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Dying in SILENCE

14 languages disappearing for lack of preservation efforts

PINAKI ROY

The 14 languages declared endangered over two years ago remain in various stages of decline as the number of users diminish, with experts calling for extensive measures from the government to preserve these.

The state of some of these languages is so dire that only 10 to 12 elderly people in certain ethnic communities speak them.

According to Unesco, "A language disappears when its speakers disappear or when they shift to speaking another language -- most often, a larger language used by a more powerful group."

It also says, "Languages are threatened by external forces such as military, economic, religious, cultural or educational subjugation, or by internal forces such as a community's negative attitude towards its own language."

A linguistic survey conducted by the International Mother Language Institute (IMLI), which ended in 2018, listed the 14 endangered languages -- Kondo, Kharia, Koda, Soura, Mundari, Kole, Malto, Khumi, Pangkhua, Rengmitcha, Chak, Khyang, Lusai and Laleng (Patro).

They are mostly spoken in the north, Sylhet region, and the Chattogram Hill Tracts and among 41 ethnic languages spoken as mother tongues in the country.

MORE PAGE 2, 3

ON THE VERGE OF EXTINCTION

Kondo, Kharia, Koda, Soura, Mundari, Kole, Malto, Khumi, Panakhua, Rengmitcha, Chak, Khyang, Lusai and Laleng (Patro)



An artist puts finishing touches to the graffiti depicting the martyrs killed by police in 1952 for demanding Bangla be made state language. The photo was taken on the Central Shaheed Minar premises on the eve of International Mother Language Day, when the nation commemorates the language movement heroes.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



Language Movement paved path for independence

Says PM

UNB, DHAKA

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the 1952 Language Movement had paved the path for achieving the independence of Bangladesh.

"In the history of the Bangalee's struggle for freedom, the Language Movement is very important. All our achievements came through this movement," she said while distributing the prestigious Ekushey Padak, the country's second highest civilian award, among the recipients.

The cultural affairs ministry organised the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

EIGHT LANGUAGES

Bangla, Chakma, Marma, Tangchangya, Rakhaine, Mro, Monipuri and Ahmia have their own alphabets



Textbooks using Chakma and Marma alphabets were introduced in 2017 for students up to grade-III while Garo, Kokborok, Sadi language textbooks were printed using Roman alphabets

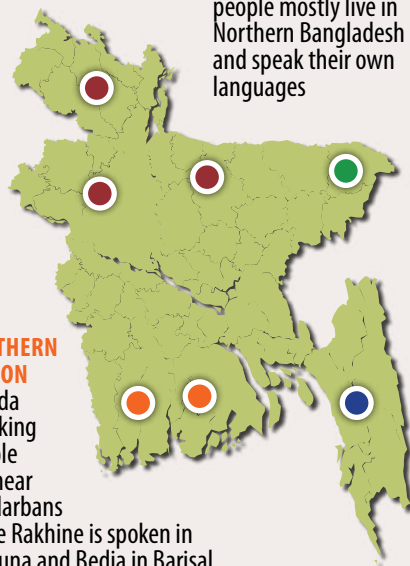
MYMENSINGH AND NORTHERN REGIONS
Mandi (Garo), Hajong, Koch and Lingam speaking people live in Mymensingh region while Santal, Kole, Koda, Munda people mostly live in Northern Bangladesh and speak their own languages

SYLHET REGION
Tea garden workers in Sylhet region speak Munda, Ahmia, Mahali, Kuruk, Kanpuri, Santal, Madrazi, Telegu, Uria, Kanpuri, Malto, Soura, Sadi Gurkha and Bhojuri while there are other people who speak Khasi, Monipuri (Meitei), Monipuri (Bhisupriya) and Lelang (Patro) languages

CHT, COX'S BAZAR REGION
Bawm, Chak, Chakma, Marma, Khumi, Mro, Rengmitcha, Pangkhua, Khyang, Lusai, Tangchangya, Kokborok, Nepali (Gurkha) and Rakhine languages are spoken in CHT and Cox's Bazar region

SOURCE: IMLI, UNESCO

SOUTHERN REGION
Munda speaking people live near Sundarbans while Rakhine is spoken in Barguna and Bedia in Barisal



Drama over Quader Mirza 'suspension'

Journo injured in Friday night's clash dies; 50 hurt in fresh violence

OUR CORRESPONDENT, NOAKHALI

Noakhali Awami League leaders backtracked from their decision to relieve Abdul Quader Mirza of organisational activities within two hours of issuing the release statement yesterday.

A top leader of the district AL claimed the statement was issued "mistakenly".

It was signed by the district AL President AHM Khairul Anam Chowdhury and its General Secretary Mohammad Ekramul Karim Chowdhury and was issued around 4:00pm yesterday.

The statement said Quader Mirza has been released from all types of the party's organisational functions on charge of delivering indecent speech that went against the party and threatened some party men.

Besides, the district AL president and secretary also recommended in the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

RED CRESCENT VOLUNTEERS

A vital cog in vaccination

MOUJUD AHMED SUJAN

"Have you brought the vaccination card, sir?" Rubina Akter asks a middle-aged man who just arrived at a Covid-19 inoculation centre at Dhaka Medical College and Hospital.

Once the man gives her the card, she takes him to a desk and helps him fill out a few forms. She then shows him the waiting room, saying, "You will be called soon."

Rubina, a graduate student, is one of the 4,200 volunteers aged between 18 and 30 of Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS). They are lending a hand in the government's vaccination programme.

They have been working at over 1,000 vaccination centres across the country since February 7 when the campaign launched. They only receive a meal and transport costs for the work.

"We enjoy giving back to the community," said a smiling Rubina at a DMCH vaccination centre on Thursday.

The positive attitude can be seen among volunteers at many vaccination centres across the country. They help people at the reception desks and assist them in every step of the process.

With academic activities limited to online classes, many students like Rubina have been able to find the time to engage in voluntary work.

At some centres, this correspondent saw the volunteers helping the elderly in wheelchairs. It is the volunteers who watch for side-effects in vaccine recipients for 30 minutes after they get the shot.

Shanto Hossain Rabby, an accounting student, said the voluntary work was a blessing for him.

"Many people do not get such opportunities to help others. I consider myself lucky," said Rabby, the chief of the youth section of BDRCS in Dhaka.

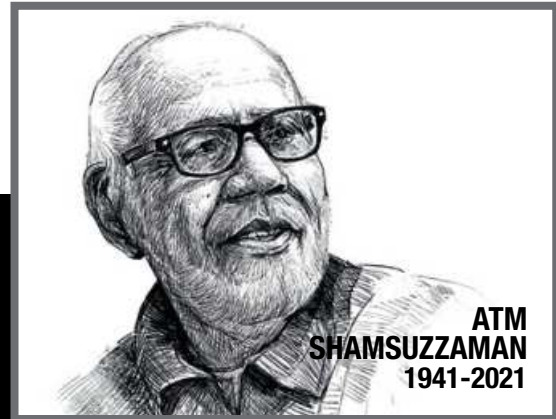
For Afia Ulpha, who is in her third year at Mirpur Institute of Science, Trade and Technology, voluntary work is a source of immense happiness.

"The smiling faces of people after they get inoculated give me peace," Afia told this correspondent at booth-8 in Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Hospital.

Halimur Rahman, a resident of Pallabi, was extremely grateful to the volunteers.

"I got my shot within just 10 minutes. The management is efficient. The health workers and volunteers are caring people," he said.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



ATM SHAMSUZZAMAN 1941-2021

An actor etched in collective mind

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Ekushey Padak and National Film Award winning actor ATM Shamsuzzaman passed away at 9:00pm yesterday at his Sutrapur residence.

He was 79 years old.

The news was confirmed by SA Haque Olik, general secretary, Bangladesh Directors' Guild.

Shamsuzzaman was hospitalised after suffering from breathing problems.

He was taken to Asgar Ali Hospital in Gendaria on February 17 for some tests before being admitted to the ICU. He had tested negative for Covid-19 and returned home from hospital on Friday.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

মা তোমাকে ভালবাসি

শব্দ নয়, অনুভূতি হোক ভাষার প্রাণ

From the house of KDS

MORE NEWS

The last of the Kharia speakers PAGE 2

Nasa's rover beams back spectacular new images PAGE 6

History hidden in plain sight PAGE 3

Somela Rahman: an unsung language hero PAGE 3

Transatlantic alliance is 'back' PAGE 6

ভাষা দিবসে ব্যাংক এশিয়া নিয়ে এলো বাংলা কিউআর

BANGLA QR

এখন যাবতীয় কেনাকাটার পেমেণ্ট হবে আরও সহজে ও নিরাপদে ডিসা ব্যাংক এশিয়া বাংলা কিউআর এর মাধ্যমে

বিস্তারিত জানতে কল করুনঃ ৯৬২০৫ (২৪/৭)

VISA | Bank Asia

BANGLADESH UPDATE



350
New cases in 24hrs



5,43,024
Total cases



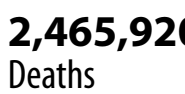
8,342
Deaths



4,90,892
Recoveries



2,465,920
Deaths



111,360,920
Total cases

President, PM pay rich tributes to language heroes

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid rich tributes to the Language Movement heroes in the first minute of the day.

On behalf of President Abdul Hamid, his military secretary Maj Gen SM Salahuddin Islam placed a floral wreath at the Central Shaheed Minar.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's military secretary Maj Gen Naquib Ahmed Chowdhury placed a floral wreath on behalf of her.

Senior Awami League leaders, including General Secretary Obaidul Quader, presidium members Matia Chowdhury and Lt Col (Rtd) Faruk Khan, Joint Secretary Hasan Mahmud, and Cultural Affairs Secretary Asim Kumar Ukil, also paid tributes on behalf of Sheikh Hasina as she is the president of the party.

Sergeant at Arms Commodore Miah Mohammad Nayeem Rahman placed a wreath on behalf of Speaker Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury.

Also, chiefs of the armed forces, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen, Inspector General of Police Benazir Ahmed, Jatiya Party Chairman and leader of the opposition GM Quader,

Education Minister Dipu Moni, Bangladesh Ansar and Village Defense Party Director General Maj Gen Mizanur Rahman Shameem, Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, ambassadors and high commissioners of different countries and chiefs of international agencies, members of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Birth Centenary Celebration National Implementation Committee, members of Dhaka University Alumni Association, Attorney General AM Amin Uddin, wounded Freedom Fighters of Muktiyoddha Kalyan Trust, DU Vice-Chancellor Prof Akhtaruzzaman, and Dhaka Divisional Commissioner Khalilur Rahman on behalf of Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam placed floral wreaths.

Barefoot and wearing black badges, they placed the wreaths at Central Shaheed Minar stood in silence in remembrance of those who embraced martyrdom to make Bangla the state language in 1952 as the tune "Amar Bhaier Rokte Rangano Ekushey February" reverberated the air.

The day is observed worldwide as the International Mother Language Day. In 1999, the Unesco declared February 21 as the International Mother Language Day.



Military secretaries, on behalf of President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, place floral wreaths at the Central Shaheed Minar at zero hour to pay tribute to the heroes of Language Movement.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Man sent to jail for rape of minor

STAR REPORT

A Joypurhat court yesterday sent a man to jail for his alleged involvement in the rape of a 10-year-old mentally challenged girl in the district.

The accused is Ruhul Amin alias Tutul, 26, of Rambhadrapur village in the district's Panchbibi upazila.

According to the case statement, Tutul raped the girl on Friday afternoon when she went outside of the home.

The accused took the girl to an isolated place, raped her, and fled the scene, the case statement added.

The victim's father filed a case with Panchbibi Police Station.

Polash Deb, officer-in-charge of Panchbibi Police Station, said police arrested Tutul on Friday night from a border area of Rambhadrapur village.

Later, he was produced before a district court that sent him to jail.

The victim was also sent to Joypurhat Modern Hospital for medical tests, he added.

Meanwhile, police detained two teenage boys in Barguna as they allegedly attempted to rape a 10-year-old girl on Wednesday afternoon in the district.

Drama over

FROM PAGE 1

statement that party chief Sheikh Hasina permanently expel Quader Mirza and cancel his primary membership from the party.

Contacted, Khairul Anam said he earlier signed the statement but later withdrew the decision due to "unavoidable" reasons.

"The statement was issued mistakenly. Now, we are waiting for a decision from our party chief Sheikh Hasina on this matter," he said.

Mohammad Ekramul Karim Chowdhury could not be contacted over phone for his comment.

Quader Mirza termed the district AL committee illegal and said the committee does not have the jurisdiction to take such a decision.

Abdul Quader Mirza, younger brother of AL general secretary Obaidul Quader and elected mayor of Basurhat municipality under Companiganj upazila, has been serving as the vice president of the district unit and a member of executive committee of the upazila unit.

Mirza has lately been delivering speeches against some party men, claiming they were involved in misdeeds and corruption. His remarks have put the AL top brass in an awkward position.

Meanwhile, followers of Mirza yesterday again locked into clashes with police near Companiganj police station yesterday, a day after mayhem in the area.

After the clash, Mirza at a press conference at Rupali Chattar in Companiganj claimed that 15 of his followers were injured.

Earlier on Friday, at least one person died and 50 people were injured in clashes, nine with bullet injuries, between two AL factions over establishing supremacy in the upazila.

One group was led by Mirza and another group was led by Mizanur Rahman Badal, organising secretary of the upazila AL, also a follower of lawmakers Ekramul Karim Chowdhury and Nizam Uddin Hazari.

Immediately after the violence, Mirza called a strike in Companiganj upazila yesterday "protesting the attack on his men" and to press home his previous demands, including an end to corruption and misdeeds by AL men and the transfer of some government officials who were allegedly involved with graft.

In support of the strike, Mirza and his supporters brought out a procession around 7:00am yesterday. Many of his supporters were carrying sticks, said witnesses and police.

Marching on different streets of Basurhat municipality, the procession reached the police station gate. The agitators then tried to enter the police station, but police intercepted them, which triggered a clash, police sources said.

At one stage, police charged batons to disperse them.

Meanwhile, Mirza's rival group, led by Mizanur Rahman Badal, held a separate press conference at a local AL office in the upazila and demanded the expulsion of Mirza from the party and mayoral post.

In the press conference, Badal claimed that Mirza, who ran in Basurhat municipal poll with the party's symbol, won the election by "vote rigging".

JOURNO DEATH IN VIOLENCE
A local journalist, who was bullet-hurt in clashes between the district AL two factions died at a Dhaka hospital yesterday night.

The dead, Borhan Uddin Muzakkir, 30, correspondent of local online portal Barta Bazar and resident of Char Fakira union under Companiganj upazila, succumbed to his injuries while undergoing treatment at the ICU of Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) around 10:45pm, said Inspector Bacchu Mia, in-charge of DMCH Police Outpost.

Borhan was admitted on Friday night in with a bullet injury in the throat, said Dr Md Alauddin, resident surgeon at emergency department of DMCH.

Borhan was hit during the Friday clash between two groups of Noakhali AL.

He was initially rushed to Noakhali General Hospital and then referred to DMCH for better treatment as his condition deteriorated.

THE LAST OF THE KHARIA SPEAKERS

A language getting lost due to dominance of others and lack of interest from younger generation



Veronica and Christina are two of the less than 20 people who speak Kharia.

MINTU DESHWARA and PINAKI ROY

Since her husband Abraham Soreng died two years ago, 70-year-old Veronica Kerketa doesn't get the chance to talk in her mother tongue at home. None of her children or grandchildren speak the Kharia language.

In her village, under Bormachhara tea garden area of Moulvibazar's Sreemangal upazila, only one other person -- her younger sister, 65-year-old Christina Kerketa -- speaks Kharia.

"Except for the two of us, the nearest person who knows this language, Jaharlal Pandey Induar, lives three kilometres away from our village," said Veronica.

"I talk with my sister or sometimes talk with him in this language when we meet."

She added, "Nobody else from my own family speaks this language now. So, I need to talk in Sadrri or Bangla with them."

The use of Sadrri is largely prevalent across the various ethnic communities in the tea gardens.

"After our death, nobody will speak this language [Kharia]. I tried to teach the language to the younger people but they do not show interest and laugh at me when I speak in Kharia," said Veronica.

Jaharlal Pandey Induar, 65, of Sreemangal's Mangrabasti, said that as a tea workers' family, they are always under financial stress. "We do not have enough time to give for our own language."

He said, "I still can't speak Kharia fluently, as I have mostly used Sadrri for a long time now."

Dayaram Kharia, 60, also from Mangrabasti, said 110 Kharia families live in the village.

"There is no one in our village who can speak our own language fluently -- there are only five people who know a few words of Kharia."

In Krishnanchura village of Habiganj's Chunarughat, of 41 Kharia families living in the village, only four old women can speak a few words in the language when they meet each other, said 45-year-old Manik Kharia.

Rajshahi University student Simon Kerketa, 23, from the Bormachhara area of Sreemangal upazila, said at least six members of his father's family still know Kharia.

"But I myself can't speak the language," he said.

A DYING LANGUAGE
Mashrur Imtiaz, assistant professor in the department of linguistics at the University of Dhaka, who conducted a survey on the language in 2018, found less than 20 people in Sylhet speak Kharia.

"Only 10 to 12 people from their community know this language. And a few others know some Kharia words and some stories and rituals. But they cannot really make sentences or continue a conversation," he said.

"There is no written form of this language in Bangladesh. I wanted to work on their grammar but did not get adequate people who speak the language."

Kharia, a language belonging to the Munda branch of the Austro-Asiatic language family, is one of Bangladesh's endangered languages, he said.

George Abraham Grierson's "Linguistic Survey of India", published in 1928, described Kharia then as a "dying" language, noted Mashrur.

Kharia people, who live in various tea gardens in Sylhet, were enlisted in the government's updated list of 50 small ethnic communities, which was made in 2019.

Before this, they were not even recognised as a separate ethnic group in Bangladesh.

Pius Nanuar, a Kharia social activist, who conducted a study on the Kharia population in early 2020, told this correspondent they found around 5,700 Kharia people in 41 villages in Sylhet division.



"New generations do not talk in this language -- they hardly know one or two words. This language is going to be lost from our country very soon as only 12 people from the community can speak the language," he said.

Pius, who knows a little bit of Kharia, said he learned it from his grandmother when he was a school student in the '90s.

His grandmother used to take classes informally every evening, telling stories of Kharia heroes, myths, riddles, rhymes, singalongs, harvest stories, Karam (a harvest festival) and other festivals, hunting, and folk traditions.

"In our boyhood, a good number of Kharia children at least learnt a few Kharia words and came into connection with our Kharia roots and culture. But after her death, that effort was lost," he said.

In 2017, an initiative was taken to teach the language to the younger generation through a youth organisation called "Beer Telenga Kharia Language Learning Centre", Pius said.

But it was a failed effort to save the Kharia language and culture in his community.

"Kharias in Bangladesh do not have our own alphabet. Kharias in India too use Roman and Latin alphabets," Pius added.

According to the website

Omniglot, an encyclopedia of writing systems and languages, Kharia is spoken in the Simdega and Gumla districts of Jharkhand state, in the Surguja and Raigarh districts of Chhattisgarh, and in the Sundargarh district of Odisha in India.

There are about 256 speakers of Kharia in the Mechi and Kosi zones of Nepal along the border with India.

Kharia is written also with Devanagari, Odia and Bangla alphabets, according to the website.

NOT JUST A LANGUAGE LOST

The majority of Kharia people in Moulvibazar, Habiganj and Sylhet districts are descendants of people who were brought to the plantations from various parts of India by the British colonists around a century and a half ago, according to the Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD).

In 2016, SEHD identified 658 Kharia households in 16 tea estates in Sylhet division.

Not just Kharia, even the more commonly spoken ethnic languages are in danger of disappearing.

Pranesh Goala, chairman of Kalighat Union Parishad in Sreemangal, said those who still speak Sadrri also mix in Bangla and Hindi words while speaking.

AFM Zakaria, professor in the anthropology department of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, told The Daily Star losing a language means closing the entrance to a civilisation, to a storehouse of cultural resources.

Sukra Kharia, 65, a younger brother of 70-year-old Gopia Kharia, a freedom fighter from Nalua tea garden in Habiganj's Chunarughat upazila, said as Bangladeshis, they are proud to be part of the country's history and culture.

At least six Kharia people participated in the Liberation War in 1971.

"But it is very sorrowful to say we are waiting to see the death of our own language," he said.

In the month of February, Pius Nanuar said, Kharia children pay homage to those who sacrificed their lives for the Bangla language but will never know how to speak the Kharia language, their own mother tongue.

Director General of the International Mother Language Institute Prof Dr Jinnat Imtiaz Ali told The Daily Star it is difficult to preserve a language spoken by less than 20,000 or 30,000 people.

"Finding the source of the language then becomes very difficult. We do not know then what exactly the oral form of the language was."

"However," he added, "we have formed a committee to compile the grammar in a dictionary to save endangered languages. We have started work."

Dying in silence

FROM PAGE 1

Their preservation becomes even more difficult as there is no written form or alphabets of these languages. In the meantime, the number of speakers continue to decline and are no longer learnt or used by the next generation.

Experts said these endangered languages will soon be lost forever along with their linked culture and traditional knowledge, if proper measures are not taken.

Mashrur Imtiaz, assistant professor of linguistics at the University of Dhaka, said the population size of the communities who speak the 14 languages range from 1,000 to 40,000.

"In the case of Mundari, the total population is around 40,000 but from the linguistic aspect, the number of speakers is significantly less in reality," he said.

Currently, he added, less than 15 people talk fluently in the Kharia language.

Experts say when less than 5,000 people speak a language, that is an endangered language.

"People from the community will have to step forward if they want to save their language. Then, the government can help in the process," said Dr Mohammad Iltemas, deputy director of IMLI's publications and research planning wing.

Under the linguistic survey project of IMLI, Dr Mohammad Iltemas said researchers collected 300 words of each language and the Bangla and English meaning of these words. The researchers also worked on how to form sentences in these languages and anthropogenic origins of each language.

The research work will be published in Bangla and English and will be inaugurated by the Prime Minister, he said.

The date of this publication's launch has been up in the air for more than two years since the research was completed.

On the occasion of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's birth centenary, IMLI has translated and published his March 7 speech in five ethnic languages including Chakma, Marma, Garo, Sadrri, and Kokborok, said Dr Iltemas.

The institute is also making a documentary on 10 ethnic communities introducing their language and culture, an IMLI official said.

However, Sourav Sikder, professor of the linguistic department at DU, believes only documentation is not enough to save endangered languages.

"Only documentation of a language won't save it. We need to make arrangements so that the communities get opportunities to practise their languages and they can read, write and speak their mother tongues."

He further said, "We need to ensure they get at least primary-level education in their own languages. But currently the government does not have any such initiative for these 14 languages."

In 2017, the government started publishing books starting from primary to class three in five different languages including Chakma, Marma, Kokborok, Garo, and Sadrri.

The Chakma and Marma books are in their own script while the other three are in the Roman script. The Santal language was included in this project but later excluded as the community could not reach a consensus on which alphabet should be used in the book.

This project has so far seen mixed success with experts pointing to a lack of training for teachers to supplement the new books.

"Primary education in the mother tongue project was not very successful for different reasons," said Sourav Sikder.

He suggested the government form a language commission that would take effective measures to save endangered languages.

"The government should take measures to ensure all citizens of the country get the opportunity to learn and practise their mother tongues," he said, referring to the country's glorious history of fighting for the mother tongue.

LANGUAGE DIVERSITY

In 2019, the government enlisted 50 ethnic communities in the gazette

of "Small Ethnic Groups Cultural Institutes Act of 2010".

Aside from Bangla and Urdu, these small ethnic communities speak 39 languages as their mother tongue, IMLI's linguistic survey found.

These languages are Bawm, Chak, Chakma, Mandi (Garo), Hajong, Kole, Khasi, Kharia, Koch, Munda, Khyang, Khumi, Marma, Monipuri (Meitei), Monipuri (Bhisnupriya), Lusai, Mro, Ahmia, Kanpuri, Mahali, Kurukh, Malto, Kondo, Thar, Laleng (Patro), Pangkhua, Rakhaine, Santal, Soura, Madrazi, Telugu, Tangchangya, Kokborok, Nepali (Gurkha), Rengmitcha, Koda, Lingum, Uria, and Sadrri.

Out of the 41 languages spoken in Bangladesh, only eight languages -- including Bangla, Chakma, Marma, Tangchangya, Rakhaine, Mro, Monipuri and Ahmia -- have their own alphabets, the linguistic survey found.

Though some other languages like Kokborok, Mandi, and Bwam do not also have their own alphabets, they use the Roman or Bangla script.

Subhashish Sinha, popular theatre director and a writer from a Monipuri (Bhisnupriya) community in Moulvibazar, said their alphabet has been lost.

"We now write Monipuri using the Bangla alphabet," he said.

Bawm, Chak, Chakma, Marma, Khumi, Mro, Rengmitcha, Pangkhua, Khyang, Lusai, Tangchangya, Kokborok, and Nepali (Gurkha) speakers mostly live in the Chhatogram Hill Tracts (CHT) and Cox's Bazar area in limited numbers.

Only a few Nepali speakers live in Bandarban, believed to have come to CHT with British soldiers during the colonial era, as well as in the tea gardens in Sylhet.

Yonguang Mro, a Mro writer, said a portion of the Mro community living in Krangsi Para of Alikadam upazila in Bandarban speak Rengmitcha.

"Now, only a few people still talk in the Rengmitcha language. Though they are [also] Mro people, we cannot understand their language. It is a different language," said Yonguang.

Tea garden workers in Sylhet speak multiple languages including Munda, Ahmia, Mahali, Kuruk, Kanpuri, Santal, Madrazi, Telugu, Uria, Kanpuri, Malto, Soura, Sadrri, Gurkha, and Bhojpuri.

Other languages spoken in Sylhet are Khasi, Monipuri (Meitei), Monipuri (Bhisnupriya), and Laleng (Patro).

Mandi (Garo) and Hajong languages are spoken mainly in the greater Mymensingh region. Some Koch and Lingum speakers also live in this region.

Santal, Kole, Koda, and Munda people mostly live in northern Bangladesh and in the Sylhet area in limited numbers. Some of the Munda community live near the Sundarbans while river gypsies or the Bedia people speak Thar.

Rakhaine speakers live in Cox's Bazar and in Barguna, Barishal.

As per the "Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger" published by Unesco in 2010, there is a list of 2,500 endangered languages. Researchers predict the number will reach 3,000 by the end of this century.

A vital cog

FROM PAGE 1

According to BDRCS officials, over 14,000 volunteers across the country are prepared to lend a hand, thanks to the cooperation of the Directorate General of Health Service (DGHS).

More of them will be engaged when the number of vaccination centres increases, they added.

"We cannot ensure all the logistics due to fund shortages. But the young volunteers are really committed," Imam Jafor Sikder, director of Youth and Volunteers at BDRCS, told The Daily Star.

BDRCS was constituted on March, 31, 1973.

Prof Nasima Sultana, additional director general (administration) at the DGHS, said, "The volunteers of the Red Crescent Society have been with us since the beginning of the pandemic. We are grateful and we appreciate their contributions."

A decade's history hidden in plain sight

Rich documents of Language Movement at private museum deserve better care

HASAN MEER

The walls are stacked with rare photographs of the Language Movement, as are shelves with books; some have become a bit dusty, but no less significant for it.

It's a small room filled to the brim with documents, paper clippings and memorabilia, transporting anyone that walks in to a time defined by courage, patriotism and love for Bangla.

This place -- two rooms inside a house -- is a museum, called Bhasha Andolan Gabeshana Kendra O Jadughar (Language Movement research centre and museum).

This little-known museum sits at House 5 on Road 10 in Dhanmondi residential area.

Founded by late Kazi Golam Mahboob, a language hero and convener of Rashtr Bhasa Sangram Parishad, it was set up in 2006.

After his demise, his family has been maintaining it through a trust, chaired by Mahboob's wife Peari Mahboob.

This newspaper visited the museum earlier this week.

Walking through the two rooms, some 30 photographs -- donated mostly by language veterans like Mohammad Taquillah, Mohammad Amanul Haque and Prof Rafiqul Islam -- take one on a journey of the Language Movement spanning nearly a decade, from 1947 to 1956.

Visitors also get a chance to look at books, pamphlets, journals and newspaper clippings during the

movement, to relive the tumultuous times captured by Taquillah during February 21, 1952.

There is also a visual journey, through images captured by photojournalist Amanul Haque of protesters who brought out a procession near Dhaka Medical College, violating curfew on that fateful day.

These and many other pieces of footagewere donated by witnesses and participants of the movement to the museum, and constitute the history of the Language Movement that is fast fading from collective memory, said Lipi Mahboob, in charge of the museum.

"That's why it's important to preserve these," she said.

This museum and research centre used to be maintained by MR Mahboob, its director, who had collected many of the precious memorabilia from all across the country and had written numerous books on the Language Movement and its heroes, added Lipi. Since Mahboob passed away last year, his wife Lipi is looking after it.

She said they also have portraits and biographies of some thirty Language Movement veterans, political and student leaders, and intellectuals who played key roles in the movement.

Besides, this correspondent saw original copies of newspapers including Saptahik Sainik -- considered the voice of the movement at that time, rare unpublished photographs, pamphlets and manuscripts.

During his visit, this correspondent also met private university student



While walking through this small but significant private initiative, rare photographs, documents and other memorabilia take one on a journey of the Language Movement spanning nearly a decade, from 1947 to 1956. These photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR



Moni Akter, who was writing a paper on Ekushey February, and her friend.

She said she was searching for museums or research centres on Ekushey and heard about it.

"As soon as I walked in I could tell this place is important. It should be preserved properly. We only remember Ekushey when February comes but we need to do more than

that," said the master's student.

One could tell this private initiative to preserve and spread the history of the Language Movement needs support, as it becomes evident while

talking to Peari Mahboob, widow of the language hero.

Age has taken its toll on her, but it could not diminish her will to carry on. The spirit of Ekushey continues to shine bright in her eyes.

Peari spoke extensively of how her husband wanted to preserve the memory of a generation that stood up for their rights, how he painstakingly collected the memorabilia or carried out the research work and most importantly the importance of continuing the good work.

A state-run, large-scale museum on the Language Movement, like the Liberation War Museum, is necessary for the new generation to learn more about the movement and to preserve these rare memorabilia that paint a vivid portrait of a remarkable generation, said Peari Mahboob and Lipi Mahboob in unison.

The spirit of Ekushey, like the spirit of the Liberation War is one of the finest and proudest moments in our history, when we came together as a people to stand firm for our beliefs.

In many ways, Language Movement was precursor to the War of Liberation and in that, we owe the martyrs respect and reverence for eternity.

As this correspondent left the museum premises and walked along the road, renamed after Kazi Golam Mahboob in 2006, he couldn't help but think that a large-scale museum for the Language Movement, like Peari Mahboob and Lipi Mahboob hoped for, could be an apt step towards that direction.

Somela Rahman: An unsung language hero

EAM ASADUZZAMAN, Nilphamari

Language movement veteran Somela Rahman is 84 now. Once quite the rambler, she now passes most of her time at her residence in Nilphamari's Hospital Road, bed-ridden with old age complications.

Somela has her name etched on the district's folklore, literally. Along with fellow revolutionaries, her name can be found on the plaque of Nilphamari Government College's Shaheed Minar.

But for the exceptional devotion she has shown for her language, its speakers aren't speaking back to her at her loneliest hours. Stuck in bed, a sense of agony sometimes overtakes her -- of not being remembered, of being forgotten. Other than a very few close relatives, almost nobody else comes to check on her anymore, especially none from the civil society that should be celebrating her.

As luck would have it, financial woes are part and parcel of her household too. Out of her five children, only one son lives with her and takes care of her, but his meagre income gets in the way of the household's stability. Even at her age, Somela still has to deal with financial anxiety.

"All my fellows from the Language Movement have gone one by one, many of them in miserable conditions. And the almighty yet keeps me alive to let me see the golden dawn when the Language Movement veterans would be properly evaluated not merely with words but materialistic support

to survive with honour," said Somela emotionally as this correspondent visited her recently.

Golam Mostofa, former head of the Bangla department at Nilphamari Government College, said when Somela Rahman and her fellows from Nilphamari Govt Girls School -- Fouzia Begum Baby, Halima Begum, Taiyeba Khanam, Zakia Sultana, Rezia Banu, Jaheda Begum, Jebunnahar and so on -- came forward to join the Language Movement, it not only helped that movement, but also the cause of women's liberation in a conservative society.

Somela Rahman, then only 15 and a student of class 10, said, "After Rafiq, Salam, Barkat, Shafiq, Jabbar and more were shot down in Dhaka in February 21, the situation turned volatile in Nilphamari too, and people brought out a protest procession the next day."

On February 23, the erstwhile East Pakistan govt arrested Khairat Hossain, a member in the then East Pakistan provincial assembly, as he along with opposition leader Maulana Abdur Rashid Tarkabagish walked out from the parliament session protesting the killings.

As the news of the arrests reached Nilphamari's sub-divisional town, people became enraged and held continuous protests on February 24, 25 and 26.

To suppress the people's voice -- loud and clear by this point -- the repressive government arrested sub-divisional Awami



SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Build a country free of graft in Ekushey spirit

TIB urges all

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) has called for building a corruption-free and well-governed country in spirit of Ekushey.

The declaration of 'zero-tolerance against corruption' from the highest level of the government has only remained on paper, as it has not taken stern action against big shots apart from some petty corruption, said TIB executive director Dr Iftekharuzzaman yesterday, in a statement.

Bangladesh's almost-unchanged position in the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for a decade and a second-lowest position in South Asia goes to prove it, he added.

Therefore, in addition to the declared promises, the adoption of all-out strict measures against corruption will be in line with the spirit of Ekushey, he said.

The TIB executive director also said it is a matter of great concern that there is a "denial syndrome" in the government and the administration. Attempts to deny all sorts of corruption, irregularities and allegations have been continuously questioning the political and state commitments against corruption.

According to him, it has also been creating a conducive environment for corruption.

Dr Iftekharuzzaman also said that Bangladesh stood up against repeated injustice and exploitation with the spirit of Ekushey and won independence. The Ekushey spirit should be a source of inspiration to prevent corruption, it added.

INT'L MOTHER LANGUAGE AWARD

PM to honour three individuals, one org

ASIFUR RAHMAN

Three individuals and an international organisation have been nominated for the International Mother Language Award, due to be handed over today in a virtual programme by the International Mother Language Institute (IMLI).

Prime minister Sheikh Hasina will present the awards around 3pm, officials of IMLI said.

This is the first iteration of the biennial award, which will recognise four recipients -- two national and two at the international level -- for their contributions towards the practise or preservation of mother tongue.

At the national level, the awardees are national professor Rafiqul Islam and Mathura Bikash Tripura, executive director of Khagrachhari's Jabarang Kalyan Samiti. Internationally, the recipients are Uzbekistani researcher Ismailov Gulom Mirzaevich and The Activismo Lenguan, a Bolivia-based organisation.

The Daily Star spoke to both of the national awardees, who spoke of their relationship with their mother tongue, retelling both their hopes and their frustrations surrounding the languages.

National Professor Rafiqul Islam, former teacher of Dhaka University Bangla department and a prominent educationist, said, "Though constitutionally Bangla is our state language, we have not been able to establish it even after fifty years of our independence."

"We remember its importance only in February, and then forget to take care of it rest of the year."

Regarding the worrying state of education in the country, Prof Rafiqul said, "The Kudrat-i-Khuda Education Commission report is yet to be implemented. The report emphasised that Bangla

would have to be the teaching-learning medium from primary to higher level, while English or other languages could be taught as well."

"But we did the contrary as we have Bangla and English medium, English version of Bangla medium, Alia Madrasa, Qawmi Madrasa and many more language-based curricula. We need every language, but are we teaching students any of the language properly? In addition, are we teaching Bangla in a scientific way?" he asked.

The other local awardee, Mathura Bikash, has worked for the preservation, revival and development of his mother tongue and formulated educational activities in his own language, according to a letter issued by IMLI.

Mathura Bikash told The Daily Star, "We still have about 50 indigenous languages in our country. Most of these languages are still in use, but there is little writing on these languages because of the lack of patronage."

"I hope these languages will not be lost, because if a language is lost, then all the knowledge based on that language is also lost."

Ahead of the Indigenous Language Decade, to be celebrated all over the world from 2022 to 2032, Bikash said, "As the initiator of Mother Language Day, Bangladesh will definitely play a pioneering role in this regard, this is our expectation."

According to the IMLI, international awardee Uzbekistani Ismailov Gulom Mirzaevich has researched and practised to protect, promote, and revitalise the culture of his mother language Uzbek.

The lone organisational recipient of the award, "The Activismo Lenguan" (Language Activism) was selected for their initiative to promote indigenous languages on the Internet.



A day before International Mother Language Day, artists were busy drawing alpana on the road in front of Central Shaheed Minar in Barishal city. These intricate designs are part of the traditions for observing the special occasion.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

ATTACK ON BU STUDENTS BY TRANSPORT WORKERS

Barishal at standstill as both parties block roads

Connection to southern districts snapped

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Barishal University students yesterday staged demonstrations and blocked roads in the city, demanding immediate arrest of all transport workers accused in a case filed for attacking their fellows.

Meanwhile, transport workers blockaded road in Rupatoli Chaumatha area around 12pm, seeking release of two of their fellow workers.

The blockades snapped road communications between Barishal and other southern districts including Jhalakathi, Pirojpur, Barguna, Patuakhali and Bhola all the day long.

Many passengers were seen walking to their destinations; many carrying their baggage and goods on their shoulders.

Students stayed on Barishal-Kuakata highway in front of the university around 9:30am, also demanding that the case be recorded as an attempted murder case.

Mahamudul Islam Tamal, an agitating student, told The Daily Star, "Transport workers snatched mobile phones and wallets from over 50 students... We want immediate recovery of those."

"Police have arrested two transport workers. But the main accused are still at large," Tamal said. "We will continue our movement until our demands are met."

The students withdrew their blockade around 6pm and postponed the agitation

till today, on the occasion of International Mother Language Day.

They would announce the next course of action later, said Tamal.

On the other hand, transport workers said police arrested their fellow workers unjustly. "We demand their release," said Khorshed Alam, a front liner of their agitation.

Transport workers also withdrew their blockade almost at the same time but transport operation did not begin till writing of this report at 7pm.

Police said they have arrested two transport workers in connection with it.

"We have kept raiding different spots to arrest other accused," said Md Nurul Islam, officer-in-charge (OC) of Kotwali Model Police Station in Barishal.

On February 16, two BU students and transport workers altercation at BRTC bus counter at the city's Rupatoli. At one stage, the workers stabbed a student.

When the news spread on the BU campus, students vandalised a BRTC bus counter and blocked Barishal-Kuakata regional highway for two hours.

The incident caused anger among transport workers who attacked student dorms of BU in Rupatoli on February 17, leaving at least 25 students injured.

On February 18, the university registrar filed a case against the unidentified miscreants with the police station.

Somela

FROM PAGE 3

Muslim League president Dabiruddin Ahamed, educationist Abu Nazem Mohammad Ali, Shamsul Huque, and student leader Safiar Rahman.

Almost all the male activists went into hiding. This is when the female revolutionaries came up to the forefront. They organised processions, meetings, arranged cultural programmes, and coordinated with movement leaders, all inspiring the district's people to keep raging on.

Finding no other way, police issued arrest warrants against Fouzia and Halima and warned guardians of female protesters to force their daughters to shun the movement.

"They tried everything they could, but we were indomitable. We held on until Bangla was declared the state language," Somela told this

correspondent, almost in a single breath. Her eyes, ravaged by cataract and years of neglect, glistened, and one could almost see flashbacks of the events from those difficult days that led to glory.



The lines are long at Chattogram General Hospital's Covid-19 vaccination programme, where people are spending hours queued up to receive their inoculation. This photo was taken yesterday from the port city's Andorkilla area.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

An actor etched

FROM PAGE 1

Abu Taher Md Shamsuzzaman was born on September 10, 1941, in Noakhali's Doulatpur -- his maternal grandfather's residence.

He grew up in Old Dhaka's Debendranath Das lane and studied in Pogose school, where he befriended fellow actor Prabir Mitra, before completing his HSC from Mymensingh City High School. He completed his higher studies in Jagannath College.

"I am physically unwell," said Prabir Mitra. "I am in shock. He was one of my dearest friends."

ATM Shamsuzzaman started his career as assistant director to Udayan Chowdhury, a renowned name at the time, for the film "Bishkonna". Even though he surfaced as an actor in 1965 in various comic roles, his first notable performance that shot him to fame was in Amzad Hossain's "Noyonmoni" (1976).

In a career spanning over six decades, he delivered excellent performances in "Surja Dighal Bari" (1979), "Dayee Ke?" (1987), "Madam Fuli" (1999), "Churiala" (2001), "Mon Boshena Parar Table E" (2009) and "Chorabali" (2012), among many others.

His performance as Begaar Ali in Chashi Nazrul Islam's Liberation War-based film, "Ora Egaro Jon", will be celebrated for generations to come.

ATM Shamsuzzaman's portrayal of the character Mondol in "Golapi Ekhon Train E" (1978) earned him appreciation both at home and abroad, including the Moscow International Film Festival. His role of Kodom Ali in Aftab Khan Tulu's "Dayee Ke?" (1987) earned him a National Film Award.

In his illustrious career, he performed in more than 300 films.

"He had all the qualities that an actor should," said eminent actor Babita, who shared the screen with him in "Golapi Ekhon Train E" and "Noyonmoni".

"It is heartbreaking to hear of this loss." Renowned actor and Member of Parliament Akbar Hossain Pathan Farooque worked with ATM Shamsuzzaman in many projects.

"I was just thinking today [yesterday] that I should call him," he said.

"Sadly, I can never call him again. He was a cut above legendary -- he could master any role at will. Another admirable thing about him was that he perfectly balanced family and career."

"All the talented names in the industry are leaving us," said actor Salma Begum Sujata.

"ATM Shamsuzzaman was a man of many talents, but more importantly, he was a gem of a person."

Besides films, his memorable projects on television include "Ronger Manush", "Bhober Haat", "Goru Chor", "Ghor Kutum", "Noashal", "Pita Putro" and "Sinduk Nama", among many others.

"He was obsessed with his work," said Suchanda, who worked with him in many productions and also directed the Shamsuzzaman-starrer film "Hajar Bochor Dhore."

"I felt honoured to be able to work with him." "He was incomparable as a person," said renowned actor Anwar. "I am extremely hurt by the news of his passing. I am praying for his departed soul."

Veteran actor Abul Hayat said, "I would call him Khokon Bhai or sometimes Khokon Da. We lost such a good soul."

Apart from them, actors Sohel Rana, Tariq Anam Khan, Salahuddin Lavlu, Masum Reza also recollected their memories with him and prayed for his departed soul.

ATM Shamsuzzaman's pairing with noted thespian Salahuddin for his directorial debut "Molla Barir Bou" (2005), for which he also wrote the story, screenplay and dialogues, was an instant hit.

He was awarded the Ekushey Padak in 2015 and won the National Film Award five times for his outstanding performances.

According to his final wishes, his body was not taken to the Bangladesh Film Development Corporation or to the Shaheed Minar.

He was laid to rest at the Jurain Graveyard, after his Namaz-e-Janaza at Narinda Pir Shaheb Mosque after Zuhr prayers.

He left behind his wife, Runy Begum, three daughters and a son.

WOMAN, 90

WORKING THE PHONES EVERY DAY IN VAIN, REPORTS SAID.

WHEN SHE FINALLY GOT ONE FOR LAST SUNDAY, GOLDMAN WAS DETERMINED TO KEEP HER APPOINTMENT -- SEVERAL INCHES OF SNOW ON THE GROUND BE DAMNED, ACCORDING TO THE SEATTLE TIMES.

THE WEATHER MADE DRIVING TO THE HOSPITAL WHERE SHE ARRANGED THE SHOT UNADVISABLE.

THE DAY BEFORE, GOLDMAN DID A SORT OF TRIAL RUN, WALKING MOST OF THE THREE-MILE TREK TO THE HOSPITAL.

Councillor

FROM PAGE 12

Netrakona, joined the beauty parlour four months ago, but the councillor (reserved seat for wards-16, -17 and -18) forced her to work as domestic help at her house in Gazipur city's Great Wall area.

Roksana, with the help of Nurul, was forcing the girl into prostitution for the last two months, read the case statement.

The girl fled the house on Tuesday and filed the case.

Yesterday, police produced the councillor before the Gazipur court seeking seven-day remand for her in the case, but the court granted remand for a day.

Over 200m

FROM PAGE 12

G7 leaders plan to more than double their total support to worldwide coronavirus vaccinations, to \$7.5 billion, including through the World Health Organization-led Covax scheme.

More broadly, 92 percent of doses worldwide have been given in countries classified by the World Bank as "high-income" or "upper-middle income", accounting for around half of global population.

Among the 29 countries the institution ranks as "low-income", only Guinea and Rwanda have begun vaccinating.

Israel is far ahead of any other country worldwide with almost half its population having received at least one vaccine dose. One in three Israelis has received both doses needed for full protection.

Other countries to have given more than 10 percent of their people at least one dose include Britain (25 percent), Bahrain (16), the US (13), Chile (12), the Seychelles (43) and the Maldives (12).

Teen held

FROM PAGE 12

before a Sylhet court, he was sent to jail on Friday, the OC said, adding that police was trying to arrest Sultana.

All three victims were taken to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, where Rubaiya and Maha were declared dead. Tahsin died a couple of hours later while undergoing treatment.

The killer's father Abdal Hossain, 42, is a shopkeeper. He was at work when the incident happened.

One of their relatives said Abdal's first wife lives in their village home with the 17-year old, while Abdal lived with Rubaiya and their two children in a house at Mirer Mahalla.

Abdal's first son recently began living with his father to help with his business.

Confessing to the killings, the boy said he was furious since his stepmother "did not take proper care of him", the OC said.

Over 20.82 lakh gets the first jab

FROM PAGE 12

Covid-19 vaccines purchased from the Serum Institute of India and 20 lakh doses of the same vaccines sent by the Indian government as gifts.

The vaccination centers are open from 8:00am to 2:00pm every day, except holidays.

On January 26 and 27, a total of 567 frontline workers were vaccinated as part of a seven-day observation programme.

Of those who were vaccinated yesterday, 41 recipients showed side-effects, taking the total figure to 578 since the beginning of the campaign, according to a press release from the health directorate.

RECOVERY RATE 90.4 PERCENT
Five people have died from Covid-19 in 24 hours until 8:00am yesterday, according to a press release issued by the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

With this, the total number of deaths reached 8,342 and the death rate stands at 1.54 percent.

Language Movement paved path for

FROM PAGE 1

programme at the capital's Osmani Memorial Auditorium, with State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khalid in the chair. The PM joined the event virtually from the Gono Bhaban.

Briefly describing the contributions of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman to the Language Movement, Hasina said an Education Conference in Karachi in December 1947 had decided that Urdu would be the state language of Pakistan.

She mentioned that Bangabandhu formed Chhatra League on January 4, 1948 and the proposal for the Language Movement was adopted as per his proposal. "Basically, we attained our Independence through this struggle of the Father of the Nation, because he had launched his protest against those who attacked our language."

Following Bangabandhu's proposal, the "Sarbadaliya Rashtrabhasha Bangla Sangram Parishad" (All Party State Language Bangla Action Council) was formed at Fazlul Huq Hall of Dhaka University, comprising Chhatra League, Tamuddin Majlish and several other progressive student organisations in March (1948) for the movement to get the recognition of Bangla as a state language, the PM said.

2 killed as cops open fire

FROM PAGE 12

"Twenty people were injured and two are dead," said Ko Aung, a leader of the Parahita Darhi volunteer emergency service agency.

JU students break into their dorms

FROM PAGE 12

case would be filed against villagers over attacking students.

Visiting the halls in the afternoon, this correspondent found that some students were staying at the male dormitories.

At least 35 JU students were injured in Friday's clashes over a cricket match feud between JU students and villagers in Gerua Bazar.

Intermittent clashes took place between the two sides after locals were called in via loudspeakers of a local mosque, saying that robbers entered the village, said witnesses.

People armed with rods, sticks and other weapons attacked JU students and vandalised some motorbikes and shops during the clashes.

Speaking to this newspaper, JU Assistant Proctor Md Rony Hossain said 10 students were undergoing treatment at Enam Medical College and Hospital yesterday.

In a press statement, the JU Public Relations Office yesterday said staging demonstrations and breaking open the locks of residential halls during the closure of the institution were against the decisions of the university

Zero death and no serious side-effects linked to the Covid-19 vaccination have been reported so far.

Of all vaccine recipients, around 13.78 lakh were males while around 7.04 lakh were females.

Meanwhile, a total of 31,36,976 people registered with www.surokkha.gov.bd to receive Covid-19 vaccines.

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She mentioned that the Bangalee nation attained independence under the leadership of Bangabandhu through long struggles starting from the Language Movement.

Quoting from Bangabandhu's speech delivered on February 21, 1971, Hasina said the Language Movement was not only to establish the rights of mother tongue, but also to achieve political, social, cultural and economic rights of the Bangalee nation.

She recalled the sacrifices of the great sons of the soil, including Rafique, Salam, Jabbar, Barkat and Shafigue.

"If anyone is interested to know about the details of the Language Movement, I will request him to go through the Pakistan Intelligence Branch reports on Bangabandhu from 1948 to 1971. We are publishing those in books. Seven volumes have already been published while the remaining ones are under the process of publication."

The secret documents of the Intelligence Branch on Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman are being published in 14 volumes.

The premier said, "We have attained our Independence going through many struggles and movements, and this attainment of independence is the most important one [in our history]."

Hasina mentioned that every achievement of the country has been

At least 350 new infections were recorded in the meantime, taking the total number of people infected to 5,43,024, added the release.

Against a total of 11,148 tests, the current positivity rate is 3.14 percent while the total positivity rate is at 13.80 percent.

At least 424 Covid-19 patients recovered during the period.

With this, the total number of people recovered rose to 4,90,892 and the recovery rate to 90.4 percent.

One of the deceased was aged between 51 and 60 years and four were above 60, according to the release.

Among the five deceased, three were male.

attained through movement and struggle. "No one gave us anything willingly."

She reiterated her firm resolve that Bangladesh would go ahead at the world stage with dignity and holding its head high, and it will not depend on others.

Talking about the Covid-19 situation, the PM renewed her call to the people to follow health rules and wear masks even after taking vaccine.

Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque handed the Ekushey Padak to the recipients on behalf of the prime minister.

This year's winners of the award are: Motahar Hossain Talukdar (posthumous), Shamsul Haque (posthumous), and Afsar Uddin Ahmed (posthumous) (Language Movement), Begum Papia Sarowar (music), Raisul Islam Asad and Salma Begum Sujata (performing arts), Ahmed Iqbal Haider (drama), Syed Salahuddin Zaki (film), Bhaskar Bandyopadhyay (recitation), Pavel Rahman (photography), Golam Hasnayan, Fazlur Rahman Khan Faruk, and Syeda Issabela (posthumous) (Liberation War), Ajay Dasgupta (journalism), Samir Kumar Saha (research), Mahfuza Khanam (education), Mirza Abdul Jalil (economics), Kazi Kamruzzaman (social service) and Kazi Rozy, Bulbul Chowdhury and Golam Murshid (language and literature).

Malpass welcomed Friday's pledge by the Group of Seven rich countries to intensify cooperation on the pandemic, saying it could help jump-start deliveries of vaccines to poorer countries, which are lagging far behind rich countries in getting shots in arms.

Data compiled by Our World In Data, a scientific online publication, showed Israel was leading the world in Covid-19 vaccinations, with nearly 82 of 100 people vaccinated, while India and Bangladesh reported less than one person per 100. Many African countries have not started at all.

Malpass said he was heartened by news about new vaccines coming down the road, and about Pfizer Inc and BioNTech seeking permission to store their vaccine at higher temperatures, which would ease another obstacle to deliveries in lower-income countries.

Police were not available for comment.

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MIGRANT WORKERS

Govt working for recognition of skills certification: officials

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is working to sign mutual recognition agreements (MRA) with different countries and regional bodies so Bangladeshi migrant workers' skills certifications are accepted internationally, two officials said yesterday.

Such agreements are required to ensure robust accessibility of Bangladeshi workers in the global market, they said at a consultation in a hotel in the capital.

WARBE Development Foundation with support of Solidarity Centre Bangladesh organised "Migration and Development: Trade Unions and Civil Society Organisations Platform".

Bangladeshi migrant workers in the Middle East earn lower wages than Sri Lankan or Indians, due to absence of proper certification, said Bangladesh Employers Federation.

Addressing yesterday's programme, Mir Khairul Alam, additional director general (training) of Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET), said the government recently took a decision to provide skills training for migrant workers, in line with the National Technical and Vocational Qualifications Framework.

However, providing training will not be enough, since there is an issue of whether workers' certification is accepted in the global market, he said.

To resolve this, authorities are under process of signing MRAs with different countries, he said, adding that already some agreements have been signed.

Addressing the event as chief guest, Mujibur Haque Chunnu, chairperson of Parliamentary Standing Committee on labour and employment ministry, urged all stakeholders, including government officials and NGOs, to be sincere to end migrant workers' sufferings.

Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 12

vaccine contracts that countries are signing with drug makers, and is pushing manufacturers to be more open about where doses are headed, as it races to get more vaccines to poor countries, the bank's president said.

The bank is working with local governments to identify and fill gaps in distribution capacity, after they purchase vaccines under a \$12 billion World Bank programme, and also to standardise the contracts they are signing with manufacturers, he said.

The bank's International Finance Corp, its private financing arm, has \$4 billion to invest in expanding existing production plants or building new ones, including in developed countries, but needs more data on where current production is headed, he said.

"We are eager to be investing in new capacity, but it's hard to do because you don't know how much of the existing capacity is already committed to the various off-takers," Malpass told Reuters. New or expanded plants could be used to produce other types of vaccinations in the future, he said.

The bank's funds could be used to expand plants in advanced economies, if the production was earmarked for developing nations, he said.

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Police were not available for comment.

ব্র্যান্ড নিউ ফ্ল্যাট বিক্রয়

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

যোগাযোগ: ০১৯৪৯ ১১১ ৯৯৯

KULaura-SHAHBAJPUR RAIL TRACK REHABILITATION WORK

Date expired again, only 30 percent work done

MINTU DESHWARA

The deadline for rehabilitation work of Kulaura-Shahbajpur railway track in Moulvibazar has expired again but only 30 percent of work has been completed.

According to the railway department, the government took the initiative to rehabilitate the Kulaura-Shahbajpur railway in Moulvibazar to increase the transport of goods and regional trade between India and Bangladesh in 2010.

The project, which started on August 10 in 2016, was scheduled to be completed in December last year.

But due to the lack of supervision of the contractor and the slow pace of work, only 30 percent of the work has been completed on time.

The deadline for the completion of the remaining 30 percent of the work has been extended till June 2022.

However, the concerned people have expressed doubts about the completion of the remaining work within the extended period.

After 2010, the government took the initiative to open the closed line between India and Bangladesh to facilitate the transportation of goods and increase regional trade.

The project was approved at the meeting of Executive Committee of the National



Due to lack of supervision of the contractor, only 30 percent of the Kulaura-Shahbajpur rail track rehabilitation work in Moulvibazar has been completed. However, the deadline for the rehabilitation work has expired in December last year.

PHOTO: STAR

Economic Council (Ecne) on May 28 in 2015.

The project was approved at a cost of Tk 678 crore 50 lakh 79 thousand but it was later revised to Tk 544 crore.

The government borrowed 25 percent of the project cost from Bangladesh and the remaining 75 percent from Exim Bank of India.

The contract for the work was awarded to Kalindi Railway Construction Company, an Indian construction company.

Rehabilitation work started on August 10, 2016, after 17 years of after its closure.

Under this project, a total of 52.54 km of railway line will be laid from Kulaura railway station to Shahbajpur Zero Point with

44.6 km of main line and 6.8 km of loop line.

Apart from broad gauge and meter gauge dual lines, there are six stations and 59 bridge culverts.

The deadline ended again in December last year. During this time, the contractor has completed only 30 percent of the work.

Visiting different places of Kulaura and Juri upazilas, it was seen that the workers were demolishing the old railway bridge. The bricks and stones of the old line were being removed by truck and placed next to the line.

Sajjad Mia, 75, a resident of Joychandi village in Kulaura Upazila said, the railway was

rehabilitated in 1958-60. The Kulaura-Shahbajpur rail link was closed in 2002. As a result of the closure, people of Kulaura, Juri, Baralekha and Beanibazar upazilas of Sylhet are in suffering immensely for communication and transportation of goods.

He said, only 15 percent of the rehabilitation work has so far been completed as workers started work in their area a few months ago.

Kalindi Rail Construction Company Field Supervisor Montaz Ali told this correspondent, that work on the project remained stalled for a long time after the outbreak of the coronavirus. The work has resumed recently.

Asked if the work could be

completed in the extended period, he said it could not be said right now.

However, the number of labourers has been increased to finish the work quickly, he added.

Bangladesh Railway Kulaura section Senior Assistant Engineer (work) Jewel Hossain said, even though the deadline of the project was expired in December, the progress of the work was 30 percent.

Although the job was to be completed by the middle of 2018, things had to be rescheduled till December 2020, he added.

Although an attempt was made to talk with project director Md Sultan Ali but he could not be reached for his comment.

Woman killed in attack 'by UP chairman' in Cumilla

Husband among 3 injured, 1 held

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

A woman was killed and three others, including her husband, were injured in an attack allegedly carried out by a local union parishad (UP) chairman and his men in Meghna upazila on Friday night.

The deceased was identified as Nazma Begum, 55, wife of Abdus Salam.

The injured are Abdus Salam, his elder brother Sirajul Islam and Faruk, a local youth.

Of them, Salam and his brother Sirajul were shifted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital early yesterday as their condition deteriorated, Officer in Charge of Meghna Police Station Abdul Majid said.

Meanwhile, police detained one of the attackers Delwar Hossain from Raipura area in Munshiganj's Gazaria upazila yesterday noon, Senior Assistant Superintendent of Police (ASP) Fazlul Karim said.

Locals said Bhaorkhola Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Faruk Abbasi and his supporters have been extorting money from them and conducting other criminal activities in the area for a long time.

They also alleged that Chairman Faruk and his men attacked the family around 7:30pm on Friday night.

After the attack, police raided the houses of Faruk Abbasi and his brothers Khokon Abbasi, Yar Abbasi and Imran Hossain Titu on Friday night and seized huge amount of locally made lethal weapons from them, the ASP added.

Meghna Upazila Chairman Saifullah Sikder Ratan, also general secretary of the upazila unit Awami League (AL), said there are several allegations, including murder and extortion, against Baharkhola UP chairman.

Land dispute leaves 1 killed, 10 injured

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A man was killed and at least 10 others were injured in a clash between two groups of villagers centring a feud allegedly over a disputed land in Gopalganj's Kotalipara upazila on Friday.

The deceased, Aktar Hossain Gazi, 35, was son of Samsul Haque Gazi of Attabari village in the upazila.

Locals said there had been a longstanding conflict between Ohab Ali Gazi and Sohrab Hossain Gazi of Attabari village over the ownership of a disputed land.

As a sequel to the feud, supporters of both the groups equipped with lethal weapons locked in a fierce clash on Friday. The half an hour long clash left at least 11 people from both sides injured.

The injured were rushed to Kotalipara Upazila Health Complex, from where Aktar was later shifted to Khulna Medical College Hospital for better treatment.

Aktar succumbed to his injuries while undergoing treatment there around 11:00pm the same night.

Police said victim's brother filed a case with the police station accusing 26 named and 10 to 15 unidentified people yesterday.

Meanwhile, police detained two people yesterday.

The arrestees--Rashid Mollah, 50, and Salam Gazi, 68, of neighbouring Titoshi village--were later produced before a court that sent them to jail.

Probable archaeological site on verge of destruction



PHOTO: COLLECTED

'Bhim Er Maayer Chula', in Putimari village of Kishoreganj upazila, is one of the noted tourist attractions in Nilphamari. But the site, recorded as private property, is gradually being destroyed in the hands of locals.

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

'Bhim Er Maayer Chula' is mentioned as one of the seven prominent tourist destinations in Nilphamari on the official website of the district, http://www.nilphamari.gov.bd/site/view/tourist_spot.

But the unprotected site, in Putimari village of Kishoreganj upazila, with distinctive geological features is on the verge of destruction.

During a recent visit to the place, this correspondent came to learn that almost two-thirds of the elevated land mass, surrounding the site, was already levelled by local farmers while the remainder of the site lies unrecognisable under a cloak of shrubs and brush.

Anil Chandra, a senior citizen from the area, said when he was very young, the diameter of the furnace area of the stove was around 80 to 100 metres and the surrounding earthen wall was about 10 to 12 metres high.

Aminur Rahman, a local, was

found doing agricultural work at the site. When asked how he could grow crop at a tourist spot recognised by the government, he said he and his brothers have genuine proofs of inheriting the land.

The legend behind the name Bhim Er Maayer Chula, meaning stove of Bhim's mother, is narrated in several books including Rangopurer Itihas, Rangopurer Protino Sampad and Nilphamarir Itihas, published by Bangladesh Academy.

According to the legend, Bhim's mother Kunti set up a massive stove at the site, which is in present-day village of Putimari, to cook rice for her sons. As she poured liquid starch or maar from the boiled rice, the river named Maargala was created in the area.

In an explanation found in the books, during a war with King

Rampal, Bhim started building a fort in a densely forested area of Putimari village under the then Rangopur region, which is now known as the division of Rangpur.

The construction of the fort was later stopped due to a change in the course of the war. With the passage of time, people later on started to call the abandoned structure Bhim Er Maayer Chula.

Contacted, Mehedi Hasan, assistant commissioner (land) in Kishoreganj upazila, said the 2.55-acre land of the site was always recorded as private property in government land surveys.

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Roksana Begum said as part of their efforts to protect the site, they issued orders banning removal of earth from the site and they were considering legal action against violators.

Nahid Sultana, regional director of the archaeology department, said she would visit the site soon so necessary steps can be taken to bring the site under government protection.

Man killed, 10 hurt in Madaripur villagers' clash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

A man was killed and 10 others were injured in a clash between two rival groups of villagers over establishing supremacy in Madaripur Sadar upazila yesterday.

The deceased, Sayed Bhuiyan, 38, was son of late Nur Sobhan Bhuiyan of Midharkandi village.

Locals said there has been a feud between one Ferdous Talukdar and Rahman Mridha of the village over establishing supremacy in the locality.

On February 15, supporters of Rahman allegedly hacked Ferdous' follower Julhas Talukder while he was returning home from a local market.

Julhas is now undergoing treatment at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

Meanwhile, both the groups locked into a clash over the issue yesterday noon that left 11 people including Sayed injured.

Critically injured Sayed was first taken to Shibchar Upazila Health Complex, while the other injured were admitted to Madaripur General Hospital.

Sayed later died on way to a hospital in the capital the same evening.

One of the witnesses of the clash Mirjan Mirdha said a group suddenly attacked Sayed while he was returning home alone.

The gang also stabbed some locals when they tried to save Sayed from the attackers.

Madaripur Superintendent of Police (SP) Mahammad Mahabub Hasan said additional police have been deployed in the area to avoid any untoward incident.

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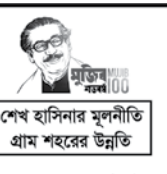
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শেখ হাসিনার মূলনীতি
গ্রাম শহরের উন্নতি

Date: 18/02/2021

Memo No. 46.02.0000.404.14.001.2021/126

e-Tender Notice No. 08/2020-21

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

Sl. No.	Name of scheme	Tender ID	Tender/proposal publication date & time	Tender/proposal closing & opening date & time	Remarks
1.	Construction of Ansar Member Barrack beside UNO Quarter under Naogaon Sadar Upazila District Naogaon Package N- e-Tender/ADP-Revenue/2020-21/06	549476	23-Feb-2021 10:00	11-Mar-2021 14:00	LTM
2.	Supplying of Medical Instrument at different 31 Nos. Union Community Clinic Upazila Naogaon Sadar District Naogaon Package-INF-2019-20-506460-01	549464	23-Feb-2021 10:00	11-Mar-2021 14:00	OTM (Goods)
3.	Construction of 5 Nos. High School Wash Block with hygiene corner under Naogaon Sadar Upazila District Naogaon Package No. INF-2019-20-506460-02	549468	23-Feb-2021 10:00	11-Mar-2021 14:00	OTM (Goods)

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.sprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for Tender/Proposal document to be deposited online through any registered banks branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@procure.gov.bd).

Md. Imtiaz Zaherul Haque
Upazila Engineer
LGED
Naogaon Sadar, Naogaon
Ph. 01708161579
E-mail: ue.naogaon-sd@lged.gov.bd

GD-341

ROW OVER NEWS CONTENT PAYMENT

Facebook 'friended' us again: Australia

REUTERS, Canberra

Facebook Inc is back at the negotiating table, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said yesterday after the tech giant this week blocked news on its site in the country.

Facebook's abrupt decision to stop Australians from sharing news on the site and strip the pages of domestic and foreign news outlets also erased several state government and emergency department accounts, causing widespread anger.

The company has "tentatively friended us again," Morrison told a news conference in Sydney. "What I'm pleased about is that Facebook is back at the table again."

Facebook has publicly indicated no change in its opposition to a proposed law requiring social media platforms to pay for links to news content. Morrison was not asked about that.

Australia's Treasurer Josh Frydenberg said on Friday he had spoken with Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg and further talks were expected over the weekend. It was not clear whether those talks have happened.

The stand-off comes as Australia's vows to press ahead with the landmark legislation, which could set a global precedent as countries like Canada express interest in taking similar action.

The Australian law, which would force Facebook and Alphabet Inc's Google to reach commercial deals with Australian publishers or face compulsory arbitration, has cleared the lower house of parliament and is expected to be passed by the Senate within the next week.

Australia's legislation is being widely watched overseas. Canadian Heritage Minister Steven Guilbeault said on Thursday his country would adopt the Australian approach as it crafts its own legislation in coming months.



A person shows bullet shells during a protest against the military coup, in Mandalay; and a rescue worker checks an injured man after clashes with cops there.

PHOTO: REUTERS



NEWS IN BRIEF

'Bengal wants its own daughter'

"Bangla Nijer Meyekei Chaye" (Bengal wants its own daughter) -- is the new slogan unveiled yesterday by West Bengal's ruling Trinamool Congress portraying Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee as the daughter of Bengal for the upcoming assembly elections due in March-April. The slogan has added to the raging "insider vs outsider" debate provoked by Trinamool Congress. "We don't want outsiders to call the shots in Bengal," said TMC Secretary General Partha Chatterjee. TMC is engaged in a bitter political fight with the BJP, pitching the opposition party's leaders as "outsiders" who are on "election tourism" to the state.

Navalny remains in jail

A Moscow court yesterday upheld a ruling to jail the Kremlin's most prominent opponent Alexei Navalny, sealing his first lengthy prison sentence in a decade of legal battles with Russian authorities. Judge Dmitry Balashov dismissed Navalny's appeal against a recent decision to imprison him for violating the terms of a suspended sentence on embezzlement charges. The anti-corruption campaigner was ordered on February 2 to serve the time in a penal colony for breaching parole terms while in Germany recovering from a nerve agent poisoning he blames on the Kremlin. Russia has come under increasing Western pressure to release Navalny since he was detained on arrival at a Moscow airport in January.

Floods cripple Jakarta

Whole neighbourhoods of Indonesia's capital Jakarta and dozens of major roads were flooded yesterday after torrential rains pounded the Southeast Asian city overnight. More than 1,300 residents have been evacuated to temporary shelters, with parts of the capital under four to nine feet (1.2 to 2.7 metres) of water. No casualties have been reported so far. Jakarta, a megalopolis that is home to around 30 million people, is frequently hit by floods in the rainy season.

Argentina health minister out over vaccine line-jumping

Argentina's health minister resigned late Friday after it emerged that friends of his had been able to skip the line for a Covid-19 vaccination. Health Minister Gines Gonzalez Garci stepped down after President Alberto Fernandez called on him to quit in the wake of the scandal. The scandal broke after a 71-year-old journalist, Horacio Verbitsky, announced on the radio that, owing to his longstanding friendship with the minister, he had been able to get vaccinated in his office ahead of the general population. So far only health workers have been vaccinated in Argentina and vaccinations for people aged over 70 only began on Wednesday in the province of Buenos Aires. Local media reported that other people close to the government were also vaccinated at the health ministry.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

NO-CONFIDENCE VOTE IN THAILAND

Protests as PM survives

REUTERS, Bangkok

Hundreds of protesters gathered outside Thailand's parliament after Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha and nine ministers survived a parliamentary no-confidence motion yesterday after a four-day censure debate.

"It was a disappointment, but expected," protest leader Attapon Buapat said.

Over 1,000 protesters rallied outside the parliament gates. Organisers gave assurances the protest would not turn violent.

Earlier, lawmakers voted in favour of Prayuth and other ministers.

Opposition lawmakers have taken aim at what they say is a slow government roll-out of the coronavirus vaccine and at its economic policies, vowing to continue investigating.

Prayuth, a former chief of the armed forces, overthrew an elected prime minister in 2014 and stayed in office after a 2019 election that his rivals said was badly flawed. The government has said the elections were free and fair.

The no-confidence motion came as pro-democracy protests returned after a lull brought on by a second outbreak of Covid-19. Youth-led protests last year reached across the country posing a major challenge to Prayuth.



Transatlantic alliance is 'back'

Declares Biden as he makes presidential debut on world stage

AGENCIES

President Joe Biden declared the "transatlantic alliance is back" in a powerful speech seeking to reestablish the United States as leader of the West against what he called a global assault on democracy.

The remarks to the annual Munich Security Conference -- held by video link because of the Covid-19 pandemic -- dovetailed with German Chancellor Angela Merkel's welcoming of a return to "multilateralism" after the confrontational years of Biden's predecessor Donald Trump.

Making his first major international address on foreign policy since becoming president in January, Biden said traditional US allies should once again have confidence in Washington's leadership.

"I'm sending a clear message to the world: America is back. The transatlantic alliance is back," he said from the White

BIDEN AT MUNICH SECURITY MEET

Warns allies against threats from China, Russia

Says world can 'no longer do bare minimum on climate'

No sanctions relief for Iran before talks

House.

Biden said his administration was again stressing alliance building, in contrast to Trump's isolationist policies and abrasive treatment of US partners.

"Our partnerships have endured and grown through the years because they are rooted in the richness of our shared democratic values. They're not transactional," Biden said in clear reference to Trump's emphasis on redefining allies as economic rivals.

"We can no longer delay or do the bare minimum to address climate change," Biden said, calling this a

"global existential crisis."

But Biden delivered harsh warnings about the threats he said are posed by Russia and China.

The White House said Biden has ditched Trump's controversial efforts last year to reestablish the G8, which became the G7 after Russia was expelled in response to its seizing of the Ukrainian region of Crimea.

Similarly, said Biden, US partners should stand together against "the Chinese government's economic abuses and coercion that undercut the foundations of the international economic system."

On Iran, Biden reiterated his pledge to return to negotiations with Tehran over its nuclear program, but said "we must address Iran's destabilizing activities across the Middle East."

White House said it has no intention to lift sanctions ahead of talks, the only demand set out by Iranian Supreme Leader Khamenei.

Scientists now know how to break into people's dreams!

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A new study has suggested that it is possible to communicate people through their dreams, able to understand questions and reply with cogent answers.

"We found that individuals in REM sleep can interact with an experimenter and engage in real-time communication," senior author Ken Paller of Northwestern University said in a statement. "We also showed that dreamers are capable of comprehending questions, engaging in working-memory operations, and producing answers."

"Most people might predict that this would not be possible--that people would either wake up when asked a question or fail to answer, and certainly not comprehend a question without misconstruing it," he added.

The researchers attempted communications with 36 subjects who were lucid dreaming - during which the sleeping person is aware they are



having a dream - across the US, France, Germany, and the Netherlands. Some participants were adept lucid dreamers, while others had never done it before.

They found that it was possible for people who were dreaming to follow instructions, do basic mathematics, answer yes-or-no questions, and tell various other sensory inputs apart.

In lieu of responding verbally, the subjects' answers could be gleaned from eye movements or facial muscles.

For everyday people, these methods could also be used to help those with sleep difficulties or suffering from nightmares.

FARMERS' PROTEST IN INDIA

Thunberg lends support for jailed activist Ravi

AFP, Stockholm

Greta Thunberg has tweeted her support for an Indian activist jailed over a guide for anti-government farmers protests, which the Swedish climate campaigner had earlier shared to social media.

In a post on Twitter, Thunberg wrote "freedom of speech and the right to peaceful protest and assembly are non-negotiable human rights."

"These must be a fundamental part of any democracy. #StandWithDishaRavi," the 18-year-old activist tweeted, referring to Indian climate campaigner Disha Ravi.

Ravi, 22, was arrested on last Saturday. Police alleged she helped edit a so-called toolkit, which offers basic advice including joining on-the-ground protests and showing support on social media.

Police said the main aim of the toolkit was to create misinformation. Ravi's arrest has been criticised by opposition politicians and activists within India.

Farmers have been camping on the outskirts of the capital since late November, and calling for the repeal of new agriculture laws.

The tussle between the government and the farmers took an international turn in early February when Rihanna and Thunberg tweeted about the rallies to their millions of social media followers.

Princess 'being cared for at home'

Says Dubai after UN demands proof of her life

AFP, Geneva

Dubai's royal family insisted that Sheikha Latifa was being "cared for at home" after the United Nations demanded proof that she was still alive following "disturbing" footage aired this week.

The UN Human Rights Office said it had asked the United Arab Emirates for evidence after the BBC published video shot by the daughter of Dubai's ruler Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al-Maktoum saying she was being held captive and feared for her life.

His 35-year-old daughter has not been seen in public since a foiled attempt to

escape from the emirate in March 2018. The videos were shot nearly a year after the incident, BBC reported. Since then her friends have heard nothing from her.

In a statement issued by the UAE's embassy in London, the Dubai royal family said: "We want to thank those who have expressed concern for her wellbeing, despite the coverage which certainly is not reflective of the actual position."

"Her family has confirmed that her highness is being cared for at home, supported by her family and medical professionals. Sheikha Latifa continues to improve and we are hopeful she will return to public life at the appropriate time."

'Something we've never seen'

Nasa's Perseverance rover beams back spectacular new images

REUTERS, Los Angeles

Nasa scientists on Friday presented striking early images from the picture-perfect landing of the Mars rover Perseverance, including a selfie of the six-wheeled vehicle dangling just above the surface of the Red Planet moments before touchdown.

The color photograph, likely to become an instant classic among memorable images from the history of spaceflight, was snapped by a camera mounted on the rocket-powered "sky crane" descent-stage just above the rover as the car-sized space vehicle was being lowered on Thursday to Martian soil.

The image was unveiled by mission managers during an online news briefing webcast from Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) near Los Angeles less than 24 hours after the landing.

The picture, looking down on the rover, shows the entire vehicle suspended from three cables unspooled from the sky crane, along with an "umbilical" communications cord. Swirls of dust kicked up by the crane's rocket thrusters are also visible.

Seconds later, the rover was gently planted on its wheels, its tethers were severed, and the sky crane - its job completed - flew off to crash a safe distance away, though not before photos and other data collected during the descent were transmitted to the rover for safekeeping.

The image of the dangling science lab, striking for its clarity and sense of motion, marks the first such close-up photo of a spacecraft landing on



Mars, or any planet beyond Earth.

"This is something we've never seen before," Aaron Stehura, a deputy lead for the mission's descent and landing team, describing himself and colleagues as "awe-struck" when first viewing the image.

Adam Steltzner, chief engineer for the Perseverance project at JPL, said he found the image instantly iconic, comparable to the shot of Apollo 11 astronaut Buzz Aldrin standing on the moon in 1969, or the Voyager 1 probe's images of Saturn in 1980.

Next week, Nasa hopes to present more photos and video - some possibly with audio - taken by all six cameras affixed to the descending spacecraft, showing more of the sky crane maneuvers, as well as the supersonic parachute deployment that preceded it.

The vehicle landed about two kilometers from tall cliffs at the base of an ancient river



delta carved into the corner of the crater billions of years ago, when Mars was warmer, wetter and presumably hospitable to life.

Scientists say the site is ideal for pursuing Perseverance's primary objective - searching for fossilized traces of microbial life preserved in sediments believed to have been deposited around the delta and the long-vanished lake it once fed.

Samples of rock drilled from the Martian soil are to be stored on the surface for eventual retrieval and delivery to Earth by two future robotic missions to the Red Planet, as early as 2031.

The mission's surface team will spend the coming days and weeks unfastening, unfurling and testing the vehicle's robot arm, communication antennae and other equipment, aligning instruments and upgrading the rover's software, Hwang said. She said it would be about nine "sols," or Martian days, before the rover is ready for its first test spin.

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Vaccinating children against COVID-19

DR ABDULLAHEL AMAAN &
DR KHAINOOR ZAHAN

The world is in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic which has spread rapidly across the world. The pandemic is already having a serious impact especially on global and national economies, health and education systems, and ultimately on the fulfilment of children's rights. Governments all over the world have implemented several measures to contain the spread of COVID-19, ranging from social distancing, behavioural changes to home quarantine, school closures, business closures and community lockdown, all of which have had secondary impacts on about 1.5 billion children and their households.

Vaccination is a success story of global health and development, saving millions of lives every year, in each of the corners of the world. Vaccines reduce the risks of getting a disease by working with our body's natural defences to build protection. If the body is exposed to the disease-causing germs later, the body is immediately ready to destroy them and prevents illness. It is a key component of primary health care and an indisputable human right. It is also one of the best health sector investments.

The COVID-19 vaccine contains material from the causative virus that gives our cells instructions for how to make a harmless protein that is unique to the virus. The vaccine will help our body to develop immunity to the virus that causes COVID-19.

Vaccination can liberate us to return to school or work, celebrate holidays, eat in



restaurants, travel, go on a vacation and run all sorts of economic activities. We look to vaccines to give us back our world; children back in their classrooms, on soccer fields, and at birthday parties which are essential elements of the normal world and we need to help children to get there. We must have to minimise our children's risk, maximise their chances of returning to school, and mitigate the pandemic's effects on their families.

Globally, about 26% of the population is under 15 years of age thus an effective herd immunity will certainly require the coverage of paediatric vaccination. Vaccinating children is likely to have benefits both direct (protecting children against COVID-19 and its associated

grave effect - multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children [MIS-C]) and indirect (protecting others by reducing the spread). So we need to think creatively and empathically about what motivates parents to accept vaccination for their offsprings.

The data from the paediatric-focused studies and post-licensure monitoring for potential rare outcomes such as vaccine-associated MIS-C are a bare minimum, as is ensuring just and equitable access to vaccination. A societal decision-making regarding vaccinating the children and assurance from the government regarding widespread access to testing, and institutional support for parents, teachers, and other caregivers would help protect

families in this stressful period.

The Expanded Programme on Immunisation (EPI) is one of the most successful public health interventions in Bangladesh. The ever-successful EPI vaccination campaigns may offer relevant insights about parents' decisions regarding vaccinating their children; about building societal trust, access, and equity; and about how to mitigate the targeted disinformation regarding the safe and effective vaccine.

Today planning for the implementation of COVID-19 vaccination requires not only working out details of its distribution and cold chains but also strategies for reaching distrustful, hesitant, dubious people and convincing them to get ready to vaccinate their children whenever it will be available for them.

Protecting children against COVID-19 infection is both an ethical obligation and a practical necessity. We need to disseminate the data from paediatric trials to reassure parents about the safety and efficacy of this approach. The physicians' community has already been trying to build a social motivation for vaccination through social media. Other trusted messengers of our society may help to encourage the mass population in this regard and help to bring the lovely days back in our lives.

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NEW DIAGNOSTIC

Learning from prostate cancer-detecting dogs to improve diagnostic tests

New research demonstrates the ability of dogs to detect aggressive prostate cancer from urine samples and suggests that an artificial neural network could learn from this olfactory ability, with an eye toward replicating it in novel detection tools. Claire Guest of Medical Detection Dogs in Milton Keynes, U.K., and colleagues presented these findings in the open-access journal PLOS ONE.

The widely used prostate specific antigen (PSA) screening test can miss aggressive prostate cancer in men who have it or indicate that a cancer is aggressive when it really poses little risk. Alternative tests are being explored, and research has also shown that dogs can be trained to detect prostate cancer from urine samples with a high degree of accuracy. However, dogs would be impractical for large-scale screening.

The researchers trained two dogs to detect aggressive prostate cancer from urine samples. These dogs showed 71% sensitivity (ability to identify truly positive cases) and 70% to 76% specificity (ability to correctly identify negative cases) in detecting prostate cancer with a Gleason score of 9, indicating highly aggressive disease.

The team also applied two laboratory detection methods to the urine samples: Gas chromatography-mass spectroscopy analysis of volatile compounds and analysis of microbial species found naturally in urine. Both methods surfaced key differences between cancer-positive and cancer-negative samples.

Finally, the researchers used the dogs' data to train an artificial neural network to identify specific portions of the spectroscopy data that contributed significantly to the dogs' diagnoses. This also revealed specific differences between positive and negative samples.

HEALTH bulletin



Semaglutide plus lifestyle change shown effective for obesity

Injectable semaglutide, approved to treat type 2 diabetes, is efficacious as an adjunct to diet and exercise for weight loss in nondiabetic overweight or obese adults, according to an industry-conducted trial published in the New England Journal of Medicine.

Researchers randomised nearly 2,000 participants without diabetes who were either overweight with at least one weight-related comorbidity or obese to receive 2.4 mg subcutaneous semaglutide or placebo weekly for 68 weeks. All participants received counselling to reduce calorie intake and increase physical activity.

Mean weight loss was significantly greater with semaglutide than placebo (15% vs. 2%), as was the percentage of patients losing 5% of body weight (86% vs. 32%). Semaglutide users had a higher rate of adverse gastrointestinal effects, most mild. Cholelithiasis was also more common in the treatment group (1.8% vs. 0.6%). No difference in hypoglycemia was noted.

Editorialists say that the trial results are promising, but they note several limitations, including that only 6% of trial participants were Black, and 12% were Latinx, which is not reflective of the global population.

COVID-19 vaccination potential will not be achieved without increased production, affordable pricing, global availability, and successful rollout

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Having new COVID-19 vaccines will mean little if people around the world are unable to get vaccinated in a timely manner. Vaccines have to be affordable and available to all countries, and governments must have the administrative and political capacities to deliver them locally to ensure an effective global immunisation strategy against COVID-19, say the authors of a Health Policy piece published in The Lancet.

Global distribution of safe vaccines is imperative for spurring economic recovery, protecting lives, achieving herd immunity, and minimising the risk of new variants emerging against which existing vaccines are less effective.

Dr Olivier Wouters, lead author from the London School of Economics and Political Science, UK, says: "Several manufacturers have successfully developed COVID-19 vaccines in under 12 months, an extraordinary achievement. But the stark reality is that the world now needs more doses of COVID-19 vaccines than any other vaccine in history to immunise enough people to achieve global vaccine immunity. Unless vaccines are distributed more equitably, it could be years before the coronavirus is brought under control at a global level. The questions now are when these vaccines will become available, and at what price."

Scaling up vaccine production to meet global demand is a monumental challenge. Most countries still lack the domestic

capacity to rapidly produce COVID-19 vaccines on their own, and the sheer number of vaccines that are needed places huge pressure on global supply chains for materials like glass vials and syringes.

Scarce supply, coupled with advanced orders by the world's richest nations for billions of vaccine doses—enough to protect some populations several times over—creates challenges to achieving timely, universal access. COVAX (the global initiative to ensure access to COVID-19 vaccines for all countries) was set up to avoid this, but vaccine nationalism could leave COVAX with limited supplies.

Affordability also remains a major concern, with some vaccine manufacturers setting prices for COVID-19 vaccines that are among the highest ever charged for a vaccine. Without price controls, low-income countries are unlikely to be able to afford or access

enough vaccines to protect their populations—with the lowest prices developers have offered to any country or purchasing bloc ranging from US\$5 to US\$62 per course.

Many Low- and Middle-income Countries (LMICs) also face substantial logistical and administrative barriers to delivering vaccination programmes, including infrastructure, vaccination registries, and cold storage. For instance, while many multi-dose, ultra-cold storage vaccines are highly efficacious, resource-constrained countries might be better to use single-dose vaccines which only have to be kept refrigerated, and are in late stages of clinical development.

To overcome challenges in vaccine hesitancy and ensure that vaccines are administered to as many people as possible, governments need to do much better at building public trust in the safety of vaccines and to combat misinformation and rumours around COVID-19.



Vision loss could be treated in one billion people worldwide

Addressing avoidable vision loss with existing, highly cost-effective treatments, and improving inclusion of people living with permanent vision loss in society, offers enormous potential to improve the economic outlook of individuals and nations, and to contribute to a healthier, safer, more equitable world, according to a new Commission report on Global Eye Health published in The Lancet Global Health journal.

Without additional investment in global eye health, new estimates reveal that 1.8 billion people are expected to be living with untreated vision loss by 2050. The vast majority of these (90%) reside in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), with the greatest proportion occurring in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa.

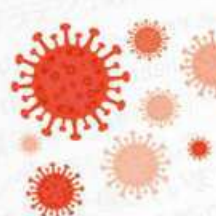
"It is unacceptable that more than a billion people worldwide are needlessly living with treatable vision impairment", says Professor Matthew Burton, co-Chair of the Commission and Director of the International Centre for Eye Health at The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, UK. "Vision impairment leads to detrimental effects for health, wellbeing, and economic development including reduced education and employment opportunities, social isolation, and shorter life expectancy. As the COVID-19 pandemic brings renewed emphasis on building resilient and responsive health systems, eye health must take its rightful place within the mainstream health agenda and global development."

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২১ ফেব্রুয়ারী ২০২১
আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা দিবস

21 FEBRUARY 2021
INTERNATIONAL MOTHER LANGUAGE DAY



More than **1,900** COVID patients admitted (since June 2020 till date)
More than **38,000** COVID tests done (since May 2020 till date)

ভাষা আন্দোলনের মতো করোনা আন্দোলনেও আমরা সবাই মিলে জয়ী হবো
ভালো থাকো বাংলাদেশ, এগিয়ে চলো বাংলাদেশ

As we won in Language Movement, together we are also going to win our battle against Corona Virus

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Language Martyrs' Day

Our love for the mother tongue must go beyond rituals

AS we observe the 69th Anniversary of the Mother Language Day, we pay our deepest respect to those who laid the groundwork for the movement to establish the right to speak in our own language, to those who led the movement and to those who made the supreme sacrifice on this day sixty-nine years ago. But seldom do we comprehend the significance of this day. We forget that 1952 not only asserted our nationhood and accorded a pride of place to Bangla internationally, it also established the syncretic character of the nation and acted as the precursor to our independence. But how much have we been able to fulfil the dreams of the language martyrs? It is time for some self-examination. While we can rightfully take pride in the fact that this day has been recognised universally by the UN as International Mother Language Day, we will not be remiss in suggesting that the language languishes from neglect both at the individual and official levels. There is little of substantive work in making the use of Bangla widespread in the country and at all levels of education, particularly higher education and our administration. Proficiency in other mother languages is taken with pride. Apathy towards the language has become a part of the elitist culture. While we resisted the Pakistani rulers in their effort to dilute our culture, we ask how much have we been able to retain the pristine character of the culture that is germane to this land? Our service to our mother language must go beyond words and manifest into actions. Admittedly, a second language is essential in today's globalised world, but its practice and learning cannot come at the expense of Bangla. We suggest that the teaching curricula be revised at all levels of our education system. One of the areas that needs to be addressed is our higher education, where Bangla is neglected totally as a medium of instruction. Lack of adequate books in Bangla, both in original and translated, is one of the main reasons for this situation. A look at the situation in the principal seat of higher learning in Bangladesh, Dhaka University, will give a clear depiction of the matter. Reportedly, except for the Department of Bangla literature and a few others in the arts faculty, not many books written or translated in Bangla can be found in the academia. At Dhaka University's sciences, biology, earth and environmental, and engineering and technology faculties, only 34 out of the 3,201 reference books are in Bangla, according to the syllabus of the departments. Seven of the 13 departments of these faculties do not have a single reference book in Bangla. This poses as a major obstacle to students who have studied in Bangla most of their lives and are suddenly having to learn from English texts. The matter needs immediate attention of the DU authorities. However, in our effort to enrich and expand the use of Bangla countrywide, we should not ignore the need to preserve and help flourish the languages of many other ethnic communities, whose languages and cultures are being obliterated over time. That would be the best way of showing our gratitude and respect to the Language Martyrs and heroes.

Building collapse in Keraniganj

Why were the building codes not followed?

FREQUENT incidents of building collapse in Dhaka have become a major cause for concern for people living in buildings that are built on water-bodies or canals. On Friday, a three-storied building in Dhaka's Keraniganj collapsed on a nearby pond, injuring seven people. According to the deputy assistant director of Fire Service and Civil Defence in Keraniganj, the building could have collapsed a long time ago because the soil it was built on was weak. Basically, a pond was filled up to construct the building without any permission from the authorities. Luckily, no lives were lost in the incident.

As more and more unauthorised buildings are being built on filled-up water-bodies and canals inside the capital and on the outskirts of the city, posing serious risk to people's lives and properties, the authorities responsible are just not doing enough to stop such illegal practices. Rajuk, being the authority that is supposed to ensure buildings comply with the building codes, has to shoulder the responsibility for what happened in Keraniganj.

The incapacity and inefficiency of Rajuk to ensure building safety have been exposed in various incidents of building fires and collapses over the years. The collapse of Rana Plaza, which killed over 1,100 people in 2013, is a glaring example of the failure of Rajuk to prevent building owners from violating the building codes. The FR Tower fire in the city's Banani in 2019 was another example of Rajuk's inefficiency to carry out its responsibility.

In 2018, Rajuk conducted a survey to find out which buildings that were built violating the building codes and found that around 1.31 lakh completed buildings out of some 1.95 lakh did not comply with the code. After the Banani fire, it conducted another survey to identify buildings flouting the building codes. Unfortunately, we do not know of any steps being taken against the violators so far. Compared to the incidents of Rana Plaza collapse and FR Tower fire, the building collapse in Keraniganj might seem very insignificant. But, if Rajuk cannot check such small-scale violations, how would they check the other major building code violations? Therefore, Rajuk should be made to answer for how the building in Keraniganj was built without its permission in the first place. Moreover, the local government authorities, the Department of Environment (DoE) also did not play their role to stop the construction of the building. The lack of accountability of the relevant bodies that ensure that buildings are constructed safely has led to these dangerous conditions that can lead to the loss of lives.

Can raising the minimum wage sometimes hurt the workers?

A quick lesson on economics and politics



AN OPEN DIALOGUE

ABDULLAH SHIBLI

RAISING the minimum wage is supposed to benefit the workers, particularly those who are making less than the minimum and are struggling to make a decent living.

The demand to raise the minimum wage from time to time comes from unions, political parties, and policy analysts. In the USA, the support for raising the minimum wage has been building. One of the promises candidate Joe Biden made was to increase the minimum hourly wage to USD 15. After being sworn in, Biden has spoken out in favour of legislation to raise the minimum wage within the first 100 days of his administration. It is expected that a higher minimum wage, as Biden proposes, would lift some workers out of poverty, and raise the wages of millions more. Unfortunately, there is also the possibility that during this crisis, raising the minimum wage may also hurt the job prospects for youth, low-skilled, and women workers.

Resistance to raising minimum wages comes typically from two sources, employers and economists/policymakers. And they are a strong band. Employers see any increase in the minimum wage as an attack on

market condition or under-employment conditions. When the price of labour goes up, employers can resort to using less labour and more capital per unit. A related mechanism emphasised by some economists is wage compression, i.e., along with some redistribution from profits to wage, there is a "...possibility that employers may compensate for higher wage costs at the bottom by cutting wages of workers who are nearer to the top."

The Raise the Wage Act, introduced on January 26, 2021 by some Democrats

organised in order of priority. President Biden won the White House by pledging to respond to the pandemic with many liberal policy proposals, and raising the minimum wage across all sectors, which was one of his most popular proposals. But only if wishes were horses.

For those not familiar with this expression, let me elaborate. "If wishes were horses, beggars would ride" is a proverb and nursery rhyme, first recorded about 1628 in a collection of Scottish proverbs, which suggests if wishing could make things happen,

Recession, with employment reduced by 10 million jobs, 6.5 percent off the February 2020 level. In economic terms, some states in the US have suffered more during the pandemic than others. Twenty-seven states have lost more than 5 percent of their jobs. New York, Hawaii, and Michigan have seen a sharp rise in unemployment, growing poverty, and lack of jobs. If the federal government now passes a minimum wage legislation, the job prospects for many who are not highly educated might be dimmed.

A renowned columnist for *The Boston Globe* newspaper wrote an op-ed titled, "The cruelty of a higher minimum wage". And the columnist, Jeff Jacoby, was not using the word "cruelty" sarcastically! Jacoby argues that while it is hard to live on USD 15 an hour, it is "infinitely harder, however, to live on USD 0 an hour. And that is what many of the least-skilled, most precarious workers in America will be making if the hourly minimum wage climbs by more than 100 percent."

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office's recent report shows that the minimum wage hike to USD 15 an hour by 2025 would result in 1.4 million unemployed. Past economic studies on the impact of minimum wage legislation on jobs have been inconclusive. When the first minimum wage law, The Fair Labour Standards Act of 1938 (FLSA) was passed, it was reported that the effect was mostly felt by unskilled African-American workers, and the Labour Department reported that between thirty thousand and fifty thousand workers lost their jobs within two weeks of FLSA.

While many big retailers such as Walmart, Costco, and Target support a higher minimum wage and have consistently raised wage in some states to USD 15 an hour, there is pushback from their smaller competitors. Increasingly, many small businesses and the restaurant industry are voicing their opposition to raising the minimum wage now when demand for some products and stores has declined. In some parts of the country, competitive wages are lower than the national average.

Interestingly, some analysts in the media have questioned the motive behind the push to raise the minimum wages now. The big corporations have benefited during the pandemic and are now doing well. E-commerce leader Amazon boosted the starting pay for its warehouse workers to USD 15 an hour last year. Others have done the same. At the end of the tunnel, there will be a shakeout and the increased cost of labour will enable the big corporations to squeeze out the SMEs, it is alleged.

Dr Abdullah Shibli is an economist and has been working in higher education and information technology for 35 years in the USA and Bangladesh. He is also Senior Research Fellow, International Sustainable Development Institute (ISDI), a think-tank in Boston, USA.



in the Congress, would gradually raise the federal minimum wage from USD 7.25 an hour to USD 15 an hour by June 2025, and then index it to rise at the same rate as median hourly wages.

It now appears that Biden is backing down. On February 16, he conceded that he is open to negotiation on his proposal for a USD 15 minimum wage, a centrepiece of his USD 1.9 trillion coronavirus relief bill. First, he suggested that he could be open to a longer phase-in than the current plan of five years in the Democratic Party legislation. In addition, he indicated that a lower number, for example, USD 12 or USD 13, could be beneficial while having less impact on business owners.

During the Covid-19 economic downturn, workers have suffered a decline in income, an erosion of their savings, and other injustices that the economic system inflicts on the working class. In the coming years, as national economies bounce back and economic policies are recalibrated in light of the lessons learnt, policymakers everywhere, particularly in the USA, are working furiously on their "To Do" list.

Like his predecessors, President Biden has his own "To Do" list. It is a list of policy goals or tasks one would need to complete, or things that one would want to do. Most typically, they're

then even the most destitute people would have everything they wanted. Similarly, the minimum wage legislation that Biden and others on the liberal wing of the Democratic Party promised, is facing resistance from not only the Republicans, but also the conservative Democrats.

Undoubtedly, the minimum wage has always been a hot button issue in the USA. Students taking their first undergraduate economics course in college learn that if the wage level is pushed above the competitive equilibrium rate, demand for labour will be less than supply. This gives rise to excess supply or unemployment. In the USA, some parts of the country are already experiencing unemployment in excess of 10 percent and there is concern that raising the hourly minimum wage from USD 7.25 to USD 9.5, while benefitting some workers, will hurt many others. Two groups stand out. Those with minimum skills who can't find a job and others who are currently employed in low-skilled jobs but are facing the risk of job cuts.

The question that my readers might ask, "How can raising the minimum wage face such resistance? Isn't the right to a minimum income enshrined in the American ethos?" The short answer is, it all depends. The country as a whole lost more jobs than in the Great

Is the priority list of vaccine recipients being maintained?

AFIA JAHIN

NOW that the few crores of Covid-19 vaccine doses are finally arriving in Bangladesh in batches of tens of lakhs (and many more have been promised to be on their way soon), a new challenge has presented itself for those in charge of distributing the vaccines. That is, the challenge of organising the inoculations in such a way that those who are most vulnerable to the virus are immunised before everyone else.

According to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) in the United States, it is recommended that the initial supplies of vaccines be administered to "healthcare personnel and long-term care facility residents". Given how much more susceptible the elderly are to the virus, they are also usually included in the list of persons to be prioritised during the initial stages of the vaccination programme.

Bangladesh's Covid-19 vaccination campaign is also in line with this, as only people aged above 40 years and frontline workers are supposed to be vaccinated on a priority basis during the current stage of the plan. However, there are some sizable loopholes in the registration process, and people who do not fit the priority criteria are being able to successfully register for and receive the vaccine.

In order to get the vaccine, one has to register online through the website surokkha.gov.bd using information from their NID card and fill out any other required details. If a frontline healthcare professional, above the age of 18 years, wishes to register for the vaccine then they simply need to put in their National Identity Card number in order to get in line and receive the Covid-19 vaccine.

Of course, this presents an issue as there is no way for the automated system to verify that the individual is actually a frontline healthcare worker. In a report



People crowd the vaccination centre of Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College in the capital to get inoculated against Covid-19. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

published on February 15, 2021, an official linked to the vaccine registration process (choosing to remain anonymous) told *The Daily Star* that because "the DGHS has no complete list of public and private healthcare staffers in the frontline, the bar was withdrawn recently." He also added that the list which they were provided was not in a "format that supports the database of surokkha.gov.bd".

Even though frontline professionals aged below 40 years of age had to have their NID numbers sent through their respective organisations (and then to the DGHS) in order for them to be uploaded to the website's server, there are still major gaps in the registration process which allow many individuals who are not qualified for the priority-based vaccines to still get inoculated.

However, what might be considered more disconcerting is the DGHS's response to a mishap of such a scale. It was said by the director of the

organisation's Management Information System that, "...the system will not understand who is a health worker and who is not. In the long run, everyone will register and we have to vaccinate everyone. Now if anybody does this [faking professional identities], we cannot do anything about it."

It is understandable—and truth be told, expected—that those in charge of vaccinating a nation of over 16 crore people, with many limited resources, would slip up quite a few times along the way to achieving the aforementioned goal. The issue of insufficient human and other resources is present in Bangladesh no matter what the crisis is. As such, it is commendable that the government has been able to procure the number of vaccines that it has, and that the inoculation process in our nation has begun at the same time as that of other countries with much better stocks of these resources.

Still, this bit of necessary efficiency and success does not automatically discharge the authorities of the responsibility of sticking to their promises. When a rule such as the one in question (that of frontline healthcare workers' vaccination being prioritised) is put in place, it gives people a sense of security and acts as confirmation that their government genuinely has their best interests in mind.

It also goes without saying how important a rule such as this one is. But, alas. While the elderly (in this case, those above the age of 40 years) need to be vaccinated first due to their special physical vulnerability to the virus, the other category of people whose vaccination must be prioritised are those who are most exposed to the virus. Obviously, healthcare staff who are constantly in contact with and are spending the majority of their 24 hours tending to diseased individuals fall under this category.

If those who are personally making sure that we are protected from Covid-19 cannot themselves be shielded from it first, then that exposure will inevitably trickle down to the rest of the population as well. Sure, more and more people are being vaccinated each day. But that does not justify purposely slowing down progress wherever we can achieve it.

It is now more important than ever before—during a global pandemic—that our government must urge all those institutions that are part of the inoculation programme to be strict and vigilant.

The vaccines have arrived and we are thankful for it, but the journey does not even come close to ending here. Now is our opportunity to pull our weight and fight the virus (and its looming variants) with not just the preventative vaccines, but also our own willpower.

Afia Jahin is a member of the editorial team at *The Daily Star*.

Old Bangla prose

On the occasion of Amar Ekushey, we reprint a translated essay (published in our Ekushey supplement in 2016) of the eminent educationist and writer Professor Emeritus Anisuzzaman, who passed away on May 14, 2020. The original Bangla text was taken from the writer's collection of essays titled Purono Bangla Gadya published by Mowla Brothers.

By my faith! For more than forty years I have been speaking prose without knowing anything about it!
— Molière, Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme (1670)
[Monsieur Jourdain in Act Two]

THE history of Bangla prose is generally described from the beginning of the nineteenth century. But most scholars agree that some examples of Bangla prose can be found from the sixteenth centuries. They say that prose from the sixteenth to the eighteenth century is scattered and limited to records and documents. The development of Bangla prose, on account of continuity and essence, is noticed from the nineteenth century. But a few other factors, though unspoken of, are related to this. The knowledge of theory and logical sense, the culture and creativity that is required for prose literature—many thought that before western influence, these things could not develop here.

century. But just stating this does not prove anything—for that, we need examples. Fragments that prove this have been collected over the last 100 years. But the difference of opinions among scholars about their unnaturalness, language and time of composition has meant that the complexity of the problem of the early history of Bangla prose remains. Kailash Chandra Ghosh was probably the first one to opine (1885) that the start of composition of Bangla prose could be seen from the sixteenth century or a bit earlier. As proof, he mentioned some prose regarding Vaishnava Sadhantatta (discipline), but his reasoning was weak. He had stressed on the style of language and on the etymology of words, and had considered Biddapoti and Chandidas as the first prose writers of Bangla (2). But the early history of Bangla prose cannot be reclaimed from the origins of words and the manner of speaking.

Style (1921). There, Dinesh Chandra considers the conception of Bangla prose from the tenth century (6). On the other hand, Siva Ratan Mitra was not overcome by so much emotion, although, he too did not shy away from expressing his opinion (1922): "... there existed a considerable amount of Bengali prose-writing long before the Serampore Missionaries or the Pundits of the Fort William College, or even Raja Rammohan Ray, in the early years of the nineteenth century dream of 'creating' a general prose-style. The existence of these specimens of prose-writing will in itself remove the impression, still obtaining in some quarters, that Bengali prose is entirely a creation of the nineteenth century" (7). That, even 80 years after Siva Ratan Mitra's voicing of this opinion, this notion has not been dispelled, is not so much our fault, as it is of the scholars. The most inclusive discussion on the pre-nineteenth century Bangla prose is probably in Sushil Kumar Chatterjee's *History of Bengali Literature in the nineteenth century* (1919). But he says: Indeed, the achievement of early Bengali prose is not only very late but, speaking generally, it amounts to almost nothing (8). On the other hand, Sajanikanta Das termed the time up to 1943 as the dark ages of Bangla prose in his *Bangla Sahityer Itihas* (1946). According to him, these dark times were dispelled through the printing of *Kripa Shastrer Orthobhed* in Lisbon. It is not that he was unaware of the existence of Bangla prose from before that time, but he was of the opinion that there was no way to verify the authenticity of those texts (9). Therefore, we should remain thankful to either the English or the Portuguese for the birth of Bangla prose. In 1800, that is after the establishment of the Fort William College, was the beginning of serious engagement in Bangla prose writing according to Suniti Kumar Chatterjee. But, he saw an effort in assimilation of foreign backing and local history: "Out of the large number of forms, dialectical and archaic, which prevailed in Middle Bengali, especially in the verb, documentary and epistolary Bengali of the three centuries 1500-

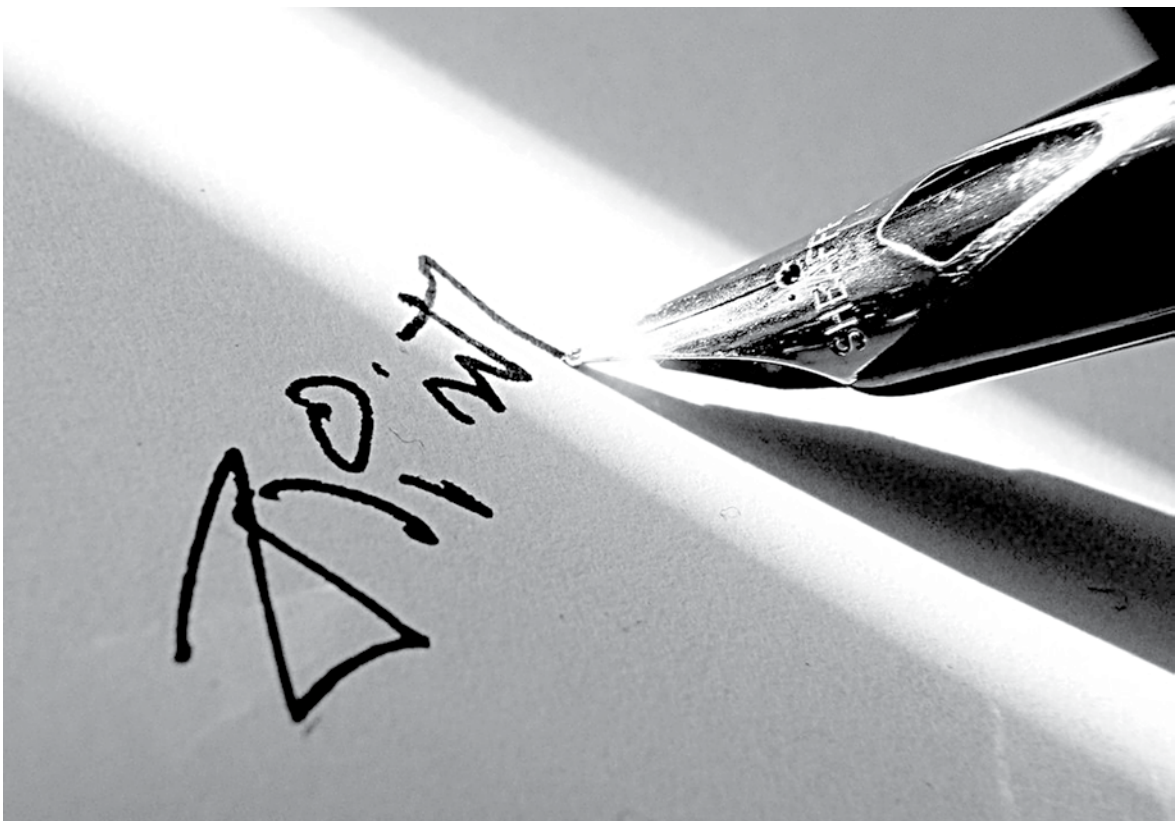
saints, he says: "At the beginning of the eighteenth century, the style of Bangla prose had already taken a rough shape—this can be understood from the example mentioned above" (11). But he still mentioned that, "The development of prose literature in ancient literature was unexpected, as this is based on knowledge of theory and logic" (12). I have already mentioned that this opinion, along with the role of Fort William College, has always stopped us from paying attention to our ancient Bangla literature. The differences between prose or prose-style and prose literature had also influenced the thought process of many. Besides, there was no effort to collect the scattered and fragmented remains, and there was no effort to look for more material. As a result, no definite idea about pre-nineteenth century Bangla prose could form in our minds. Along with the known examples of some old Bangla prose, some previously unknown examples of pre-nineteenth century prose are now available to us. From this we can venture to say that continuous examples of prose from the sixteenth century—both practical and emotive—are being found today. There are many historical reasons for the availability of texts from that time. Ilyas Shahi sultans had patronised the Bangla language and Bangla literature. Therefore, there was a widespread use of Bangla—not in the personal sphere, but in the letters of kings and princes, in business, in documents and records. We have not been able to find any government letters from the sultanate period, but more than one letter signed by Mughal rulers from the seventeenth century can be found (13). There is no evidence that the Mughals had patronised the Bangla language; therefore, it would not be illogical to assume that this practice is a remain from the time of the Sultans. As a result of a debate about Vaishnava ideology in the court of Murshid Quli Khan, there is a joyptro written in Bangla stamped with the seal of the Nawab (14). During the time of the East India Company, till 1853, the use of Bangla in official works is also an indication of this custom. In the sixteenth-seventeenth centuries, the language used in the government works of the kingdoms of Assam, Cachar, Cooch Bihar, Tripura and Mallabhum was Bangla. The letters of Maharaja Nara Narayan written in 1555 are testament to that. But an even more productive role was played by the Vaishnava mahajans. They had chosen Bangla as the medium for preaching the Gaudia Vaishnava religion. This practice had gone beyond the poetry and into the prose. In the seventeenth century, when none of the Six Goswami of Brindaban were alive, and there was no recognised leader of the Vaishnava community, then the Margabhed (difference of paths) issue became a big problem in the Vaishnava practice. Due to the theoretical debate between the Boidhiponthe and Raganugaponthi Vaishnava, the effort and need of explaining the Vaishnava practices were rejuvenated. Towards the end of the sixteenth century and at the beginning of the seventeenth century, there was development of the Vaishnava Sahaiya community. They had tried to talk about theory in Bangla. In reality, in the way Buddhist Sahajayana saints were the pioneers of Bangla poetry, the Vaishnava Sahajiyas were the pioneers of emotive prose in Bangla. In the seventeenth century the Christian missionaries followed this path, and in the eighteenth century, *Smriti Shashtra* was written in Bangla prose. Alongside the political, social and religious reasons for the development of prose-writing, there was also an environment which was facilitative

of the development of language and literature. Due to the bloom of Bangla verse in the sixteenth century, Bangla had attained an ideal shape and become the medium of expression for the common people. This was the pre-condition for the development of prose-writing. One of the greatest virtues of prose-in-verse is that it can be stored in the memory easily. As a result, prose can be composed in the mind, in the spoken word. But prose still had to wait to take on the written form, to be spread through duplication. In an age when there was no printing machine, for the spread of literature, the help of the scribe was needed. From the abundance of penned manuscripts from the seventeenth century, it can be said that by that time, professional scribes were everywhere. Therefore, it was the perfect time for the spread of writing in the hitherto unknown form of prose. In this context, the emergence of prose happened in the sixteenth century. First, there came prose in the form of verse. The infatuation with poetry and rhythm are not shaken off that easily. Besides, Sanskrit Champu (that is, prose compositions) was still present at its root. The amazing power of the *pojar* that had shadowed Bangla prose is undoubted. Therefore, only when the prose came out from within the verse, it assumed its own form. The influence of the Sanskrit Sutra style in old Bangla prose is also evident. One historian of Sanskrit literature had compared the style of the sutras with the style of language used in telegrams (15). That form of disjointed, sparse sentences can be noticed in many writings of old Bangla prose. After overcoming these influences, the simple and expressive local prose form developed. Then, at the hands of anonymous writers like Manuel da Assumpção and foreigners like Miller, developed a translation-tinged prose. We see the result of that in law books and religious writings. After that, the scholars of Fort William College devoted themselves to the composition of Bangla prose. The abundance of the new soon overshadowed the old. This happened in such a way, that it has now become necessary to remember that the new day for Bangla prose was not its first.

Professor Anisuzzaman was an eminent writer and educationist, and a Professor Emeritus at the University of Dhaka. He received many awards in recognition for his contributions. He was awarded the Nilkanta Sarkar Gold Medal from the University of Dhaka, the Dawood Prize for literature from the Pakistan Writers' Guild, the Bangla Academy award for research, and the Ekushey Padak, bestowed by the state, for his contribution to education.

The article was translated by Moyukh Mahtab.

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Besides, the establishment of the Fort William College (in 1800) and the achievement of the English rulers in encouraging the composition of student textbooks in Bangla prose have been given importance generation after generation. As a result, it was common and natural for people to start regarding the scattered fragments of Bangla prose from before that time with contempt. But, it was not unknown to anybody that long before the western influence there was a rich culture of prose writing in the Indian subcontinent. The literature in Vedic, Sanskrit, Pali and Prakrit languages were not all in verse. The Yajurveda and Brahman, Aranyak, Upanishad and Kalpasutra, and even Mahabharat, Vishnu Purana and Bhagavata Purana had prose in them. Sanskrit sayings and tales, Pali horoscopes and the Prakrit prose of Jains—these had no western influence. The biographies and histories written in India for 600 years in Farsi prose had no trace of western influence either. In many new Aryan languages related to Bangla, the development of prose had started very early. In Singholi, examples of prose can be seen from the twelfth century—according to some from the tenth century—in Gujarati, from the twelfth to thirteenth centuries, in Marathi from the thirteenth century, in Oriya and Maithili from the fourteenth century, Assamese and Braj language from the seventeenth century (1). Therefore, there is no reason for the development of Bangla prose not happening before the nineteenth

The dialogue was related to the spoken word, and what is spoken has always been prose. There is no reason to justify calling Biddapoti and Chandidas the first prose writers of Bangla. This is because, the prose of Biddapoti is not in Bangla, and of texts which are found to be written by someone called Chandidas, it is difficult to ascertain which Chandidas it is, or if they are in fact written by him at all. But Kailash Chandra's achievement is that he directed our attention to the Vaishnava-Sahajiyas writers (3) and hinted at the possibility of the development of Bangla prose before the English period. Dinesh Chandra Sen (1896) had agreed to an extent with Kailash Chandra. About the pre-nineteenth century Bangla literature, he says: It is not that there are no examples of prose literature, but that it is insignificant. But before I show the development of prose literature in the second part, I think it is important to mention briefly the examples of ancient texts that have been discovered. That small, scattered body of prose literature can be considered the base for the modern Bangla literature (4). In his *Bishwakosh* (1907) Nagendranath Basu added a history of ancient prose literature, where he mentioned 44 compositions from before the English-influence (5). Even though he could not mention the time of writing of these manuscripts, the influence his discussion had on literature historians can be seen in Dinesh Chandra's book, *Bengali Prose*

Alongside the political, social and religious reasons for the development of prose-writing, there was also an environment which was facilitative of the development of language and literature.

1800 was evolving a standard language for prose, in which only a few recognised forms were used; and the documentary and epistolary Bengali, based as it was on the speech of the 15th century, or it may be, of the 14th, was adopted as the language of ordinary prose composition, when the advent of western learning brought in a sudden demand for a prose style" (10). Sukumar Sen reminded us again in 1934 that ancient Bangla prose did not only mean documents, records or letters. Discussing essays on Vaishnava

QUOTABLE Quote



WALTER WINCHELL
American columnist (April 7, 1897-February 20, 1972)

A real friend is one who walks in when the rest of the world walks out.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS
1 List of candidates
6 Seaport setting
11 Spiral shape
12 Egypt's Sadat
13 Cove
14 Zigzag
15 "Sure thing!"
17 Tab, for one
18 Make mistakes
19 Close-fitting jackets
22 Old auto
23 Houston team
24 Skating figure
25 Malay island
27 Airport screening org.
30 Ballpark figure

DOWN
1 Black eye
2 Poe's love
3 Top NFL player
4 Layer
5 Blackmailing
6 Cornfield cry
7 Common bill

31 "You betcha!"
32 Gallery fill
33 Kicks off
35 Fleet makeup
38 Furious
39 Marisa of "My Cousin Vinny"
40 Low cards in pinochle
41 Used up
42 Airport areas

8 Come to
9 Frugal folks
10 Low cards
16 "Stayin' Alive" singers
20 Urging on
21 Dieter's no-no period
24 Memorable period
25 Go carousing
26 Punctual
27 Autocrat
28 Sofa's kin
29 Evaluate
30 Ship staffs
34 Verdi piece
36 Stock holder
37 Canine command

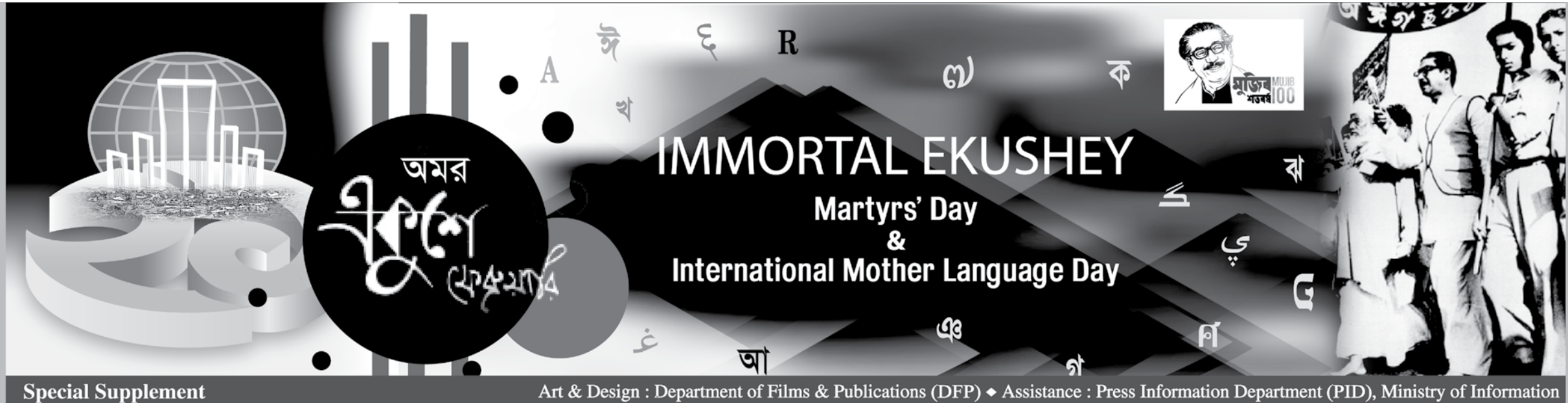
WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinoin@gmail.com.

TUESDAY'S ANSWERS

D	E	E	P	S	S	P	A	R	S
A	L	P	H	A	U	L	N	A	E
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N	O	M	A	D	M	I	S	S	Y

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



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Message

On the occasion of the great 'Shaheed Day (Martyrs Day)' and 'International Mother Language Day 2021', I extend my warm congratulations and sincere felicitations to the people and ethnic groups of different languages of the world along with Bangla-speaking people. It is a unique celebration in protecting mother tongue as well as own culture and heritage.

The great Language Movement is a memorable event in our national history. Today, I remember with profound respect, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who led Sarbodhilo Rashtrabhasa Sangram Parishad (All Party State Language Action Committee), formed in 1948 and was imprisoned. I would like to recall all the language activists including the then Member of Gonoparishad (Constituent Assembly) Dharendra Nath Dutta, whose foresightedness, boundless sacrifice, courage, organizational skills and instantaneous decision making resulted in the final outcome of the language movement on February 21, 1952 and consequently, the Bangalee achieved their right to the mother tongue. I pay deep homage to the language martyrs namely Salam, Barkat, Rafiq, Jabbar, Shafiur and many unknown and unsung language heroes who laid down their lives for the cause of mother tongue Bangla.

The aim of the language movement was to establish the right of our mother tongue as well as to protect our ethnicity, self-identity and cultural distinction. Being a source of ceaseless inspiration, Amar Ekushey (Immortal Shaheed Day) inspired and encouraged us to a great extent to achieve the right to self-determination, struggle for freedom and war of liberation. With the bloodshed passages of Language Movement of February, we achieved the recognition of Bangla as our mother tongue and consequently, we attained our long-cherished independence under the charismatic leadership of the greatest Bangalee of all time, Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

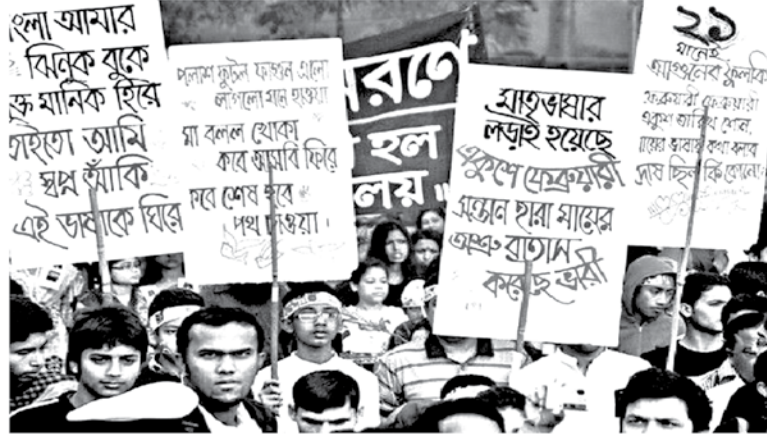
In fact, embracing martyrdom for the cause of mother tongue is a rare incident in world history. February 21 has now been recognized by the United Nations as the 'International Mother Language Day' with the spontaneous willingness and sincere endeavour of Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina along with the primary efforts of some Bangladeshi expatriates in 1999. As the Bangalee nation, it is also a great achievement for us.

Many languages in the world are now at the risk of extinction. Extinction of a language means disappearance of a culture, a nation and a civilization from the face of the earth. Therefore the world must raise the voice for protecting the language and culture of all ethnic groups, including the development of respective mother tongue and culture. International Mother Language Institute, an institute for the research and preservation of the flourishing and nearly extinct languages of the world, has been established in Dhaka in 2001. Besides, textbooks and teaching methods have also been introduced for the tribes, minor races, ethnic sects and communities in our country with a view to protecting and developing their own languages and culture. At the same time, in the development of the Bengali language for which we have sacrificed our lives, emphasis should be laid on the introduction of pure Bangla at all levels. I firmly believe that observing the International Mother Language Day will play a positive role in the development and preservation of our own language as well as in building a sustainable future through multilingual education.

The spirit of Amar Ekushey is now the incessant source of inspiration for the protection of own languages and culture of peoples of different languages in the world. Imbued with the spirit of Amar Ekushey, let the bond of friendship among multilingual people be strengthened, world's almost defunct languages be revived and the globe be diversified in respective societies- it is my expectation on Shaheed Day and International Mother Language Day.

Joi Bangla.
Khoda Hafez, May Bangladesh Live Forever.

Md. Abdul Hamid



For Ekushey All These Tears and Verse Mahadev Saha

For Ekushey all these tears and verse,
Millions of roses blooming in no moment,
Love flowering in bosoms
For Ekushey this sky with anguish,
Thirteen hundred rivers rippling with stormy waves,
White dewdrops of morning, groaning in Ramna ground
For Ekushey this festivity of alphabet, endless lines of verse
Martyr's monument decked with circlets of flowers
For Ekushey these nightlong mourning marches,
Morning tunes sung by everyone
These flowers and tears, silent weeping of wakeful birds nightlong
For Ekushey is this Mother Language Day,
Bangla spreading worldwide
This tale of glory and
This victory flag held in every hand
For Ekushey this chorus of courage in millions of hearts rising
Processions for freedom on all streets resounding,
For Ekushey these full-throated words,
For Ekushey this soulful love spreading unending

Translated by Mohammad Nurul Huda



Contributions of Ekushey: At Home and Abroad Ahmad Rafiq

The language movement demanding Bangla as state language had commenced from the year 1947 - even before Pakistan was born by partitioning India through an orderly process. Even at that time, the Muslim League leaders were repeatedly uttering the same thing: the only state language of future Pakistan shall be Urdu, and no other language. At that juncture, a few Muslim teachers-journalists-writers spoke and wrote in favour of Bangla as the principal state language in a logical fashion by gathering enough courage. They included Dr. Muhammad Shahidullah, Abdul Haque, Dr. Quazi Motahar Hossain, Dr. Muhammad Enamul Haque, Dr. Abul Quasem, et al.

After crossing this preliminary or theoretical phase, a massive movement was launched from March 1948 that lasted up to 1950. Then its huge nationalistic contour found expression in February 1952, when the movement for state language was transformed into a complete language movement. The slogan was then not limited to merely the state language. Various slogans were raised everywhere in the country (province of East Bengal) at that time: "We want state language Bangla; we seek release of political prisoners; introduce Bangla at all levels (of national life)".

Just as the first slogan indicated a nation-state, the second slogan reflected the demand for democratic rights; and the third one expressed a nationalistic spirit for establishing mother-language and state-language Bangla at all levels of national life including in higher education, higher courts, etc. Just as the colloquial language coming out of a mother's mouth or the mother-language consolidates the linguistic and nationalistic emotions of a people around their homeland through exchange of ideas, composition of literature, etc., similarly the potential for creating a nation-state based on a state language becomes a certainty through relating it with livelihoods.

The state language movement became and took the shape of a nationalistic language movement after reaching the Ekushey (21 February) episode of 1952. Its mutuality and autonomous character become clearer if the social-cultural-political aspects of language are considered. Its negative aspect like 'racial pride' may be contrary to humanistic spirit, but the nationalistic ethos and nation-building become inevitable by the urge for establishing the self and bringing about economic prosperity of the people. Class consciousness occasionally concedes defeat in such situations. It retreats. Such examples are visible in many countries of the world.

In fact, Ekushey became the seed-bed for nationalistic spirit and a future nation-state based on language. This path was never smooth; it was strewn with unwanted complexities. Because of the divisive policies of British rule in India and its agricultural policy in Bengal, the Bengali Muslims were lagging behind in education and socio-economic status not only in comparison to their neighbours from the Hindu community, they were also behind compared to the Muslims of northern and western India. Studies of researchers from northern India like Irfan Habib offer proof of that. Places ranging from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh to Bombay, Punjab and Gujarat provide proof of that as well.

Naturally, the Bengali Muslims suffered from an inferiority complex. Therefore, the distinct world of Jinnah's politics of separatism (Pakistan) appeared to them to be attractive and a realm of dream in their quest for self-development and self-assertion. They took time before they could disentangle themselves from this unwanted politics. This journey led to the bath of freedom after reaching the decade of 1950s.

Prior to the partition, Pakistan became a land of dreams for the Bengali Muslims. The central political leaders of Pakistan starting from Jinnah to Liaquat took advantage of their infinite liberality. The provincial election of 1946 bore testimony that the backdrop for establishment of Pakistan was laid through the votes of the Bengali Muslims. They cast their votes collectively in the ballot box of the Muslim League. With the exception of two seats won by Fazlul Haque, all other seats were captured by the Muslim League.

But the election results in Muslim-majority western India were different and mixed. Anti-Muslim League cabinets were formed in Punjab and the frontier province. In Sind, the league could painstakingly form the cabinet only with the support from the European bloc. To cut it short, it was the Bengali Muslims who created the real setting for the establishment of Pakistan.

And after the founding of Pakistan, West Pakistan devoured all the honeys with the blessings of the Urdu-speaking central leadership due to the infinite liberality of Bangla Muslims. Instead of Dhaka, at first Karachi became the capital of Pakistan. Later, the capital was shifted to Rawalpindi and finally to Islamabad by spending a huge amount of money. Dhaka was not even conferred the honour of an alternative capital.

Most of the loans and grants from British and American foreign aid were spent in different towns of West Pakistan, in development programs like building various types of industrial zones and modernisation of Karachi port. But Chittagong Port remained the same as before. The Urdu-speaking non-Bangalis were the owners of jute and textile mills in East Bengal. A huge socio-economic disparity was built up between the east and west over the years.

The students and youths were the main driving force in the 1946 election and the Pakistan Movement. The demand for Pakistan reached the general masses due to their tireless labour and the campaign of the Muslim League. The demand became universal everywhere.

The driving forces behind the language movement that brought an end to this political character were again the conscious students and youths. Through their toils, ideals and self-sacrifices, the multidimensional demands for language (recall the slogan) and the movement of Ekushey spread from Teknaf to Tentulia, from Chatmohar to Meherpur, that is from north to south, from east to west, up to the villages. This was mainly centred in the educational institutions. The movement assumed a universal character, but was quite the reverse of 1946. It clearly followed a non-communal, liberal-democratic, progressive and nationalistic trend.

As pre-partition character of politics underwent transformation, the state-language movement (1948-52), especially that of Ekushey, was founded on linguistic nationalism. The infinite courage and bravery of the students-youths and masses was expressed at one stage of this movement.

The Dhaka administration imposed section-144 in Dhaka city on 20 February 1952 afternoon in order to thwart the program announced by the students and youths for 21 February. As the carrot of election was hung before them, the politician-dominated All-Party State-Language Action Council adopted a resolution against breaking the section-144, although the main segment of the student-youth leadership as well as the general students did not accept that. They were determined to observe the declared program at any cost, even by breaking section-144.

With that objective, the students assembled at the arts building compound of Dhaka University in the morning of 21 February by sticking to their unwavering stand. Then the small processions of ten students at a time went out towards the medical college hostel compound by breaking section-144 amid baton-charges and tear-gas shells fired by the police.

An extraordinary event took place at noon on that day. The police opened fire on the students and masses, who were chanting slogans on the hostel compound after failing to break the strong police barricade. Rafiq-Jabbar-Barkat et al embraced martyrdom as a result. The day later became marked as the Martyrs' Day. The whole province including Dhaka city became tumultuous in protest against the incident. That included an amazing protest of red and white in Dhaka, which was also participated by the inhabitants of Old Dhaka.

Dhaka became a city of processions on 22 February. A new slogan 'May the martyrs' memory become immortal' was added to the old ones. The politically inclined students of Dhaka Medical College built a martyrs' monument having 10-feet height and 6-feet width by putting in night-long labour on their hostel compound. That beloved monument of the Dhaka city-dwellers was broken by the police in the afternoon of its very inaugural day on 26 February; and all its bricks were also taken away.

But a martyrs' monument cannot die, just as the linguistic spirit of humans remains undying in their minds. Meanwhile, martyrs' monuments were built at all places from Rajshahi to Narail town, even on the compounds of rural schools, through the efforts of students and youths. Later on, efforts were also made through government initiative to construct a central martyrs' monument (Shaheed Minar) that underwent building, breaking and rebuilding process. Finally, the present martyrs' monument came into being by modifying the original design. But it did not capture the original design of Hamidur Rahman and the sculpture of Novera Ahmed.

The language movement and Ekushey have presented two permanent and vitally important symbols to the nation, the country (People's Republic of Bangladesh) and the government. The first one is the 'Ekushey February' that could materialise due to the self-sacrifices of the martyrs; and the second one is the 'Shaheed Minar' (martyrs' monument). The nation bows its head in reverence at least once a year not only at the Central Shaheed Minar, but also before numerous martyrs' monuments of various shapes (small and large) built all over the country.

Emanating from the memory of self-sacrifices of the martyrs, the 21st February has been recognised on the one hand as an occasion of grief, and on the other hand as an inspiration for protests and democratic movements. The day involves a memorial procession from the Shaheed Minar as well as afternoon gatherings. The whole country observes the day from the first hours of midnight as a national holiday.

The martyrs' monument is not something different in this respect. It's symbolic significance covers sorrow for the martyrs, abhorrence of any despotic regime, protests, and above all an inspiration for democratic movements. At the same time, it remains as a fountain of cultural pursuits.

Another glorious contribution of the language movement has been the declaration of Ekushey as the 'International Mother Language Day', which is a matter of pride for all Bangla-speaking people. The primary credit for this goes to two expatriate Bangladeshis named Rafiqul Islam and Abdus Salam Naser. At the same time, credit goes to the then Awami League government, especially the efforts of education minister A S H K Sadeq and eminent Bangladeshi diplomat Syed Muzzeem Ali. The declaration came on 17 November 1999 from the 30th annual meeting of UNESCO.

The contributions of the language movement and Ekushey (1952) has remained a matter of pride for us all in this way, although its important slogan 'Introduce Bangla at all levels' has not materialised yet. The royal language of colonial era - English - still prevails in many fields including higher education and higher courts. The mother language Bangla lags far behind in that area and in fact is still neglected in practice. The only exception is the domain of literature and culture.

The concluding remarks in this monologue would be that the greatest contribution of the language movement has been an independent Bangladesh that could emerge by treading the path of blood-drenched nationalistic spirit, strong winds for self-rule through the 6-point and 11-point demands, the mass upsurge of 1969, and the liberation war of 1971.



Message

On the occasion of the great Martyrs' Day and International Mother Language Day, I extend my sincere greetings to the people of all languages and cultures of the world, including Bangla. UNESCO has been celebrating this day with due dignity since 2000 with Bangladesh. Like every year, they have set a theme for this day 'Fostering multilingualism for inclusion in education and society', which I think is very timely.

The importance of the language movement in the history of the Bangla liberation struggle is immense. Through this movement, the foundation for the inception of a non-communal, democratic, language-based nation/state system was laid. On this day in 1952, Abul Barkat, Abdul Jabbar, Abdus Salam, Rafiquddin Ahmad, Shafiur Rahman and many others sacrificed their lives to protect the dignity of our mother language Bangla. Today, I pay my deep tributes to the memory of the martyrs of all languages, including Bangla. I remember with the utmost respect all the language heroes, including the greatest Bangla of all time, Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, who led the struggle for the dignity of the Bangla language, whose visionary historical decisions and supreme sacrifices have saved the existence of our mother, land, and people.

The turbulent days of the language movement in the glorious historical records of the Bangla from 1947 to 1952 have been serving as a source of inspiration in our national life from time and again. Behind every achievement in the protection of the interests of the peace-loving people of this region lies the history of blood-shedding struggle and the sacrifices of countless lives. The Father of the Nation has been repeatedly imprisoned for leading the language movement. At the Education Conference held in Karachi on 27 November 1947, a recommendation was accepted to make Urdu the state language of Pakistan. When the news reached Dhaka, the students of Dhaka University immediately protested in front of Khawaja Nazimuddin's residence. Shortly afterward, Sheikh Mujib, a law student of Dhaka University, used his organizational experience to play a very key role in the establishment of the Chhatra League in Dhaka on 4 January 1948. In the first session of the Constituent Assembly on 23 February, Dharendra Nath Datta of Comilla moved an amendment proposal demanding the inclusion of Bangla as the language of the Assembly. Rejecting the proposal, Khawaja Nazimuddin declared in the Legislative Assembly that the people of East Bengal would accept Urdu as the state language. But to counter the reckless decision of Nazimuddin, an all-party Chhatra Sangram Parishad was formed on 2 March at Fazlul Ilah Hall of Dhaka University comprising Chhatra League, Tamaddun Majlish and other parties. Many language heroes, including Sheikh Mujib, were arrested in front of the Secretariat for leading the strike on 11 March and were released on 15 March. The day after their release, on 16 March, the students again besieged the provincial council building under the leadership of Sheikh Mujib, and many were injured by police baton charges. On 21 March, Jinnah spoke out boastfully against the Bangla language and in favor of Urdu at the Dhaka Racecourse Ground. When Urdu was declared the state language of Pakistan at the students' convocation on 24 March at Curzon Hall, the students immediately protested.

To transform the language movement into a national campaign, Sheikh Mujib organized a nationwide tour plan and participated in a massive campaign, and addressed rallies. He was arrested from Faridpur on 11 September and released on 21 January 1949. He was arrested again on 19 April and released in July. He was arrested on 14 October 1949 and released on 27 February 1952. Undoubtedly, Sheikh Mujib had been in touch with language heroes and Chhatra League leaders from 1st January 1950, in Dhaka Central Jail and had given various suggestions to add momentum to the movement. He sent news through three messengers on 3 February called for a nationwide strike on 21 February and marching around the meeting venue of the executive council. That announcement was made after the students' procession on 4 February. When Sheikh Mujib declared a hunger strike at this stage, on 16 February the jail authorities transferred him from Dhaka to Faridpur Jail.

The budget session of the East Bengal Executive Council was scheduled for 21 February 1952. On the advice and instructions of Sheikh Mujib, a general strike was called all over the country on that day. To deal with the situation, the Muslim League government had issued Section 144 for one month in Dhaka city from 20 February and banned all kinds of meetings, rallies, processions, etc. Students gathered at Dhaka University violated Section 144 and when the police fired indiscriminately, some lives were lost in the blink of an eye, many were injured and many were arrested. Several members of the provincial council walked out of the session room. The next day, on 22 February, a spontaneous strike was observed in Dhaka. The government called for the army, imposed curfew, and the Bangla language resolution was passed in the provincial assembly.

On 8 March 1954, the Awami League-led United Front won the election with the boat symbol. Awami League members started pressuring to make Bangla the state language. Meanwhile, on 30 May, the Governor of Pakistan dissolved the United Front cabinet by issuing Section 92(a). All the leaders including Sheikh Mujib were arrested. In 1956, the Awami League reconstituted the cabinet, gave Bangla the status of the state language, declared 21st February as Martyr's Day, and declared it a public holiday. The same government took up the first projects to build the Shaheed Minar, publish literary and science books from the Bangla Academy and invent Bangla typewriters. Unfortunately, with the imposition of military rule on 7 October 1958, those aspirations were no longer fulfilled.

In independent Bangladesh, the Father of the Nation directed the use of Bangla in all official activities. He made Bangla the state language in the constitution. He delivered a speech at the United Nations in Bangla and placed our mother language to a dignified position in the world assembly. During the 1996-2001 term of our government, Rafiq and Salam, two Bangladeshi expatriates from Canada, along with some members of the international community formed the 'Mother Language Preservation Committee'. They sent a proposal to the United Nations to celebrate International Mother Language Day on 21st February. Since the UN does not take cognizance of any personal proposal, they suggested sending the proposal to UNESCO from the state. When we knew, we did not have much time: we contacted the Committee for the Preservation of the Mother Language and sent our proposal to UNESCO through a quick fax message on 9 October 1999, while we had to decide within 24 hours. We seek the supports of member states through our embassies. As a result, on 17 November 1999, UNESCO recognized 21st February as 'International Mother Language Day'. We have established the International Mother Language Institute. We have taken initiatives to preserve endangered languages and protect their dignity. We have ensured the use of the Bangla language in the ICT. We have introduced textbooks for ethnic groups in five languages at the primary level. We are trying to get Bangla recognized as the official language of the United Nations. A particular group of people is found always active in demigrating the contribution of the Father of the Nation in the flourishing of Bangla identity and establishing the dignity of the Bangla language. With the publication of the Unfinished Memoire of the Father of the Nation and the Secret Documents of Intelligence Branch of Pakistan, it has been possible to frustrate all such malpractices.

Based on a particular spirit, we have established the right to language and on the same spirit, we have achieved our independence. In the last 12 years, we have made tremendous progress in every area of the socio-economic sector of the country, embracing that particular ethos and the logos of the Father of the Nation. Bangladesh is a role model of development in the world today. We are celebrating the year 2020-21 as 'Mujib Year'. Next month we will celebrate the golden jubilee of independence. We have prepared the second perspective plan, 2021-2041 for the next 20 years period and have adopted the 8th Five Year Plan. Insha Allah, soon we will establish the developed, prosperous and non-communal 'Golden Bangladesh' as per the dream of the Father of the Nation.

Joi Bangla, Joi Bangabandhu
May Bangladesh Live Forever.
Sheikh Hasina

What was gained included a new flag, a new map, an extraordinary constitution, and a single state-language Bangla mandated by the constitution. Bangla is now the state language of the republic.

But the introduction of Bangla at all strata of national life has not yet materialised. That is, the royal language of colonial era - English - still prevails in higher education, science education and higher courts. The self-conscious Bangalis, who waged struggles for their language, still wait for the use of state language in accordance with the constitution in all strata of their lives.

Writer : Vetem Language activist
Translation: Dr. Helal Uddin Ahmed

WHAT TO WATCH

SONY SIX
AUSTRALIAN OPEN 2021
Final (Men's Singles)
Live from 2:30 pm
TEN 1 SERIE A
AC Milan vs Inter Milan
Live from 8:00 pm
TEN 2 SERIE A
Atalanta vs Napoli

Live from 11:00 pm
Benevento vs AS Roma
Live from 1:45 am (Monday)
T SPORTS & STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE
West Ham vs Tottenham
Hotspur
Live from 6:00 pm

Aston Villa vs Leicester City
Live from 8:00 pm
Arsenal vs Manchester City
Live from 10:30 pm
Manchester United vs Newcastle United
Live from 2:00 am (Monday)
FACEBOOK LA LIGA

Barcelona vs Cadiz
Live from 7:00 pm
Real Sociedad vs Alaves
Live from 9:15 pm
Huesca vs Granada
Live from 11:30 pm
Athletic Bilbao vs Villarreal
Live from 2:00 am (Monday)

'It feels really incredible for me'



AGENCIES

AO Naomi Osaka gave Jennifer Brady a lesson in Grand Slam tennis as she cruised to a 6-4, 6-3 win to secure her second Australian Open title yesterday and cement her standing as the new queen of the women's game.

Osaka's victory over the 22nd-seeded American at a floodlit Rod Laver Arena gave the Japanese third seed her fourth major crown at the age of 23.

Fans hoping for a repeat of the pair's engrossing U.S. Open semi-final last year were left disappointed as Brady froze in the spotlight of her first Grand Slam final. U.S. Open champion Osaka played some way short of her best tennis and joined Brady in contributing to a dour, error-strewn first set.

But she settled to clinch six straight games, roaring to a 4-0 lead in the second before serving out the match to love. A big serve sealed it, causing Brady to fire a forehand return long, and Osaka held her racket over her head and beamed in an understated celebration.

Osaka, who won the 2019 tournament, offered Brady warm congratulations and thanked the fans at the trophy ceremony. "When we played in the semis of the U.S. Open, a couple of months ago, and I told everyone that 'Listen you're going to be a problem'. And I was right," said Osaka, who will be world number two when the rankings

are updated. "It feels really incredible for me. I didn't play my last Grand Slam with fans so just to have this energy it really means a lot."

Naomi Osaka has proven without a shadow of a doubt that she is the successor to Serena Williams as the queen of women's tennis.

Ruthless in her execution on the court, Osaka was typically charming in her acceptance speech afterwards, with the crowd at times in stitches and others in rapturous applause as they got another window into the multi-faceted personality who is becoming the biggest star in women's tennis. However, despite the dominant scoreline, the Japanese star didn't have the final all her own way, admitting afterwards that Brady was "going to be a problem" for her after awkwardly asking her if she should call her "Jenny or Jennifer".

Osaka was assured when she needed to be to stop a bulldozing first set comeback from Brady and awesome once the second set began, breaking early before bullying the American on the way to the finish line.

At the age of 23, Osaka has now won four Grand Slams, two Australian Opens and two US Opens, to make her the undisputed superstar of her generation. She is just two Slams behind Serena Williams' tally at the same age, with the 23-time major winning 39-year-old having already achieved the 'Serena Slam' by her 24th birthday.

SUSPICIONS OF MATCH-FIXING

AFC instructs BFF to conduct investigation

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday asked Bangladesh Premier League outfits Brothers Union and Arambagh KS for a second time to explain their positions over suspicions of match-fixing and betting during a few league matches.

The game's local governing body asked for a reply within 48 hours after AFC queried about five suspicious matches of the ongoing league.

"For two to three weeks, we have been working on five suspicious betting matches involving Arambagh KS and Brothers Union," said BFF general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag. "We have sent letters to the clubs today for a second time to explain their positions over specific allegations of match-fixing and online betting. We will send a third letter tomorrow," Shohag continued, adding that they are likely to send details of their investigation to AFC by mid-March.

Brothers have already replied to the first letter denying the allegations while Arambagh KS were supposed to reply last night.

AFC, which monitors the top-tier league matches in different countries through a third party, raised doubts over five matches - Arambagh vs Abahani, Arambagh vs Sheikh Russel, Arambagh vs Mohammedan, Brothers vs Bashundhara Kings and Brothers vs Abahani.

Replying to a query, BFF competitions manager Zaber Bin Taher Ansari said, "The opponents of Arambagh and Brothers Union are not involved with these allegations which is why we did not ask them for any explanation."

Lack of foresight in spotlight

MAZHAR UDDIN



Over 20 years after being made part of cricket's most elite format, questions still linger regarding whether Bangladesh has developed a

proper Test culture.

Those concerns were voiced vociferously following a humiliating whitewash in a two-match home series against a West Indies team made up of second and third-choice players, leaving their record in 121 Tests standing at 91 losses and just 14 wins.

Many have pointed out that Bangladesh has not had sufficient opportunities to play Tests while others blame the lack of a cricketing structure and environment and a frail mentality from both cricketers and officials.

Just as concerns about the need to improve Test culture were peaking, another aspect came to the fore as the Bangladesh Cricket Board came to terms with reality and granted Shakib Al Hasan permission to skip the two Tests against Sri Lanka to play in the upcoming edition of the cash-rich Indian Premier League.

The decision by the player roped in by Kolkata Knight Riders for 3.2 crore rupees led to some questioning his patriotism, but one top BCB official interestingly said that the board had to accept Shakib's plea because there was no practical chance of the Tigers making an impact in the ongoing ICC Test Championship, where they are yet to bag a point.

The concept of Test cricket and the need to develop a culture around it have been discussed at length over the years and it is about time that the focus shifts towards a coherent and clear long-term plans and processes instead of occasionally tackling the short-term issues that pop up and calling it a day.

The onus is now on the BCB and how they emphasise the longer-version of the game to encourage and create an urge among players to play Test cricket.

"If you look at Bangladesh's graph in Test cricket over the last ten years, you won't see any consistency. The matches we were able to win against top teams actually came through some individual brilliance. If we want to make Test cricket exciting for the players, we need to prioritise. The board needs to think about what should be done to make this happen. Although it should have been done ten years ago, it's fine if you start now," said former chief selector Faruk Ahmed.

It is also important that the authorities who are running the board have the patience to form a structure that will give benefits in the long run. However, people within the board at times want overnight success. It is the board's duty to motivate players

and make longer-version cricket more exciting and not just blame players by saying they don't want to play longer-version domestic leagues."

Another point to consider is whether the board has thought beyond Shakib and other senior members and adequately prepared a new lot of next generation cricketers for the future. "England, India and Australia value their first-class culture and their players take part in the first-class competitions as a form of camaraderie. Also, if you play well in first-class competitions, you get value and are rated as a good player. But that is not the case for our first-class cricketers. I am not just talking about the financial aspect, it is important to empower first-class cricketers to encourage them and grow the urge to be a Test player," prominent local coach and mentor Nazmul Abedin Fahim told The Daily Star.

The likes of India, England, New Zealand, and Australia have accepted the reality of modern-day cricket, such as the need to give players mental breaks and, with that in mind, prepare a bigger pool of cricketers so as not to

been prepared for this. Shakib might have thought the board would not allow him to play IPL, but he also felt that he had to play in the best league in the world and compete with the best. Money is also a big factor and the emotion of people is not wrong either in this case," Nazmul added.

On the other hand, allowing your best player to compete in the most competitive and lucrative cricket league in the world actually helps the player grow further. Afghanistan players are now reaping the benefits of playing in franchise leagues and gaining experience despite having hardly any cricketing structure in their country.

However, things have been the opposite from Bangladesh's point of view as the board, team management, supporters, and, at times, the players too lost their faith in the existing group of cricketers in the absence of their best performer. "The reason everyone relies on Shakib is simple. It is because he outperforms everyone in all formats and you cannot deny that fact. You need two players to replace him and we haven't found a proper replacement yet. But having said that



discourage those who want to skip one or two series.

When Indian skipper and their best performer, Virat Kohli, was granted a leave from the crucial Australia series, the BCCI was adequately prepared to face Australia because of strong backup options. Eventually, they went on to record a historic series win.

The BCB should have thought of the current scenario and prepared for someone like Shakib -- who has been a long-serving performer for Bangladesh cricket over the years and who is now in mid-thirties -- to start prioritising his views. It perhaps would have been nice if Shakib had decided otherwise, but one cannot fault him for not leaving millions on the table in order to participate in a series that is not shaping up to be a good one for the Tigers.

"He has been by far our best player over the years and we should have kept that in mind. If the board had strategically handled the situation long ago then everyone would have

you also need to give some time to others as well," former Bangladesh batsman and international cricket commentator Athar Ali Khan said.

"This is however not the first time that a player has chosen franchise leagues ahead of their country. It's hard to refuse such a huge amount of money. Yes, national duty comes first but you can't just point a finger at Shakib. You also have to understand every person has their own way of living life."

He prescribed that the board needed to emphasise more on longer-version cricket at the domestic level by involving age-level cricketers. "I think it's important that the board utilises the window provided by the ICC for the IPL, when no international series are scheduled. I want to see a win-win situation for both BCB and Shakib or even Mustafizur Rahman. We need to figure out how we can allow our more players to play in the IPL or other leagues as well as play for the national team," Athar added.

Djokovic defends dynasty against Medvedev

REUTERS, Melbourne

A very different Australian Open comes to a familiar end today as Novak Djokovic looks to thwart another challenge to his Melbourne Park dynasty from the latest Grand Slam aspirant in Daniil Medvedev.

Victory over fourth seed Medvedev would mean an 18th Grand Slam title for Djokovic, pulling him within two of the record 20 shared by "Big Three" rivals Roger Federer and Rafa Nadal.

While Djokovic has never lost a final at Melbourne Park, his reign has rarely looked so vulnerable. He suffered a huge scare against Dominic Thiem in the five-set decider last year, and Medvedev is possibly the player he would least like to face.

Not for nothing did Djokovic brand him "the man to beat". The rangy Russian has been a machine since November, clinching the Paris Masters, the ATP Finals and the team-based ATP Cup in a 20-match winning streak that has included 12 straight victories over top-10 opponents.



NOVAK DJOKOVIC
Age: 33
ATP ranking: 1
Grand Slam titles: 17
Career ATP titles: 81
2020 Australian Open: Champion
Best Australian Open performance: Champion (2008, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2019, 2020)

DANIIL MEDVEDEV
Age: 25
ATP ranking: 4
Grand Slam titles: 0
Career ATP titles: 9
2020 Australian Open: Fourth round Best Australian Open performance: Final (2021)

HEAD-TO-HEAD:
DJOKOVIC LEADS 4-3

Kings go six points clear



Bashundhara Kings goalkeeper Anisur Rahman Zico dives to his right to save Kenneth Ngowke's spot-kick as the defending champions edged Saif SC 2-1 in their Bangladesh Premier League fixture at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

SPORTS REPORTER



Leaders Bashundhara Kings maintained their unbeaten run in the Bangladesh Premier League with a 2-1 win over Saif SC at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

The ninth win in 10 matches put Kings six points clear of second-placed Abahani, who raised their tally to 22 points with a 1-1 draw against fourth-placed Sheikh Russel KC in the last match of the day at the same venue. The match between Saif and Kings reminded a bit of the final of this season's Federation Cup as Saif looked more spirited and determined to turn the table against the defending champions, who had won the cup final 1-0.

Despite lacking consistency and coming on the back of a 2-0 defeat

against Abahani, Saif started with an aggressive attitude and took an 18th-minute lead with John O'Koli running down the left flank and entering the box before shrugging off Yeasin Khan to place the ball into the net past the dive of Kings' goalkeeper Anisur Rahman Zico.

After conceding the lead for first time in 10 matches, Kings bounced back strongly to level the margin in the 34th minute when Towhidul Alam Sabuz headed in a rebound from close range after Saif goalkeeper Saiful Islam failed to grip a low shot from Jonathan Fernandes. Three minutes later, Brazilian forward Robson Da Silva scored his 10th goal of the campaign with a 35-yard screamer, giving Saiful no time to react. Sixth-placed Saif should have got one point from the match but Kenneth Ngowke wasted the opportunity from the spot in the

82nd minute, with Zico making a fine save.

RUSSEL DENY ABAHANI

Title contenders Abahani stumbled again after consecutive wins as the six-time champions were held to a draw for the third time in 10 matches. The Sky Blues looked on course for a seventh victory following a 26th-minute goal from Saad Uddin, but Tajik defender Siyovush Asrorov denied the Dhanmondi-based outfit by heading home a free-kick from Khalekur Zaman in the stoppage time.

ARAMBAGH BREAK THEIR DUCK

After a record eighth straight defeat, bottom-placed Arambagh registered their first points on the board with a 4-4 draw against Uttar Baridhara at the Shaheed Ahsan Ullah Master Stadium in Tongi. The result lifted 11th-placed Baridhara to six points from nine matches.

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JU students break into their dorms

Demands reopening of dorms; university says it is up to the govt

MD ASADUZ ZAMAN

Several hundred students of Jahangirnagar University broke open the locks to all 16 residential halls yesterday, a day after at least 35 students were injured in clashes with villagers just outside the campus.

However, the university authorities later locked down eight female dormitories. They said reopening of the university and the halls was subject to a government decision.

The institution and its dormitories have been closed since March last year due to the pandemic.

Yesterday, over 600 students gathered in front of the Shaheed Minar on campus demanding reopening of the halls. They later took position before the vice-chancellor's residence around 11:00am.

The agitators placed three-point demand before the university authorities. The demands are: reopening of the halls, closure of a road linking the campus to

Gerua Bazar, and legal actions against the attackers of students.

The students blamed the university administration for its failure to protect the students during Friday's clashes.

The JU authorities assured the protesters of meeting all their demands, except reopening of halls.

Speaking to journalists, Prof Motaheer Hossain, president of the hall provost committee, said no one would be allowed to stay inside the dormitories amid the pandemic as there was a government decision to keep educational institutions shut.

Around noon, the agitating students intercepted a youth from Gerua Bazar on a road in the campus suspecting him to be involved in Friday's attacks. They beat him up and vandalised his motorbike before letting him go, said witnesses.

In the afternoon, the university syndicate in an emergency meeting decided that a

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



A child, sitting on his mother's lap, showing pictures of his father who was burnt to death in Churihatta fire two years ago. They were receiving the personal grants of the Member of Parliament of Dhaka-7 constituency.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Teen held for murder of stepmother, her 2 kids

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Police arrested a 17-year old boy and sent him to jail on Friday for the murder of his stepmother and her two children in Sylhet Sadar upazila.

Police are also looking for the boy's biological mother for allegedly planning the murder with her son.

The victims were identified as Rubaiya Begum, 30, her daughter Maha Begum, 9, and son Tahsin Hossain, 7. They were stabbed to death on Thursday night.

A case was filed against the boy and his biological mother, Sultana Begum Rumi, with Shahporan Police Station the next day.

According to Rubaiya's brother Anwar Hossain, the mother-son duo had pre-planned the murder and the boy was provoked by his mother to kill his stepmother and step-siblings over property-related issues, said Syed Anisur Rahman, officer-in-charge of the police station. The boy allegedly tried to set the victims' house on fire after the murder was committed.

On information from neighbours, a police team rushed to the spot and detained the teenage boy.

After being produced

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Councillor held for 'forcing minor into prostitution'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

A local court yesterday placed Gazipur City Corporation Councillor Roksana Ahmed Rozi on one-day remand in a case over forcing a 16-year-old girl into prostitution.

The court decision came a day after Rapid Action Battalion-1 arrested the councillor from Dhaka's Dakshin Khan area, said Rab.

The girl filed the case against five people, including Roksana and caretaker of her house Nurul Haque, with Basan Police Station under Gazipur Metropolitan Police on Tuesday.

Nurul was arrested soon after the filing of the case. He is now behind bars.

According to the case statement, Roksana runs a beauty parlour at a shopping mall in Gazipur city's Chandana intersection.

The plaintiff, who hails from

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

ANTI-COUP PROTESTS IN MYANMAR

2 killed as cops open fire

Several wounded in Mandalay; US urges military to 'refrain from violence'

REUTERS

Two people were killed in Myanmar's second city Mandalay yesterday when police fired to disperse protesting opponents of a Feb. 1 military coup, emergency workers said, the bloodiest day in more than two weeks of demonstrations.

Protesters took to the streets in several cities and towns with members of ethnic minorities, poets and transport workers among those demanding an end to military rule and the release of elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi and others.

But tension escalated quickly in Mandalay where police and soldiers were confronting striking shipyard workers and other protesters.

Some of the demonstrators fired catapults at police as they played cat and mouse through riverside streets. Police responded with tear gas and gun fire, though it was initially not clear if they were using live ammunition or rubber bullets.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

VACCINE FUNDING Bangladesh, 11 others may get \$1.6b from World Bank

REUTERS, Washington

World Bank is expected to approve \$1.6 billion in Covid-19 vaccine funding for Bangladesh and 11 other countries, its President David Malpass has said.

Malpass told Reuters he expected the bank's board to approve the fund to the countries, which also includes the Philippines, Tunisia and Ethiopia, by the end of March, with 30 more to follow shortly thereafter.

World Bank is working to standardise Covid-19

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

Woman, 90, treks miles in snow to get vaccinated



AFP, Washington

A 90-year-old American woman trudged six miles in a foot of snow with two walking sticks to get her coronavirus vaccination.

Fran Goldman, of Seattle, had been trying frantically to get an appointment for her first shot,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

PRAYER TIMING FEBRUARY 21

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN	5-20	12-45	4-30	6-03
JAMAAT	5-55	1-15	4-45	6-07
				8-00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Biden for deepening ties with Bangladesh

Accepts credentials of Bangladesh ambassador to US UNB, Dhaka

US President Joe Biden has welcomed the new Bangladesh ambassador to his country and expressed his government's desire to advance common goals and deepen the strong and abiding friendship between the two countries.

Biden made the remarks in an acceptance letter

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8



The city dwellers purchasing not-sealed face masks and other safety personal protective equipment at wholesale price in Old Town's Babubazar bridge area. Most of them are either wrongly wearing masks or not at all. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

GLOBAL CORONAVIRUS INOCULATION Over 200m doses administered

Reveals AFP tally; Russia registers third vaccine

AFP, Paris

More than 200 million coronavirus vaccine doses have been administered in at least 107 countries and territories, according to an AFP count based on official sources.

In total 201,042,149 doses had been given worldwide by 1000 GMT yesterday -- a figure that does not include the latest data from China and Russia, who have stopped making their progress public in recent days.

Some 45 percent of the injections took places in countries belonging to the wealthy G7 club, whose members account for just 10 percent of the global population.

Its seven countries -- the US, Canada, Britain, Germany, France, Italy and Japan -- promised Friday to share doses more fairly with worse-off countries.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

NATIONAL VACCINATION

Over 20.82 lakh gets the first jab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 1.5 percent of the target people have been inoculated with Covid-19 vaccines as 2,34,564 new people received the first jab yesterday.

The number of people who have received the first shot is now 20,82,877. The government has planned to inoculate 13.68 crore to attain herd immunity.

The countrywide vaccination was kicked off on February 7. More than 1,000 vaccination centres are inoculating people with 50 lakh doses of Oxford-AstraZeneca's

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

অমর একুশে ফেব্রুয়ারি
আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা ও শহীদ দিবস

আবুল বকর
আবদুল জব্বার
আবদুল সালাম

১৯৫২ এর
ভাষা আন্দোলনে
সকল শহীদের প্রতি
গভীর শ্রদ্ধাঞ্জলি

মুজিব ১০০
শতবর্ষ

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