second day of the Dhaka Test on Friday.

PHOTO: STAR



SCORES IN BRIEF

West Indies: First innings 409 all out in 142.2 overs (Da Silva 92, Bonner 90, Joseph 82; Jayed 4-98, Taijul 4-108)
Bangladesh: First innings 105 for 4 in 36 overs (Tamim 44, Mominul 21, Mushfiqur 27 not out, Mithun 6 not out; Gabriel 2-31)

the fifty mark. In fact, it was the fourth time in their last 12 innings that Bangladesh lost their first wicket for less than ten runs.

Nazmul Hossain was the next to depart in Gabriel's next over.

Despite playing a wonderful straight drive off the previous ball, the left-hander fell into Gabriel's trap outside off.

Nazmul couldn't resist going for another

Mori quits, apologises

REUTERS, Tokyo

Tokyo 2020 Olympics chief Yoshiro Mori resigned on Friday and apologised again for sexist remarks that sparked a global outcry, leaving the troubled Olympics searching for a chief five months from the opening ceremony.

The resignation of



former prime minister Mori, 83, will further erode confidence in the organisers' ability to pull off the postponed Summer Games during a coronavirus pandemic.

A Tokyo 2020 board member told reporters the new president would be chosen by a selection committee.

Among the candidates being considered to succeed him was Olympics Minister Seiko Hashimoto, media said.

Hashimoto, 56, is a seven-time Olympian and pioneering female lawmaker. Her first name is based on the Japanese words for the Olympic flame and she was born just days before the 1964 Tokyo Olympics opened.

Mori sparked a furore when he said during an Olympic committee meeting this month that women talk too much, setting off a chorus of calls for him to be sacked. He initially refused to step down.

"My inappropriate comments caused big trouble. I'm sorry," Mori said at the beginning of a meeting of senior organising committee officials on Friday, adding that the most important thing was for the Tokyo Olympics to be a success.



PHOTO: FIFA.COM

SIX FOR FLICK'S BAYERN

Bayern Munich players lift coach Hansi Flick in the air to celebrate their Club World Cup success following a 1-0 win over Mexico's Tigres in the final in Qatar on Thursday. Benjamin Pavard's second-half strike sealed the win as the Germans claimed a "six pack" of titles within 12 months under the former assistant coach of Germany national team. Bayern became the second side to win all six available titles within a year after Barcelona managed the feat in 2009.

Thiem tames Kyrgios

AFP, Melbourne

Ice-cool Dominic Thiem rallied from two sets down to tame flamboyant Nick Kyrgios at the Australian Open Friday in front of a raucous crowd hours before Melbourne goes into coronavirus lockdown.

Kyrgios produced a virtuoso performance in the first two sets, using every trick in the book, including underarm serves and tweeners, as he fed off the energy at a boisterous John Cain Arena, his favourite court.

But he couldn't sustain the intensity as US Open champion Thiem, last year's runner-up, found his groove with some dominant serving to fight back and outlast

the 25-year-old 4-6, 4-6, 6-3, 6-4, 6-4.

He will now play 18th seed Grigor Dimitrov for a place in the quarter-finals, with the Bulgarian through after Pablo Carreno Busta retired injured in the second set.

"It was my first match against Nick on his favourite court with an amazing crowd, there are easier things to do," said Thiem.

"That is one of the tougher challenges we have in our sport, you never know what is coming. Nick is a huge player when he is on fire, like today."

Austrian Thiem came into the clash after dropping just six games in his previous match, in contrast to Kyrgios who played a draining and emotional five-setter.



Eight-time champion Novak Djokovic had a bit of a scare against America's Taylor Fritz in the third round of the Australian Open on Friday, but the World No. 1 eventually won the match 7-6, 6-4, 3-6, 4-6, 6-2.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Spin onslaught awaits Eng in second Test

AFP, CHENNAI

India warned England on Friday to expect a spin onslaught in the second Test as they bid to hit back after a crushing first Test defeat.

The hosts are looking to bounce back on Saturday after their 227-run loss in the opening match, a rare Test match win for England on Indian soil. Chennai's M A Chidambaram stadium remains the venue for the second of the four Tests, but on a different pitch.

India vice-captain Ajinkya Rahane backed his spinners to cause the visitors problems.

"(The pitch) looks completely different, I am sure it will turn from day number one," Rahane told

reporters.

"We have to forget what happened in the last match, focus on this and play a good game. We know these conditions really, so we have to put our best foot forward."

Senior spinner Ravichandran Ashwin claimed nine wickets in the first Test, but got little support from the other end as Shahbaz Nadeem and Washington Sundar leaked too many runs in England's first innings total of 578, which was helped by a monstrous haul of 218 by England skipper Joe Root.

Left-arm spinner Axar Patel is back in the team after missing the opener with a knee injury while Nadeem is out of the squad.

"Everyone's in the mix," Rahane said without revealing the XI.

"All our spinners are really good," he said.

"If in India the ball is turning then the opposition is under pressure. I am not too concerned about how our spinners are bowling. I am sure they will come up with a plan and bowl well."

Meanwhile, England have left out James Anderson and Dom Bess, with the visitors naming Stuart Broad, Moeen Ali, Chris Woakes and pacer Olly Stone in their 12.

With speedster Jofra Archer ruled out due to an elbow injury, Olly, who played his only Test in July 2019, or Woakes are expected to partner Broad.

"(Stone) is certainly looking very good in and around training," captain Joe Root told reporters on the eve of the Test.

Uttar Baridhara eke out another draw

SPORTS REPORTER

Uttar Baridhara Club played out a third straight home draw in the Bangladesh Premier League as they held visitors Muktiyodha Sangsad to a 1-1 draw at the Shaheed Ahsan Ullah Master Stadium in Tongi yesterday.

With four draws, one of which was away from home, Baridhara Club stayed above 11th-placed Muktiyodha Sangsad despite having equal four points seven outings.

National forward Suman Reza put Baridhara ahead in the 42nd minute with his third goal of the campaign for a goalmouth melee but the hosts surrendered the lead two minutes into the second half when Muktiyodha captain Yusuke Kato nodded home a corner-kick.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Sunamganj
E-mail: eesun@rhd.gov.bd
☎: 0871-63457

Memo No. 35.01.9089.42.14.002.20-496

Date: 08/02/2021

e-Tender Notice

Tender/ Proposal ID No. & Package No.	Name of work	Tender document last selling/ downloading date & time	Tender closing date & time	Tender opening date & time
523763 e-GP/11/EE/SRD/2020-2021	Repairing of Ranijan Ferry Ghat approach Road Eneyetgonj end by supplying & dumping /laying 2nd class brick bats & HBB work at 30th km of Pagla-Jogannathpur-Raniganj-Aushkandi Road (R-241) under Sunamganj Road Division during the year 2020-2021.	23/02/2021 11.45	23/02/2021 13.15	23/02/2021 13.15
523789 e-GP/13/EE/SRD/2020-2021	Repairing of Ranijan Ferry Ghat approach Road Raniganj end by supplying & dumping /laying 2nd class brick bats at 30th km of Pagla-Jogannathpur-Raniganj-Aushkandi Road (R-241) under Sunamganj Road Division during the year 2020-2021.	24/02/2021 11.45	24/02/2021 14.00	24/02/2021 14.00

The above e-Tenders are published in the National e-GP System Portal <http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>. All information and guidelines are available in the e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

স্বা/=
Zahirul Islam
ID No. 602150
Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Sunamganj

GD-301



আবাস বাংলাদেশ!

BSRM
building a safer nation



Aktaruzzaman Flyover Chittagong

Principal Cement Brand

SHAH CEMENT

Land lost, so is livelihood

65 Mro families in Bandarban's Lama say rubber company grabbed 200 acres of their jhum land

SANJOY KUMAR BARUA

Around 65 Mro families of three villages in Bandarban's Lama upazila are living in fear of eviction from their ancestral homes with no source of livelihood after land grabbers illegally occupied their jhum land last month.

Residents of the three villages -- Tripura Para, Langkom Mro Para, and Rengyan Mro Karbari Para -- alleged that Lama Rubber Industries Limited grabbed around 200 acres of their ancestral jhum land.

This latest move came following earlier threats and a false case filed against members of the community several years ago, they said.

"On January 23, the rubber company sent around 120 goons -- mostly from the Rohingya community -- with sharp

weapons to take possession of our jhum land," said Langkom Mro, karbari (village chief) of Langkom Mro Para.

"They threatened our lives when we protested. How will we survive in the hills if these influential people grab our ancestral jhum land?" asked the karbari.

Indigenous people in the area largely depend on jhum cultivation and forest resources for their livelihoods.

Since the 1997 signing of the Chittagong Hill Tracts Peace Accord, thousands of acres of indigenous jhum land -- mainly in Lama, Naikhyangchhari and Alikadom upazilas of Bandarban -- have been grabbed by private rubber plantation owners and horticulturists, Jumlian Amlai, president of the Bandarban chapter of Parbatya Chattogram Forest and Land Rights

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal walking back after his loose shot plunged the hosts into deeper trouble on the second day of the second Test against West Indies in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Tigers fighting to stay afloat

SPORTS REPORTER

A change in city brought no change in Bangladesh's performance as the hosts seemed to be halfway to a humiliating series loss to an inexperienced West Indies side after the second day of the second Test at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Hot favourites before the two-Test series, the Tigers went on to lose the Chattogram Test by three wickets. Lessons were not learnt from that debacle as the hosts ended the second day on 105 for four, a whopping 304 runs behind West Indies' 409 all out.

Before the four batsmen -- Soumya Sarkar, Nazmul Hossain Shanto, skipper Mominul Haque and Tamim Iqbal -- departed playing irresponsible shots, the bowling performance from the hosts was a lacklustre one on the second day.

Having held West Indies to 223 for five on the first day, the Tigers let

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



PRAYER TIMING FEBRUARY 13
Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5:25 12:45 4:30 5:57 7:15
JAMAAT 6:00 1:15 4:45 6:01 7:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SATIRE DAY

ANNOUNCEMENT

Please visit www.thedailystar.net to enjoy the digital version of this week's Satireday, which will not be appearing on print today.

COUP IN MYANMAR

Calls grow louder for UN sanctions

AGENCIES

The United Nations human rights investigator for Myanmar yesterday urged the UN Security Council to consider imposing sanctions and arms embargoes, as 300 elected Myanmar lawmakers urged investigations into the military's seizure of power.

The United States, which imposed its own sanctions on Thursday, took the floor at the Human Rights Council to urge other

UN member states to follow suit.

Meanwhile, supporters of ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi clashed with police yesterday as hundreds of thousands joined nationwide pro-democracy demonstrations in defiance of the junta's call to halt mass gatherings.

More than 350 officials, activists, journalists, monks and students have been detained, said Nada al-Nashif, deputy UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

'Vote for AL candidate out in open'

AL leader tells rally

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

An Awami League leader in Lakshmipur has asked voters to cast ballots in public for the party mayoral candidate in tomorrow's Ramgati municipality polls.

"You have to cast your ballots in public for the mayoral candidate of 'boat' [Awami League's electoral

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Dhaka, Beijing in talks over vaccine

Says Chinese envoy

UNB, Dhaka

Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Li Jiming yesterday said they are now in close discussion with Bangladesh regarding Covid-19 vaccine assistance.

"China just announced it would provide 10 million Covid vaccines to developing countries through the COVAX initiative," he said in a video message marking the Chinese New Year, wishing a New Year with less coronavirus and more prosperity.

Ambassador Jiming said the Chinese New Year is widely celebrated around the world. "The charm of this

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

CELEBRATING 30 YEARS OF

The Daily Star

Shashi Tharoor in conversation with Mahfuz Anam on Press Freedom In South Asia



Shashi Tharoor

World famous novelist, writer, speaker, Congress Party leader, Member of Parliament and Chairman of the Parliamentary Committee for External Affairs



Mahfuz Anam

Editor & Publisher
The Daily Star

This Evening at 7:00 pm

The programme will be broadcast live on The Daily Star Facebook page

facebook.com/dailystarnews f LIVE

“এনেছিলে সাথে করে মৃত্যুহীন প্রাণ মরণে তাই তুমি করে গেলে দান”



মোঃ সফিকুল হক চৌধুরী

(১ জানুয়ারি ১৯৪৯ - ১২ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২১)

গভীর দুঃখের সঙ্গে জানানো যাচ্ছে, আশা'র প্রতিষ্ঠাতা ও প্রেসিডেন্ট এবং সাবেক তত্ত্বাবধায়ক সরকারের (২০০৬-০৭) কৃষি, যুব ও ক্রীড়া বিষয়ক উপদেষ্টা মোঃ সফিকুল হক চৌধুরী ১২ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২১ (রাত ১:০০ টা) হৃদরোগে আক্রান্ত হয়ে রাজধানীর স্কয়ার হাসপাতালে চিকিৎসাধীন অবস্থায় মৃত্যুবরণ করেন (ইন্না--রাজেউন)। তাঁকে মিরপুর বুদ্ধিজীবী কবরস্থানে দাফন করা হয়েছে। মৃত্যুকালে তাঁর বয়স হয়েছিল ৭২ বছর। তিনি স্ত্রী ও তিন পুত্র রেখে গেছেন।

মোঃ সফিকুল হক চৌধুরী ১৯৭৮ সালে আশা প্রতিষ্ঠা করেন- যা এখন শীর্ষস্থানীয় ক্ষুদ্রঋণ প্রতিষ্ঠান হিসেবে বিশ্বজুড়ে সুনামের অধিকারী। এছাড়া, তিনি আশা ইউনিভার্সিটি বাংলাদেশ, আশা ম্যাটস এবং হোপ ফর দ্য পুওরস্ট প্রতিষ্ঠা করেন। তিনি আশা ইন্টারন্যাশনাল এর প্রেসিডেন্ট হিসেবেও দায়িত্ব পালন করেন- যা বর্তমানে এশিয়া ও আফ্রিকা মহাদেশের ১৩টি দেশে দারিদ্র্য বিমোচনে কাজ করছে।

মোঃ সফিকুল হক চৌধুরী হবিগঞ্জ জেলার চূনারুঘাট উপজেলার এক সম্ভ্রান্ত মুসলিম পরিবারে জন্মগ্রহণ করেন। তিনি ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় থেকে সমাজ বিজ্ঞানে অনার্সসহ এমএ ডিগ্রি অর্জন করেন। তিনি কুমিল্লা বার্ড ও সিসিডিবিতে কিছুদিন কাজ করেন। তিনি সিভিল সার্ভিস পরীক্ষায় উত্তীর্ণ হয়েও সরকারি চাকুরীতে যোগদান করেননি। মোঃ সফিকুল হক চৌধুরী বিশ্বের বিভিন্ন দেশে দারিদ্র্য নিরসনে পরামর্শকের দায়িত্ব পালন করেন।

পরম করুণাময় আল্লাহর দরবারে মরহুম মোঃ সফিকুল হক চৌধুরীর বিদেহী আত্মার মাগফেরাত কামনা করছি।

