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DIGITAL SECURITY ACT

Misused to muzzle dissent

457 people including 75 journos prosecuted, held under DSA last year, says Article 19

ZYMA ISLAM and ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Incarcerated for over nine months, writer Mushtaq Ahmed and cartoonist Ahmed Kishore were brought into the courtroom 11 days ago and produced before a judge.

Nobody knew they would suddenly be brought to court -- not even their families, who have not seen them face-to-face since their arrests, because of Covid-19 regulations about visitors at the country's prisons.

Their families say this was their first trip out of prison, since they were both produced before a courthouse last year on May 6 and arrested under the Digital Security Act (DSA).

This newspaper's court reporter, present in the courtroom, described them as looking gaunt and haggard, their clothes

hanging loose off their frames, as they shuffled in. They were, however, not in handcuffs like many of the other prisoners.

"When I last talked to Kishore a month back, he told me his eyesight is failing," said Kishore's brother Ahmed Kabir.

The media and well-wishers rejoiced when photojournalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol was released on bail last year, but he is just one name among hundreds, including journalists, charged under the Digital Security Act.

Eleven days ago, as Judge Ash Sams Joglul Hossain of Dhaka Cyber Tribunal acknowledged the two prisoners -- the writer and the cartoonist -- in the docket, he also directed the investigators to launch a "further probe" into the case, and submit a report by March 23.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



Firefighters and locals dousing a fire that broke out in Cumilla Potti area in the capital's Maniknagar yesterday. The fire broke out in a tin-built house around 3:20pm and firefighters doused the flames around 6:15pm. Fire service officials said more than 200 rooms were burnt down. The cause of the fire is being investigated.



'We're working to ensure no language gets extinct'

Says PM

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said her government has been working to ensure that no language across the world faces extinction.

"We have established the International Mother Language Institute so that other languages in the world can be preserved. We have taken the measure to make sure that no language faces extinction and their existence can come out," she said.

The prime minister said this while opening the four-day programmes marking the Shaheed Dibash and the International Mother Language Day, 2021 and distributing the International Mother Language Day Award, 2021, at the International Mother Language Institute (IMLI), joining virtually from her official residence the Gono Bhaban in the capital.

Mentioning that a language museum has been established in the IMLI, she said that the samples of

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

Where did the money go?

People's Leasing and some BB officials trade blame over Tk 6.5cr spent to cover up scam

AKM ZAMIR UDDIN

The chairman of a non-banking financial institution, central bank officials, and an audit firm are giving different statements about a scam involving Tk 6.5 crore.

Uzzal Kumar Nandi, chairman of People's Leasing and Financial Services (PLFS), told a magistrate last week that certain Bangladesh Bank officials took the money in bribes between 2009 and 2015.

"To bury [other] misdeeds in the PLFS, a deputy governor, a general manager, and others of the central bank were given about Tk 6.5 crore between 2009 and 2015," he said.

But chartered accountancy firm HodaVasi Chowdhury & Co said it found in an audit that the money was taken illegally by members of the PLFS board of directors.

PLFS hired HodaVasi in November 2015 for the audit. The latter submitted the report the following year.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

2 students sexually harassed

Suspects videotaped them, extorted money

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Two college students -- a girl and a boy -- were sexually harassed by youths who forced them into a compromising situation and videotaped them in Noakhali Sadar upazila on Thursday night.

They then extorted Tk 10,000 from the victims by threatening to release the video on social media.

The female victim later filed a case against the suspects, who could not be arrested as of yesterday evening.

The victims are graduation-level students at a local college.

According to the case statement, the girl went to her male classmate's house in a

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

OXFORD-ASTRAZENECA VACCINE Protection expected 3 weeks after first jab

MOUJIB AHMED SUJAN

The Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine's first shot starts its effect three weeks after it is administered and remains effective up to three months, according to a latest study.

Experts said there might be misconception among some people that Covid-19 vaccines provide immediate protection.

They also said that there was also no evidence that any of the current Covid-19

vaccines could completely stop people from being infected, advising people to continue to wear masks and maintain other health guidelines laid out by the World Health Organization.

Bangladesh has been administering the Oxford vaccine across the country among people aged 40 years and above. So far, around 21 lakh people have received their first dose.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



A man in a torn T-shirt and with bruises on his arm tied to an electrical post in Goneshtola area of Dinajpur town. Seeing the man with two rods, locals thought he was a thief. They tied him up and assaulted him. He was in this state for around four hours before police rescued him. The photo was taken yesterday morning.

PHOTO: KONGKON KARMAKER

National Productivity and Quality Excellence Award 2019

Ispahani Tea Limited Is Awarded 1st Position in Large Industry Category (Foods)

Ispahani Tea Limited thanks the Ministry of Industries and all consumers, customers, stakeholders and well-wishers for their confidence, trust and support.

ISPAHANI

BUSINESS

Youngone splurging in man-made fibre

Youngone Corporation, a Korea-based global conglomerate, has made massive investments in Bangladesh for producing man-made fibre (MMF) for clothing as artificial materials are now dominating the fashion industry, according to Kihak Sung, its chairman and chief executive officer. Famous for its outerwear and MMF products, Youngone recently started manufacturing polyester fabrics at three factories in the Korean Export Processing Zone in Chattogram. Youngone has already invested around \$600 million in Bangladesh and plans to invest another \$1 billion over the next few years depending on the country's situation, according to Sung.

STORY ON B4

Teens hawk drugs in Karwan Bazar

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Around 7:00pm on February 14, a group of five or six young girls aged between 14 and 18 were seen roaming around in front of Tejaon level crossing.

Wearing worn clothes and torn sandals, they went close to rickshaws and minibuses standing near the level crossing gate and asking in low voices: "Hey, how many? How many?"

When a passerby or passenger waved at the girls, three or four rushed towards them, racing each other to reach first.

The girl who won that short race was seen bringing out something wrapped in a small, white piece of paper. The transaction happened in a matter of seconds -- the girl handed the small paper package to the passerby in exchange for money and went back to the spot she was occupying before her business venture.

The customer also disappeared from the spot.

After observing closely and talking to some passersby and rickshaw-

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

BANGLADESH UPDATE



327
New cases in 24hrs



5,43,351
Total cases



8,349
Deaths



4,91,367
Recoveries



2,475,289
Deaths



111,829,431
Total cases

ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

UN working group wants to visit Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances wants to undertake a visit to Bangladesh in relation to two cases of enforced disappearances.

The cases of enforced disappearance are those of Ansar Ali, allegedly abducted on April 18, 2012, from Dhaka by armed men believed to be state agents, and Saidur Rahman Kazi, allegedly arrested from Jashore Municipality Park on April 5, 2017, by police personnel.

The UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances discussed the issues at its 123rd session in Geneva from 15 to 19 February, held to examine more than 600 cases in 36 countries, according to a statement of the Group.

The UN Working Group comprises five independent experts – Chair-Rapporteur Tae-Ung Baik (Republic of Korea), Vice-Chair Henrikas Mickevicius (Lithuania) and other members Aua Balde (Guinea-Bissau), Bernard Duhaime (Canada), and Luciano Hazan (Argentina).

The statement said the experts examined allegations regarding obstacles in the implementation of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, such as regressive legislation and practices, or systemic failures in addressing cases of enforced disappearances.

Issues such as disappearances perpetrated by non-state actors, as well

as enforced disappearances occurring in the context of transnational transfers, were also discussed.

The Working Group also discussed internal matters and future activities, including country visits planned for 2021 and 2022.

The statement said on September 1, 2020, the Working Group, jointly with other special procedure mechanisms, sent an allegation letter to Bangladesh concerning alleged threats against and acts of intimidation and legal prosecution of blogger Asaduzzaman Noor, and the ongoing harassment of his family members in Bangladesh.

The Working Group noted with concern that it has been raising similar reports regarding the situation of enforced disappearance in Bangladesh for several years, but was alarmed that it continues to receive cases, many of which relate to individuals linked to opposition political parties, and by the apparent impunity for the practice in the country.

"It also strongly regrets the lack of engagement with the Working Group. In this regard, the Working Group notes that it has not received replies to any outstanding cases this year and that only one case has ever been clarified since the Working Group transmitted the first case to the government in 1996."

The UN Working Group hopes to receive information on the outstanding cases as soon as possible, while reiterating its interest in undertaking a visit to Bangladesh, as expressed in several communications since 2013.

Where did the money go?

FROM PAGE 1

Plagued by the multiple financial scams, PLFS is now in the process of being liquidated.

People who were in the management of the leasing company between 2009 and 2015 showed on papers that the Tk 6.5 crore went into business development, namely to buy gifts for clients or to pat the valued clients.

Based on documents and vouchers, the accounting firm said it came to the assumption that the money was actually withdrawn illegally for board meeting purposes.

The Daily Star has a copy of the audit findings.

Contacted, M Moazzam Hossain, who was the chairman of the 11-member PLFS board between April 2013 and November 2015, said the audit report was completely wrong.

"There is a strong link between HodaVasi Chowdhury & Co and Uzzal [PLFS chairman who said the money was spent in bribes] as the latter was once an audit manager there," he said.

Sk Md Tarikul Islam, who led the audit, said that the report was based on evidence.

He added that he was not allowed to disclose any more information of a client.

According to the audit report, the former directors took the money and made vouchers of expenditure at 92 board meetings between 2009 and 2015.

Meanwhile, an investigation report by the central bank found that Moazzam was also involved in siphoning off Tk 123 crore from PLFS. That inspection was carried out in 2014.

The following year, the central bank removed five PLFS directors due to their alleged involvement in embezzling Tk 358 crore.

When his attention was drawn to

this, Moazzam said someone had framed him.

In his confessional statement, Uzzal said Proshanta Kumar Halder, better known as PK Halder, had persuaded Moazzam to quit as the chairman by giving him Tk 12 crore.

The Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has been investigating Halder's involvement in siphoning off around Tk 10,000 crore from four financial institutions between 2009 and 2019.

Moazzam denied these allegations too.

"I did not take bribes. I sold my shares for Tk 15 crore. But I have yet to get Tk 6 crore of the amount. I served them a legal notice to this end."

Uzzal said in his statement that Shah Alam, then general manager of Bangladesh Bank's Department of Financial Institutions and Markets, took bribes from PLFS.

The deputy governor and Shah Alam helped scamsters in exchange of Tk 6.5 crore, he said.

Shah Alam was relieved of his duties on February 4 over his possible links to PK Halder.

He said, "I did not take bribes. I joined the department as GM in September 2013. But the amount mentioned by Uzzal was spent between 2009 and 2015."

Md Serajul Islam, an executive director and spokesperson of the Bangladesh Bank, said a fact finding committee led by a deputy governor has been formed to look into the scam.

The committee will submit a report in three months after looking into the matter, he said.

"There is no scope to comment on the matter at this moment," Serajul said.

The central bank commenced liquidating PLFS in July 2019 after it informed the central bank that it would not be able to pay back the depositors.

Protection expected 3 weeks

FROM PAGE 1

The issue of how much and from when the vaccine will provide immunity surfaced after a vaccine recipient tested positive for Covid-19 seven days after receiving the first jab in Dhaka on February 10.

Fifty-seven-year-old SM Golam Kibria, in a Facebook status on February 19, wrote: "I have become infected on the sixth day... So do not [make the] mistake [of] thinking you are safe just by taking vaccines."

He also shared a copy of Covid-19 positive RT-PCR test result from the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR). The IEDCR collected his samples on February 17.

According to the Oxford Covid-19 vaccine website, the efficacy is 76 percent between 22 days and 90 days after the first dose.

"After inoculation, the Oxford's Covid-19 vaccine takes time to produce antibodies. May be this person [Kibria] was exposed to the virus days earlier. It is normal," Prof Tahmina Shirin, director of the IEDCR, told The Daily Star on Friday.

"The person who gets vaccine doses is equally vulnerable to Covid-19 infections like the one who did not get it, until the creation of enough antibodies," she added.

"Irrespective of whether you are vaccinated or not, everyone should

wear masks and maintain physical distancing at least till the end of this year," said Tahmina.

Khondoker Mehedi Akram, senior researcher at the University of Sheffield, said the efficacy of the Oxford vaccine's first dose reaches its peak after 21 days.

"But before that, they are unprotected like those who are not vaccinated. They must remain careful during that period," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

On www.gavi.org, health experts also explained some other reasons why people should hold on to their masks.

No vaccine is 100 percent effective. They are usually slightly less effective in the real world compared to clinical trials. The effectiveness of Covid-19 vaccines also varies depending on how efficiently they are handled. It may not prevent one from spreading the virus, said experts.

Researchers are yet to figure out whether Covid-19 vaccines prevent transmission.

The preliminary evidence of a study suggested the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine could slow the transmission of the virus. But some epidemiologists said it was too early to say this, according to the Gavi.

They said people who have had one or two doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine should not lower their guard in terms of physical distancing, wearing masks or hand hygiene.



General Secretary of the All India Congress Committee (AICC) party for Uttar Pradesh, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra (top L), interacts with villagers and members of the fisherman community who were allegedly harassed by local police few weeks ago, at Baswar village on the outskirts of Allahabad, India yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

AVIAN FLU STRAIN

Russia detects first case in humans

Alerts WHO

AFP, Moscow

Russia said Saturday that its scientists had detected the world's first case of transmission of the H5N8 strain of avian flu from birds to humans and had alerted the World Health Organization.

In televised remarks, the head of Russia's health watchdog Rosпотребнадзор, Anna Popova, said scientists at the Vektor laboratory had isolated the strain's genetic material from seven workers at a poultry farm in southern Russia, where an outbreak was recorded among the birds in December.

The workers did not suffer any serious health consequences, she added. They are believed to have caught the virus from poultry on the farm.

"Information about the world's first case of transmission of the avian flu (H5N8) to humans has already

been sent to the World Health Organization," Popova said.

There are different subtypes of avian influenza viruses.

While the highly contagious strain H5N8 is lethal for birds, it had never before been reported to have spread to humans.

Popova praised "the important scientific discovery", saying "time will tell" if the virus can further mutate.

"The discovery of these mutations when the virus has not still acquired an ability to transmit from human to human gives us all, the entire world, time to prepare for possible mutations and react in an adequate and timely fashion," Popova said.

The WHO confirmed on Saturday that it had been notified by Russia about the development.

"We are in discussion with national

authorities to gather more information and assess the public health impact of this event," a spokesperson said.

"If confirmed, this would be the first time H5N8 infects people."

WHO stressed that the Russian workers were "asymptomatic" and no onward human-to-human transmission had been reported.

People can get infected with avian and swine influenza viruses, such as bird flu subtypes A(H5N1) and A(H7N9) and swine flu subtypes such as A(H1N1).

According to the WHO, people usually get infected through direct contact with animals or contaminated environments, and there is no sustained transmission among humans.

H5N1 in people can cause severe illness and has a 60 percent mortality rate.

Misused to muzzle dissent

FROM PAGE 1

The week before, Mushtaq and Kishore had been officially charged by the police under a DSA case filed last year.

In its entirety, the case is a collection of 10 social media posts, as per the first information report filed last year on May 6.

The links submitted as evidence lead to Facebook posts and political cartoons made before the pandemic, which mock the prevailing health system of the country, and re-shares of various news articles which provided commentary on the coronavirus outbreak.

Some of the links were posts made by a satirical Facebook page called "I am Bangladeshi" of which Mushtaq and Kishore were administrators.

These 10 links were submitted as evidence into a litany of charges -- including spreading propaganda against the Liberation War of Bangladesh, Father of the Nation, National Anthem and National Flag; tarnishing the image of the nation; spreading confusion; creating hostility, hatred or adversity among people; destroying communal harmony or creating unrest, disorder; threatening to deteriorate law and order.

For these 10 links -- and the subsequent charges -- the duo were denied bail a total of six times, according to their legal team.

The first time was on May 17 last year, when a virtual court by Judge Sadrir Yasir Ahsan Chowdhury rejected their bail prayer because there was a pending remand application from the cops.

The last rejection was on January 6 this year, at the courtroom of Metropolitan Magistrate KM Emrul Kayesh, who had also denied journalist Kajol bail thrice.

DSA CASES, ARRESTS UP IN 2020 Last year, as many as 457 people of all professions were prosecuted and arrested in 198 cases filed under the Digital Security Act, notes UK-based Article 19 in its annual report.

Of this figure, 75 were journalists, while others included teachers, students, folk musicians and cultural artists among others. Nearly half of the journalists prosecuted, 32, were arrested. Most of these arrests were made in the month of May.

Compare this figure to that of 2019 -- only 63 people in total were prosecuted that year.

"The misuse of the law to muzzle opposing voices, in the name of quashing rumours, was noticeable last year," said the organisation.

The statistics back it up -- data from Article 19 shows that 33 of the complainants either held posts in the ruling party Awami League and/or were parliamentarians, upazila parishad chairpersons or mayors. Eight of the cases were filed by law enforcers.

"The law is being misused by the law enforcers because the government and administration cannot tolerate criticism about themselves," said ZI Khan Panna, a Supreme Court lawyer and chairperson of Ain O Salish Kendra, who was representing Kishore and Mushtaq at the lower courts.

He suggested the government be

cautious so the provisions of the Digital Security Act cannot be misused.

On December 26 last year, the day after Kajol was released, a journalist from Pabna named KM Belal Hossain Shopon was arrested for sharing a photo on Facebook that was making the rounds on social media. Shopon is the editor of a periodical named Somooy Asomoy.

The post had a photo of a handwritten letter supposedly signed by one "Pushpo Rani" stating that she had been sexually abused by the councillor of Chatmohar municipality's ward-4. The photo was unverified, and Shopon said as much when sharing the content, adding that it should be investigated whether this is true or not.

Around seven hours after the post was shared by Shopon, he retracted the post, and shared a new announcement stating that he deleted his previous post because even after trying, he could not verify the authenticity of the letter being shared.

Seven hours of keeping up an unverified Facebook post left Shopon in jail for over a month.

Raj Ali, a pro-Awami League councillor candidate of Chatmohar municipality's ward-4, filed a case against him under DSA on December 25 last year. He charged Shopon under sections 25, 29 and 31 of the act.

The Detective Branch of police promptly moved to arrest Shopon from his house the very next day.

In addition to defamation, these charges include "creating enmity, hatred or hostility among different classes and communities of the society, destroying communal harmony, creating unrest and disorder, and deteriorating the law and order situation."

"I had even retracted my post because I did not know with certainty if this was true, but I never thought I'd have to go to jail over this. A certain section of society who I do not pander to, have used this as a tool to harass me," said Shopon.

Facebook has provided a fertile ground for journalists to get prosecuted. Gleaning from the cases mapped out by Article 19, as many as 31 cases were filed against journalists specifically for their Facebook activities -- which include wall posts, comments on posts, and things said during live videos.

But at least Shopon was released, even though he still faces charges. Freelance journalist Jamal Mir from Barguna has been in prison since May 7 last year.

On April 7, 2020, he and a group of journalists and locals entered into what they claimed was the den of a sex-work and drug-peddling racket. A month later, Mir published that video on his personal YouTube channel and on a web TV channel.

A woman named Ruby, who was present at the location, filed a case under DSA against him alleging defamation -- since defamation is a criminal charge, Mir was arrested.

Since then, his bail was rejected a total of five times by different courts, his legal team informed The Daily Star.

Teens hawk drugs

FROM PAGE 1

pullers, who were seen buying those small packages from the girls, it was learnt that the packages contained yaba pills and marijuana leaves.

Not revealing the identity of a reporter, these correspondents then talked to two of the girls selling narcotics standing on the railway track. They said they sold one small pack of marijuana for Tk 100 and per piece of yaba for Tk 300.

Visiting the area between Tejgaon level crossing and Karwan Bazar wholesale fish market over the last week, over 100 such young girls were seen either standing on the railway track or beside it and selling the drugs packed inside the small white papers.

They hide the narcotics in their clothes and in special cloth bags tied around their waists. Although they sell both marijuana and yaba, there is greater demand for the latter.

On February 15, these correspondents visited the Kamarpotti area of Karwan Bazar, near the rail tracks, and spent around 90 minutes observing some seven to eight young girls busy selling the narcotics.

At one point, a youth aged around 25 ran towards the girls and whispered something to them.

Within a couple of seconds, the area was deserted as the girls ran off in different directions.

A couple of minutes later, a police van stopped at the place and two police personnel got out. After spending a few minutes there, they left.

Half an hour later, the girls returned to the spot, some alone and others in groups of two.

The Daily Star talked to a couple of rickshaw-puller, who bought the narcotics from the girls.

One said he bought a small packet of marijuana. "I bought the drugs from the area as it is easily available here."

When asked about police, the rickshaw-puller said sometimes people introducing them as police sources stopped him and tried to search him. "When I pay them Tk 200, they just allow me to go on my way. It happens once or twice a month."

Not just rickshaw-pullers, but students, traders and various service holders buy narcotics from the area while travelling on CNG-run auto-rickshaws, private cars and sometimes in minibuses, according to locals who witnessed the transactions.

They said some 30 people identifying themselves as police sources controlled the narcotics business in the area and collected money in the name of managing police.

Md Salauddin Mia, officer-in-charge of Tejgaon Police Station, admitted that yaba and marijuana are sold on the Karwan Bazar railway tracks and nearby areas.

"We often conducted drives and arrested narcotics traders, mostly women, from the area, but they managed to obtain bail within a couple of days and again got involved in the same activities," he said.

Asked about "police sources" aiding the narcotics business, OC Salauddin denied the allegation and told this newspaper yesterday that they did not conduct any drives after taking help from any source.

"We will definitely take action against people if we get any specific complaints."

For alleged involvement in helping and aiding narcotics dealers, the Tejgaon Division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police recommended departmental action against 17 police officials in July last year. As per the recommendation, the DMP suspended the officials.

Asked about the narcotics business continuing in the presence of police, Harun-ur-Rashid, deputy commissioner of Tejgaon Division Police, told The Daily Star yesterday that it is not possible to stop the business in a day.

"Our drive against narcotics is underway and we are taking action against the responsible ones," said the deputy commissioner.

2 students

FROM PAGE 1

neighbouring village around 8:00pm on Thursday.

While the two were talking in front of the house, some young men, including Pulak Mazumder, Akbar Hossain and Raihan Uddin, appeared and alleged that the girl and the boy were in a relationship and termed it "anti-social" activities.

The men then dragged the girl and boy into a room and beat them up while forcing them to be in a compromised state.

At one stage, they taped the duo and demanded Tk 50,000. As the victims refused, the suspects threatened to release the video.

The victims paid them Tk 10,000. However, the men tried to sexually harass the girl again. When she began screaming, the suspects fled the scene, said the stationer.

On Saturday, she lodged a case with Sudharam Model Police Station in this regard.

Contacted, Fazlul Quader, inspector (investigation) of the station, confirmed the incident and said they were trying to arrest the accused.



Clockwise from top: Children, wearing colourful outfits, flag bandanas hold up cutouts of Bangla letters at Sylhet Central Shaheed Minar; members of Chattogram Charu O Karu Shilpi Sangathan bring a wreath in the shape of a monument itself at Chattogram Central Shaheed Minar; a little girl adds flower petals on a map of Bangladesh at Barishal Central Shaheed Minar; police personnel buy small flower bouquets at Dhaka Central Shaheed Minar; members of the diplomatic core place floral wreaths at the Dhaka Central Shaheed Minar in the first hour of February 21.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR, RAJIB RAIHAN, TITU DAS, RASHED SHUMON, SK ENAMUL HAQ



Rich homage to language martyrs

STAR REPORT

The nation yesterday observed Amar Ekushey and International Mother Language Day in a befitting manner, paying rich tribute to the Language Movement heroes for their supreme sacrifice for Bangla as state language.

Maintaining health guidelines, hundreds of people in bare-foot and wearing black througed Central Shaheed Minar in the capital and placed floral wreaths at the monument.

They stood silent in remembrance of the heroes who embraced martyrdom in 1952.

The day was also observed across the globe as Unesco in 1999 recognised February 21 as International Mother Language Day.

Taking part in different programmes, including discussions and cultural sessions across the country and in Bangladesh missions abroad, people reminisced the sacrifice made by the Language Movement martyrs.

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 the president, his military secretary Maj Gen SM Salahuddin Islam placed a floral wreath at the Shaheed Minar.

The PM's military secretary Maj Gen Naquib Ahmed Chowdhury placed a floral wreath on her behalf.

In his message, President Hamid said Ekushey is a unique remembrance in protecting mother tongue as well as own culture and heritage, reports UNB.

"I firmly believe that observing International Mother Language Day will play a positive role in the development and preservation of our own language as well as building a sustainable future through multilingual education," he said.

In her message, the prime minister said, "We've established the right to language and in the same spirit, we've achieved our independence. In the last 12 years, we've 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."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Children of Rasulpur build their own Shaheed Minars

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

In line with its tradition for the last couple of years, school children from Barishal city's Rasulpur Char wrapped the area with Language Day fervour by constructing 30 Shaheed Minars.

As part of a competition, the children handmade the replica monuments with brick, wood, bamboo, paper, and 10 even with Banana trees! The pieces were later exhibited by the competition's organisers Samajtantrik Chatrafront Barishal district and city units.

This unique way of paying homage to the Language Martyrs has been running for the last seven years, said Rejwan, one of the organisers.

Dr Manisha Chakraborty, another organiser, said around two thousand people live in the area, but most of them are too poor to spend money on entertainment or tributes.



For seven years, Rasulpur Char dresses up for Ekushey February when its children build their own replica Shaheed Minars with local materials. This year, they made 30! This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

FEBRUARY 21 Diplomats mark the occasion at home, abroad

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Call for building inclusive and multicultural societies is growing strong globally as International Mother Language Day, which was proclaimed by Unesco in 1999 in recognition of Bangladesh's 1952 Language Movement, was observed yesterday.

As observed by people of all walks of life in Bangladesh, the day was celebrated across the globe with vigour by Bangladesh embassies, Bangla-speaking people, and at foreign missions in Bangladesh.

The day this year bears special significance given the Covid-19 pandemic that has largely affected education, and the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's independence, the seed of which was planted through the 1952 Language Movement.

"This year's observance is a call on policymakers, educators and teachers, parents and families to scale up their commitment to multilingual education, and inclusion in education to advance education recovery in the context of Covid-19," says Unesco.

Members of Diplomatic Core, including Vatican Ambassador Archbishop George Kocherry, US

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Withstanding the test of time

Storied history of Shaheed Minar at Cumilla Victoria College

KHALID BIN NAZRUL, Cumilla

For the unassuming, Cumilla Victoria Govt College's Shaheed Minar may seem like a customary tribute to the Language Movement. That the monument itself has been a battleground between the region's people and the then East Pakistan administration is thus a history worth retelling.

It's a history that ran for quite a long time too -- from February 21, 1953 all the way up to 1962, and then again during the Liberation War. In this time, the site has seen quite a few iterations.

According to college records, the monument was demolished at least thrice from 1953 to 1962, all in the dark of the night. Finally in 1963, the present form of the black pillar of the Shaheed Minar was built, before it was taken down again in 1971 and re-erected the following year.

Local historians inform that the first temporary Shaheed Minar was built at the college premises at Ranirdighirpar on February 21, 1953. On the day, students and residents of the city offered floral tributes at the Shaheed Minar and sang protest songs against the continuing oppression of the Pakistani administration.

Ahsanul Kabir, a historian of the district, said, "According to Language Movement veteran Mohammad Ullah, locals and eminent personalities gathered at the Victoria College programme in '53. Renowned anthem singer Sukhendri Chakraborty, Farida Mirza, sister-in-law of Shaheed Munier Choudhury; Saleha Khatun, wife of Bangla film director Salahuddin; and Fatema Khayer, wife of Prof Abul Khayer, were there to sing the protest



The Shaheed Minar at the government college stands in defiant pride, after being demolished and rebuilt a number of times.

PHOTO: STAR

songs."

As the programme was going on, members of the student wing of Muslim League tried to foil it with the help of police. Then college principal Dr Akter Hamid Khan took a bold stance to fend them off.

The college saw its first permanent Shaheed Minar on 1954, but an Ekushey February programme still had to wait for a couple more years. On February 20, police imposed section 144 to prevent any such event from taking place, Kabir said.

The next day, activists did break the curfew and gathered at Cumilla Town hall, but their rally towards the monument was intercepted by a barricade at Liberty Mor (then "Picture Palace").

The programme could not be observed for the next two years too, as in both 1954 and 1956, most of the language activists were in jail, historian Ahsanul Kabir said. Following this, a few years of relative peace ensued.

"On February 21, 1971, Chhatra League members painted alphas and Bangla alphabets at the Shaheed Minar premises for the first time," he added.

But as the war broke out, the iconic structure again became a site of contention. In an urgency to crush the locals' spirit, the Pakistan army in 1971 ordered to demolish the Shaheed Minar. In an attempt to save the monument, the then principal of the college, Dr Sirajul Islam, proceeded

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Food safety top priority

LAW DESK

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, while addressing a programme recently marking National Food Safety Day-2021, stressed the need for taking effective actions against food adulteration.

This year's theme of the day is "Bangladesh: A country of sustainable prosperity and safe food".

The premier urged the National Food Safety Authority to be proactive in tackling food adulteration and conduct awareness campaigns.

She also mentioned that a central food testing laboratory is being set up.

The issue of food safety has received significant attention in recent times -- the High Court Division, in the recent years, has issued orders to relevant stakeholders directing them to take stringent actions against food adulteration.

Mobile courts have been particularly active in this regard and have been seen to conduct inspections of restaurants and stores.

The government also has in place the Food Safety Act of 2013 under which complaints may be made to the Food Court regarding violation of the provisions of the act.

Another significant legislation relevant in this regard is the Consumer Rights Protection Act 2009 under which both civil and criminal remedies are available.

The Bangladesh Standards & Testing Institution (BSTI) Act of 2018 is also significant in this regard.

In 2019, the High Court Division issued orders directing the National Food Safety Authority to remove certain products for not meeting requirements under the BSTI Act 2018 and urged the government to declare a "war on food adulteration".

However, despite having laws in place, food adulteration remains a rampant issue, raising the need for concerted efforts on all fronts. Public awareness regarding the impact of adulterated food on health is crucial in reducing the prevalence of these practices.



A seller holds up two geese he brought to the weekly haat at Tongi yesterday, where poultry birds and pigeons, inset, are in high demand among buyers. Each geese weighing between four to five kg, sells for Tk 1500-2000.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Road crashes kill 2 in Dhaka

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two persons were killed in road accidents in the capital's airport and Shyampur areas early yesterday.

The deceased are Mohammad Kibria (16), a motor mechanic from Uttarkhan, and Kabul (25), a bus helper, said police.

Kibria and his friend Sumon were returning home when a truck hit their motorcycle around 1am near the airport, said Sub-inspector Saiful Islam of Airport Police Station.

With critical injuries, pillion Kibria was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead, he said.

Sumon received minor injuries, said police.

Meanwhile, Kabul was hit by a waste-carrying covered-van while crossing a road in Shyampur's New Iron Road area on Saturday night.

He was rushed to DMCH where doctors declared him dead around 12:15am yesterday, said SI Samaresh Kumar Das of Shyampur Police Station.

Both bodies were kept at the hospital morgue for autopsy.



Near the Charail playground in the capital's Keraniganj where a three-storey building toppled on its side on Friday, a number of other buildings stand on concrete pillars going into wetlands, one of them six-storied. Some building owners have even put additional bricks to support their building (inset). Each of these establishments, presumably erected flouting legal guidelines, is a tragedy waiting to happen. The photos were taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

'Reopen campus, dormitories now'

Rajshahi University students stage sit-in, issue 24hr ultimatum to authorities

RU CORRESPONDENT

Students of Rajshahi University yesterday staged a sit-in in front of the residence of the vice chancellor and gave the authorities a 24-hour ultimatum for reopening the campus and dormitories.

Around 100 students brought out a procession from Paribahan Chatter around 11am and stopped in front of the VC's residence, parading the main roads inside the campus.

There, they staged the sit-in to press home their demand. They were shouting slogans: "Vaccine ano, vaccine dao, campus khule dao" (give vaccine, reopen campus), and "Moder dabi ekta, hall campus khola chai" (there's only one demand, reopen halls, campus). 8

Students ended their programme around 12:30pm with the 24-hour ultimatum declared by Mahmud Saki of the Department of Islamic History and Culture.

Over the matter, RU proctor Prof Lutfor Rahman said, "The government has not issued any order to open the campus or halls yet..."

All the universities and dormitories across the country have been closed since March last year due to the pandemic.

BRANDISHING BOMB-LIKE OBJECT Man held over mugging attempt at jewellery shop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police on Saturday night arrested a man after he attempted to mug ornaments from a jewellery shop in Dhaka's Baitul Mukarram Mosque Market, brandishing a bomb-like object.

The arrestee was identified as Saiful Islam, a resident of Naria Upazila in Shariatpur district, said police.

"Saiful wrapped an empty bottle with tape and carried it into a jewellery shop around 8:30pm," Abu Bakar Siddique, officer-in-charge of Paltan Police Station, said quoting shop attendants. The police official said Saiful put two bangles in his bag.

As the shop owner asked for money, he showed the bomb-like object and tried to flee, threatening to explode it, said Atiqul Islam, additional deputy commissioner (DB-Motijheel) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police.

Shop employees and street vendors caught him and handed him over to police.

Bomb disposal unit of DMP later went there and discarded the object after making sure it was not a bomb, said the ADC.

He said police recovered chili powder and a mobile phone from Saiful's possession. "In primary interrogation, Saiful told police that after mugging, his aim was to throw the chili powder and flee," the ADC said.

Saiful Islam, a deputy commissioner of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit, said they are looking into the matter.

Police arrest six members of Lalbagh hijacker gang

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Lalbagh police busted a mugging gang that has been robbing people while disguised as detective branch police or Rab for the last eight years.

They targeted people who would withdraw large amounts from bank or other financial institutions.

Before every operation, all gang members managed new SIMs and used Mobile Number Portability (MNP) service that allows subscribers to swap networks without changing their existing 11-digit number.

Using the MNP, they would register their SIM to other operators and made calls to exchange their internal communications during any criminal operations.

This way, the operator cannot provide law enforcers with call detail record (CDR), last call location and other information, said an officer of Lalbagh Division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) yesterday.

"It confused the investigators," he told The Daily Star, seeking anonymity.

Police uncovered the details on the gang of 17 while investigating a case filed in connection with the criminals mugging Tk 3.20 lakh from the manager of a plastic factory from Azimpur area on

January 12 after he withdrew the money from a bank in the area.

"We have already arrested six members of the gang including its ring leader on different times from different parts of Bangladesh," Biplob Bijo Talukder, deputy commissioner of Lalbagh Division of DMP said yesterday.

Police seized three jackets similar to that of Rab, a plastic toy pistol, several SIMs, a Swiss gear knife, two private cars used for snatching, fake NIDs and some cash. Police are trying to seize another private car they use in operation.

The arrestees are ring leader Biplob alias Shyamol; Imran Hossain; Md Ali Bullet and his brother Ahmed Ali Rubel; Jahangir Alam and Al Amin.

Another accused Md Momin was also directly involved in robbing the plastic factory manager. He is on the run. Of those arrested, Imran confessed to his involvement before a magistrate recently, the DC said. One of their members would locate a target withdrawing cash and follow the person after they came out of the bank.

He would then inform the other gang members, who would intercept the target, introducing themselves as law enforcers. They would then blindfold and forcefully take the "target" away in their car.



PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

To begin with, trucks are not allowed to ply city streets in daytime. Beyond just violating that, this one is also carrying exposed bamboo and rods spilling out of its rear end in a blatant display of lawbreaking at Gushan-2. This photo was taken on Saturday.

Diplomats

FROM PAGE 3

Ambassador Earl Miller and Indian High Commissioner Vikram Doraiswami laid floral wreaths at Central Shaheed Minar in the early hours of yesterday.

"Honoured to pay tribute to India, with representative of the Diplomatic Community, at midnight on #IMLD2021 at Central Shaheed Minar, to the language martyrs who lit the torch of freedom for Bangladesh," Doraiswami said in a tweet yesterday.

Italian Ambassador Enrico Nunziata tweeted, "Preserving multilingualism is key to protect cultural diversity and building more inclusive and equal societies."

Japanese Ambassador Ito Naoki said it is important not only to appreciate one's own mother language, but also to respect other languages and identities.

"In that sense, I believe observing this special day has significant meaning for mutual understanding and promoting peace in both global and local context," he said.

Bangladesh missions abroad also celebrated the day with due fervour, singing amar bhair er rokte rangano and placing wreaths at their temporary Shaheed Minar monuments.

Bangladesh Ambassador to China, Mahbub Uz Zaman, other staff and representatives from diplomatic missions and Chinese government, businessmen and investors from China, and Bangladesh Community members held a rally, discussion and a cultural event at the embassy premises.

Australian dignitaries, including the Australian Capital Territory Environment and Heritage Minister Rebecca Vassarotti; MLA Alister Coe, many ambassadors, Bangladesh community members joined the Bangladesh High Commission in observing the day in Canberra.

Bangladesh missions in Italy, Brunei, Sri Lanka, Austria and elsewhere also observed the day.

Ruet student found dead

OUR CORRESPONDENT, RU

A student of Rajshahi University of Engineering and Technology (Ruet) was found dead at a mess (shared accommodation) in the city yesterday.

Shakkhor Saha -- son of Shapad Saha from Faridpur Sadar upazila -- was a 15th batch student of the civil engineering department, confirmed its head Prof Kamruzzaman.

Talking to The Daily Star, Prof Rabiul Awal, director of Ruet students' welfare, said as university dormitories remain closed Shakkhor was staying at a mess near the university area.

Quoting Shakkhor's friends, he said students saw him last on Saturday night. Around noon yesterday, fellow residents of the mess knocked on his door but heard no response.

From a window, they saw him lying on the bed and broke open the door.

Later, they took him to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital where the doctors declared him dead, said Prof Rabiul Awal.

Matihar Police Station Officer-in-Charge ASM Siddiqur Rahman said the body was sent to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy.

Rich homage

FROM PAGE 3

"InshaAllah, soon we'll establish developed, prosperous and non-communal 'Golden Bangladesh' as dreamt by the Father of the Nation," she added.

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

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

Also, members of the cabinet, chiefs of the armed forces, ambassadors and high commissioners of different countries and heads of international agencies, members of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Birth Centenary Celebration National Implementation Committee, members of Dhaka University Alumni Association, and wounded freedom fighters of Muktijoddha Kalyan Trust also placed floral

wreaths.

BNP central leaders, led by party senior joint secretary general Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, went to the Central Shaheed Minar in the morning and placed a wreath.

In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, the government this year requested people to follow health guidelines outlined by it while placing wreaths at the Shaheed Minar.

The government also took various programmes to observe the day.

Different political parties, public and private organisations, and educational institutions including Workers' Party of Bangladesh, Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh, University Grants Commission, Bangla Academy, Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development, Ekattor Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee, Bangladesh Shishu Academy, North South University, Green University, and Begum Rokeya University paid homage to language heroes by organising discussions and webinars and offering floral tributes.

Bangladesh missions abroad including embassies in Washington DC, Tokyo, Rome, Athens, and Cairo

and Deputy High Commission of Bangladesh in Mumbai observed the day through various events.

Besides, marking International Mother Language Day, several hundred people from both sides of the Bangladesh-India border gathered on no man's land near Benapole land port check post in Jashore to pay their tributes, reports our Benapole correspondent.

BANGABANDHU PLACED DEMAND TO MAKE BANGLA STATE LANGUAGE: INFO MINISTER

Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud yesterday said Bangabandhu as a young student leader raised the demand to make Bangla the state language, reports BSS.

"Bangabandhu's contribution to the Language Movement remains everlasting... the then young student leader, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, presented the demand for making Bangla the state language," he said.

Hasan, also joint general secretary of Awami League, was talking to reporters after paying homage, along with AL leaders and activists, to the Language Movement martyrs at Central

Shaheed Minar in the morning. Hasan said the country's independence and the movement of self-governance were achieved following the path of the Language Movement.

Noting that the government is working for introduction of Bangla at all levels, he said Bangla is the sixth language of the world in terms of Bangla speaking population.

"Our government is moving forward with a goal of establishing Bangla as the official language of the United Nations," the AL joint general secretary said.

Earlier, at a rally in the month of the Language Movement, Hasan said Bangabandhu arranged a protest rally in Dhaka in 1948 immediately after Mohammad Ali Jinnah declared that "Urdu would be the only state language of Pakistan".

"He [Bangabandhu] also presided over the meeting and was arrested for this movement. In prison, he continued the movement for language through hunger strike," he said.

"We have a responsibility to history to highlight the remarkable contribution of Father of the Nation to the Language Movement," he added.

Auction Notice
Institute of Water Modelling (IWM) invites sealed quotations for supplying & installation of Server & Rack in IWM. For details Specifications, pls visit IWM web site: www.iwmbd.org. Institute of Water Modelling (IWM), Plot# 6, Road # 3/C, Block# H, Sector# 15, Uttara Model Town, Dhaka-1230

Eastern Refinery Limited
(A Subsidiary of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation)
North Patenga, Chattogram

Addendum to Tender Notice
Tender Name: Custody Transfer Flow Meter with Supervisory Control at ERL Tank Farm
Invitation Ref. No.: ERL/CTFM-01/2021

Serial	Original Notice	Addendum
01.	Tender last selling date: 22/02/2021	Tender last selling date: 01/03/2021
02.	Tender closing date and time: 23/02/2021 at 14.30hrs.	Tender closing date and time: 02/03/2021 at 14.30hrs.
03.	Tender opening date and time: 23/02/2021 at 15.00hrs.	Tender opening date and time: 02/03/2021 at 15.00hrs.

All other clauses will remain same. GD-344

Withstanding

FROM PAGE 3

to drown the black pillar in the pond in front of the science department's building, said the historian.

After independence, it was recovered and reinstalled near the college's main gate in February 1972, much to the joy of the district's residents.

From this point, the monument stood proud all the way up to 1988 as the only Shaheed Minar in the district, said reciter Kazi Mahtab Sumon, organiser and joint secretary of Bangladesh Abrity Somonnoy Parishad.

"In 1988, a new Shaheed Minar was built at Cumilla Town Hall premises," he informed.

Khairul Azim Shimul, former secretary of Sammilito Sangskritik Jote Cumilla, said, "It is unfortunate that this historically significant structure of our district remains unknown to the newer generations. All cultural movements and protests should begin from this Shaheed Minar."

In 2016, the Victoria College Shaheed Minar was renovated, in line with its classic design.

Prof Ruhul Amin Bhuiyan, current principal of the college, said, "This Shaheed Minar is a historic symbol of our Language Movement and Liberation War. As such, it deserves a tribute worth remembering. For some years, we have been trying to put together a grand event in memory of at least thirty language veterans who were students and teachers of our college."

Padma Oil Company Limited
(An Enterprise of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation)
Strand Road, Sadarghat, Chattogram

Ref: 28.22.0000.857.06.023.17/118 Date: 15/02/2021

Corrigendum Notice
For
"Installation of Jet A-1 Underground Pipeline from Main Installation of Padma Oil Company Limited, Guptakhal, Chattogram to Shah Amanat International Airport, Chattogram, Bangladesh on Turnkey Basis."
Ref. No. PD/Capex (DPP)/F-857/P-100/20-21. Date: 31/12/2020

This is for information of all concerned that following amendments of Tender Notice have been made:

Sl. No.	Existing	Amended
18	Tender last selling date 23/02/2021 up to 1400hrs.	Tender last selling date 22/03/2021 up to 1400hrs.
19	Tender closing date and time 24/02/2021 at 02.30pm	Tender closing date and time 23/03/2021 at 02.30pm
20	Tender opening date and time 24/02/2021 at 03.00pm	Tender opening date and time 23/03/2021 at 03.00pm

All other terms and conditions of the Tender Document shall remain unchanged.
"স্বাধীন মিলে নতুনো দেশ, দুর্নীতিমুক্ত বাংলাদেশ"
Md. Aminul Haque
General Manager (Projects), Chattogram
For Managing Director
GD-342

Farmers unite to bring canal back to life

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

After nearly two decades of waiting around for the authorities to take steps, farmers in Baulal upazila finally decided to restore a two-kilometre long dormant canal on their own.

The restoration of the Jauta-Naumala-Boga canal, running through Baulal and Naumala unions, will benefit local farmers grow crops on about 500 acres of land all year long.

During a visit to the area on February 18, several hundred volunteers were seen at work. About 750 metres of the canal -- running along Aleya Rahman Ladies' Club Government Primary School -- was found re-excavated already.

Farmer Faruk Sikder from Batkajal village said hundreds of farmers in Jauta, Batkajal and Naomala areas depend on the canal's water to irrigate crops, mainly Aman and IRRI rice, on around 500 acres of land in the area.

But they had not been able to grow most crops during most parts of the year and the rice production had also been suffering due to poor flow of water in the silted up canal. Now the re-excavation of the canal by volunteers will help rejuvenate agriculture in the area, he hoped.

Another farmer, Abdur Rouf Khalifa, from Jauta village, said water is a must

for agriculture, including rice. But rice seedlings are turning yellow already due to scanty supply of water in the canal.

"We started to dig the canal as the yield of IRRI will be affected this time if we can't irrigate the crop with sufficient water immediately," he added.

The canal slowly went dry after its source, Maishadi canal, was closed off with a sluice gate and silt kept on accumulating in it over a period of about two decades when the accumulated silt was not removed, said Shah Alam Chowkidar, of the same village.

Chairman Shahzada Hawlader of Naomala Union Parishad said livelihoods of agricultural communities in Jauta, Batkajal and Naomala depend on water from the canal.

The farmers have been suffering immensely after water stopped flowing in the canal. If the sluice gate upstream is opened up, the farmers in the area can be relieved of their miseries, he also said.

Baulal Upazila Nirbahi Officer Zakir Hossain said, "I have heard of the situation from the affected farmers. Necessary steps will be taken to re-excavate the dormant canals in the area so the farmers get uninterrupted supply of irrigation water for growing crops all year round."

He also assured of taking steps to keep sluice gates open at the source of the canals.



Jurachhari Upazila Health Complex in Rangamati. Inset, built in 1978, the health complex is yet to see any infrastructural development. The wall of that hospital is at risk of collapse any moment. PHOTO: STAR

Lurking danger at Jurachhari Health Complex

ANVIL CHAKMA, Rangamati

Jurachhari Upazila Health Complex, the only medical centre for the health services of 40,000 people in Jurachhari, the most remote upazila of Rangamati district, is in a dilapidated condition.

According to the health complex official, the health complex was built in 1978. Although the health complex was extended to 50 beds in 2012, the medical facility is yet to see any infrastructural development.

Patients and local people said that the wall of that hospital is at risk of collapse any moment and that is why they are afraid to go to the hospital for treatment.

It is also plagued with manpower crisis. Currently, there are only five doctors against 11 posts.

It could be learned that due to a severe earthquake in the adjoining

Barkal upazila in 2001, large cracks appeared in different parts of the complex building. At present, the entire facility is at risk of an impending disaster.

Ratneshwar Chakma, 34, of Tashi para village in the upazila, said a few months ago, he went to the health complex to get his brother admitted there. But seeing the precarious condition of the hospital building, he did not get his brother admitted to the hospital.

His brother was kept at a relative's house near to the hospital and received treatment.

Md Syed Abedin, medical officer of the health complex, said patients who come to this health complex for treatment do not feel safe. Those who are helpless and those whose condition is very bad are admitted to bed in trepidation.

There are no doctors' and staff quarters here, he added.

Dr Bipash Khisa, civil surgeon of Rangamati district, said the infrastructure at the Jurachhari Health Complex is actually very risky.

An accident can occur at any moment, he said.

"I have written about this to the Ministry and the Department of Health. But there is no solution to it yet. However, the soil has already been tested by the Department of Health. Hope to get good news from the department soon."

Contacted, Suresh Kumar Chakma, chairman of Jurachhari Upazila, said it is very difficult to provide services to the patients at the hospital.

"I have already informed the matter to the higher authorities many times. I hope the government will take steps the next year", he added.



Local volunteers prepare a canal for re-excavation. The two-kilometre long Jauta-Naumala-Boga canal, in Patuakhali's Baulal upazila, has been dormant for around two decades.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN



International Labour Organization

The Daily Star

International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention C190 and its relevance in Bangladesh

To observe the 16 days of activism against Gender-Based Violence (GBV), The Daily Star and ILO's Improving Working Conditions in the Ready-Made Garment Sector Programme Phase II (RMGP-II) jointly organised an online discussion titled "International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention C190 and its relevance in Bangladesh". The discussion took place on December 10, 2020, on the International Human Rights Day which was also the last day of the 16 days of activism against GBV. Here we publish a summary of the discussion.

TUOMO POUTIAINEN, Country Director, ILO, Bangladesh

The ILO Convention Eliminating Violence and Harassment in the World of Work (C190) and its accompanying Recommendation (R206) went through a long process and it culminated in the adoption of the convention in the ILO Centenary Conference in 2019. The Bangladesh government voted in favour of the adoption of the Convention C190 and Recommendation R206 and we are optimistic about the ratification of C190 by the government of Bangladesh. Workers' and Employers' organisation need to engage to discuss the convention's ratification and figure out how it can be integrated into the national system through legislation to improve practices in addressing workplace violence and harassment. Without addressing issues around violence and harassment, including GBV in the world of work, it is impossible to achieve the Decent Work Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

SHAMMIN SULTANA, Programme Officer, Gender Mainstreaming, RMGP-II, ILO, Bangladesh

ILO's C190 and R206 were adopted on June 21, 2019. This is the first-ever convention on eliminating violence and harassment in the world of work. ILO's Dhaka office was actively engaged with stakeholders for the adoption of the convention.

ILO's RMGP-II, funded by the government of the Netherlands, Canada, and the UK, technically supports the Bangladeshi government's efforts to ensure safe and decent working conditions in the garment and other sectors to improve competitiveness in Bangladesh. Women workers make up more than 60 percent of the RMG workforce. Therefore, achieving gender equality and women's empowerment is very crucial. Combating violence and harassment including GBV in the world of work is a major focus of the programme.

AYA MATSUURA, Gender Specialist, Decent Work Team (DWT), ILO, New Delhi

C190 recognises everyone's right to a world of work free from violence and harassment. It is critical to define and prohibit violence and harassment in the world of work in the laws and regulations. This convention also talks about the importance of adopting an inclusive, integrated, and gender-responsive approach in efforts to provide protection to everyone, to develop comprehensive frameworks for preventing and addressing violence and harassment, and to address persistent gender inequalities in eliminating violence and



TUOMO POUTIAINEN



SHAMMIN SULTANA



AYA MATSUURA



TASLIMA YASMIN



DR. FAHMIDA KHATUN



HUMAIRA AZIZ



NAZMA AKTER



MAHJABEEN QUADER



KOHINOOR MAHMOOD



NAIMUL AHASAN JEWEL



TAPATI SAHA



MAHEEN SULTAN



FAZLE SHAMIM EHSAN



MD. MATIUR RAHAMAN



GEORGE FALLER

harassment, especially GBV.

While disseminating information on C190, it is also essential to be sensitive towards different audiences.

TASLIMA YASMIN, Assistant Professor, Department of Law, University of Dhaka

ILO RMGP-II's recent study on "Overview of Laws, Policies and Practices on GBV and Harassment in the World of Work in Bangladesh" suggests that there are some key gaps in our legal framework. The laws defining and criminalising sexual offences are inadequate in Bangladesh. There is also a lack of provision addressing sexual harassment.

The government should emphasise on strengthening the national legal and policy frameworks on violence and harassment in the world of work, reform the Bangladesh Labour Act and the Bangladesh Labour Rule, and reform criminal laws on GBV and harassment. In the absence of specific legislation to address sexual harassment, strengthening the enforcement and monitoring of the 2009 High Court guidelines in workplaces and building awareness among all stakeholders is essential.

DR. FAHMIDA KHATUN, Executive Director, Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD)

Sexual harassment and violence in workplaces arise due to power relations, along with certain social, political, and cultural factors.

Women's participation in the labour force is essential, not only for their own development, but also for the society. Bangladesh is expected to graduate from the least developed country (LDC) category in 2024 and ratification of ILO's Convention C190 is an integral part of this graduation.

HUMAIRA AZIZ, Director, Women and Girls' Empowerment Program, CARE, Bangladesh

In the context of violence against women, social norms play a huge role. These norms can only be changed through laws that deter these harmful practices.

In order to encourage the younger generation of women to participate in the economic realm, it is crucial to create a safe work environment which is monitored and guided by protocol.

Different stakeholders have concerns about

committing to an international convention which we may not be able to adhere to due to a lack of resources and we need to identify and address these concerns in order to move forward with the ratification.

NAZMA AKTER, General Secretary & Executive Director, Awaj Foundation

Awaj Foundation follows the C190 convention in order to eliminate GBV in the RMG sector. We work at the policy and advocacy level with the government and other stakeholders. We also educate and spread awareness among factory-level management, workers, and unions. Our goal is to convince factories in supporting this convention.

MAHJABEEN QUADER, Senior Advisor, Economic Affairs and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), Netherlands Embassy

The role of the stakeholders needs to be given more attention and the recommendation section for C190 should identify what needs to be done at what level. The ratification of this convention is going to be a coordinated effort but the government definitely holds the primary responsibility in moving things forward.

KOHINOOR MAHMOOD, Director, Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS)

BILS has prepared a Bangla draft of the ILO convention. We have distributed this translated version of C190 along with posters and leaflets to create awareness among the workers.

If the government wants to implement all its development agendas, ratification of C190 is crucial.

NAIMUL AHASAN JEWEL, Member Secretary, National Coordination Committee for Workers' Education (NCCWE)

Our request to the government and workers' organisations is to raise their voice in support of the implementation of C190 since its integration is crucial for us.

TAPATI SAHA, Programme Analyst, Women's Economic Empowerment, United Nations (UN) Women in Bangladesh

It is extremely important for C190 to be ratified and we also have a role to play in assisting the government in the ratification process.

This convention is highly important because it is focused solely on dealing with violence and harassment in the workplace. Our world of work is highly hierarchical with intellectual work being valued the most and work at the service provider level is undermined. Women are usually involved in this service-provider category.

MAHEEN SULTAN, Senior Fellow of Practice, Gender and Social Transformation, BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD)

Our research has shown that young women in the workplace have difficulties finding the right language to talk about sexual harassment or protest against it. One of the strengths of C190 is that it deals with both formal and informal sectors.

FAZLE SHAMIM EHSAN, Second Vice President, Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers & Exporters Association (BKMEA)

Guidelines need to be provided to the workers and to the employers for establishing a functional complaint mechanism. Otherwise, there will remain misconceptions on both the management's and the workers' side. There are times when we are unaware about what constitutes harassment. A set of guidelines provided for each employee would help them maintain professionalism with each other. We also need to form anti-harassment committees in our industries.

MD. MATIUR RAHAMAN, Deputy Inspector General (Health), Department of Inspection for Factories and Establishments (DIFE)

We have developed the Gender Roadmap with the support of ILO's RMGP-II. This roadmap will make the labour inspectors more capable of monitoring and inspecting the gender issues in workplaces. In order to speed up the whole ratification process, we need to find the key stakeholders.

We also must stop stereotyping and employing women in certain specific positions because of their gender.

GEORGE FALLER, Chief Technical Adviser, RMGP-II, ILO, Bangladesh

Convention C190 is the first international labour standard which comprehensively addresses violence and harassment in the world of work. ILO is calling for its ratification as a way of implementing and accelerating actions on prevention of violence and harassment in the world of work. Ratification will not be enough; the convention needs to be properly implemented as well.

ILO is in the process of translating the full C190 convention and the recommendations. From ILO's end, we will provide our full support to the government, employers, workers, and other partners to get C190 ratified and implemented in Bangladesh.

Teenage girl raped Pabna

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A teenage girl was raped allegedly by one of her neighbouring youths in Sujanager upazila on Friday night.

The 13-year-old victim was sent to Pabna General Hospital for the medical test yesterday.

Officer in Charge (OC) of Sujanager Police Station Mohammad Badruddoza said Shakib Hossain, son of Abdus Salam of Jorpukuria village in the upazila, picked up the victim while she was alone on Friday evening.

The culprit then took the girl to his house and raped her forcibly, the OC said.

Family members and neighbours rescued the victim from the house early Saturday but the culprit managed to flee the scene.

Later, father of the victim girl filed a case with Sujanager Police Station accusing Sakib the same night, the OC said, adding that they were conducting drives to arrest the culprit.

Away in Chatmohar upazila, police arrested a youth from Dhonkunia village on Saturday for his alleged involvement in raping a college girl.

Police produced arrestee Hashem Ali before a Pabna court the same afternoon that sent him to jail.

On February 2, Hashem raped a neighbouring college girl promising to marry her, police said.

Later, victim's father filed a case accusing Hashem.

Myanmar grieves for slain young anti-coup protester

AFP, Naypyidaw

A sombre Buddhist funeral song rung out in Myanmar's capital as the body of a young woman, struck down during a rally against this month's military coup, was carried to a ceremony marking the end of her short life.

Thousands lined the route of the procession to pay tribute to Mya Thwate Thwate Khaing, who was shot in the head two days before her 20th birthday at a protest demanding the release of ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

The grocery store worker was kept on life support for 10 days but succumbed to her wounds on Friday, making her the first protester killed for participating in the massive civil disobedience campaign sweeping the country.

An honour guard linked hands and formed a circle around her coffin as her family members and other mourners drew near to pay their respects.

"Please don't go," one older relative whispered, grief-stricken, as she gazed down at the open casket.

A large motorbike procession rode in convoy with the ornate black and gold hearse that transported Mya Thwate Thwate Khaing to the funeral hall, alongside other vehicles decorated with floral wreaths and photographs of the deceased.

Mourners gathered outside the funeral hall held up the three-finger salute that has been adopted as a gesture of resistance to

military rule.

The crowd departed as her coffin was set ablaze for her cremation, a thin plume of smoke rising from the funeral hall's chimney.

One young woman walked back to the road while holding aloft a vinyl banner with an image depicting the moment Mya Thwate Thwate Khaing was shot, as others held her in a vain effort to render first aid.

In the days since she was shot, Mya Thwate Thwate Khaing has become a potent national symbol of resistance to military rule.

Vigils in her honour have been held elsewhere in the country. Demonstrators have in recent days hoisted photos of Mya Thwate Thwate Khaing in street marches, and news of her death on Friday sent a flash of anger through the country.

Some in the protest movement have described her as a "martyr", and rights groups have demanded an independent investigation into her death.

State media yesterday claimed that an autopsy of Mya Thwate Thwate Khaing's body showed the bullet was not fired by police officers.

It also claimed she was "throwing stones" at security forces at the protest.

But Amnesty International said footage of the incident showed that "police recklessly targeted protesters, with no respect for their lives or safety".



People line the street throw flowers on the road as the car carrying the body of protester Mya Thwate Thwate Khaing passes during her funeral service, after she died following being shot during a rally against the military coup, in Naypyidaw. Myanmar, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

'Nothing has changed'

Zarif says Biden's Iran policy hasn't changed as he reiterates demand for lifting of sanctions for any future talks

AFP, Tehran

Tehran yesterday retreated its stance that the United States must first lift sanctions on Iran if it wants to talk about salvaging the 2015 nuclear deal with Foreign Minister Mohammad Javaf Zarif saying "nothing has changed" since President Joe Biden took power from his predecessor Donald Trump.

Biden's administration said last week it was ready to talk to Iran about both nations returning to the accord, but ruled out lifting of sanctions before talks, which aimed to prevent Tehran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

Iran also said it had held "fruitful discussions" with UN nuclear watchdog chief Rafael Grossi in Tehran, ahead of a deadline when it is set to restrict the agency's inspections unless the United States lifts painful sanctions.

Grossi's visit comes amid stepped-up efforts between US President Joe Biden's



administration, European powers and Iran to salvage the 2015 nuclear deal that has been on the brink of collapse since Trump withdrew from it.

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javaf Zarif, who was to later meet Grossi, signalled that the Islamic republic wants to avoid an "impasse" but also warned that it could step further away from its commitments if Washington does not lift the sanctions.

Grossi was due to hold a press conference when he returns to Vienna in the evening.

Iran's conservative-dominated parliament months ago demanded that, if the US does

not lift sanctions by Feb 23, Iran suspend some IAEA inspections.

Tehran has repeatedly said it is ready to return to its nuclear commitments, on the condition that Washington makes the first move by lifting the sanctions that have heaped economic pain on Iran.

Zarif said that, from Iran's point of view, "nothing has changed" as the Biden administration had so far followed the same Iran policy as his predecessor's 'maximum pressure' campaign.

If sanctions were not lifted, the stockpile of "enriched uranium will increase," he said, stressing that Tehran has the right within the deal to stop observing commitments "totally or partially" if the other parties fail to honour theirs.

"We are still in the partial phase," Zarif said. "We can be total."

Zarif also stressed that "there won't be any negotiations, period. Not before or after" the US returns to the deal.

INDIA-CHINA BORDER STANDOFF

Rivals complete troops pullback from key lake

AFP, New Delhi

India yesterday said that its troops, along with their Chinese counterparts, had completed a pullback from a disputed part of their 3,500-kilometre-long Himalayan border after months of heightened tensions.

The latest flare-up turned deadly in mid-June last year when 20 Indian soldiers were killed in a border battle in the strategically important Galwan river valley in Ladakh. Beijing said four of its soldiers had died in the clash.

After nine rounds of high-level military talks which have been held since the June clash, India's Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said last week that both sides agreed to disengage from the Pangong Lake area.

India's defence ministry said in a joint statement with Beijing that during the 10th round of talks on Saturday, "the two sides positively appraised the smooth completion of disengagement of frontline troops in the Pangong Lake area".

The statement said it was a "significant step forward" that provided a good starting point for the resolution of other disputes in the western sector of the contested border.

"The two sides agreed to... continue their communication and dialogue, stabilise and control the situation on the ground (and) push for a mutually acceptable resolution of the remaining issues," the statement added.

NEWS IN BRIEF

India-Maldives sign \$50 million defence deal

India and the Maldives yesterday signed a \$50 million defence Line of Credit (LoC) agreement to boost maritime capabilities of the strategically-located Indian Ocean island nation. The signing of the agreement took place after Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar held talks with several Maldivian ministers including its Defence Minister Mariya Didi. "A \$50 million-dollar credit line agreement between the government of Maldives and EXIM Bank India was signed for defence projects," said a joint statement as visiting Indian external affairs minister ended his two-day visit to the Maldives.

Ebola death toll hits 4 in DRC

Four people have died from the hemorrhagic Ebola virus during a new outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo, officials said yesterday, warning that people are resisting measures to contain the highly contagious disease. The country has registered 6 Ebola cases. The virus has also resurfaced in Guinea, where it has already killed five people. A vaccination drive was launched last Monday, but as with past outbreaks, people in the region doubt the existence of Ebola and reject measures aimed at checking its spread. Ebola causes severe fever and, in the worst cases, unstoppable bleeding. It is transmitted through close contact with bodily fluids, and people who live with or care for patients are most at risk.

Dozens killed as US counts cost of 'polar plunge'



Frustrated Texans queued for hours for safe drinking water, after an unprecedented and deadly "polar plunge" burst pipes and left millions in the US state shivering without power or clean water for days. The extreme winter weather system wreaked havoc across much of the southern and central United States this week, reportedly killing at least 40 people and igniting anger in Texas as authorities scrambled to turn the lights back on. President Joe Biden approved a major disaster declaration for Texas on Saturday. The action by the Biden administration makes federal funding available to affected individuals, including assistance for temporary housing and home repairs and low-cost loans.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



An Asian-American wearing a face mask and holding a sign takes part in a rally to raise awareness of anti-Asian violence during the Covid-19 pandemic, near Chinatown in Los Angeles, California, on Saturday. The rally was organized in part in response to last month's fatal assault of Vicha Ratanapakdee, an 84-year-old immigrant from Thailand, in San Francisco.

PHOTO: AFP

ALLEGED COAL SCAM

CBI summons wife of W Bengal CM's nephew for questioning

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India's Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) yesterday summoned the wife of West Bengal's ruling Trinamool Congress leader and lawmaker Abhishek Banerjee, who is the nephew of Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, in a case relating to coal smuggling, officials of the probe agency said.

This is for the first time that the CBI has summoned Abhishek Banerjee's wife in the coal smuggling case in which the probe agency conducted multiple raids across West Bengal last week.

The CBI's move comes close on the heels of Abhishek Banerjee lodging a defamation case against Indian Home Minister and senior Bharatiya Janata Party leader Amit Shah.

A designated court in West Bengal issued summons to Shah on Friday last asking him to appear either personally or through a lawyer before it on February 22.

"At 2pm today, the CBI served a notice in the name of my wife. We have full faith in the law of the land. However, if they think they can use these

plots to intimidate us, they are mistaken. We are not the ones who would ever be cowed down," Abhishek Banerjee tweeted.

CBI officials said the searches were on in Purulia, Bankura, Pashchim Bardhaman and Kolkata districts. The searches included premises of Amiya Steel Pvt Ltd in Kolkata and Bankura and that of Joydeb Mandal, the alleged deputy of the suspected kingpin of the racket Anup Manjhi.

The CBI had registered an FIR in November last year against Manjhi, Eastern Coalfield Ltd General Managers Amit Kumar Dhar and Jayesh Chandra Rai (Kajora area) besides ECL Chief of Security Tanmay Das, Area Security Inspector, Kunustoria Dhananjay Rai and SSI and security in-charge Kajora area Debashish Mukherjee.

Manjhi is allegedly involved in illegal mining and theft of coal from leasehold mines of ECL in Kunustoria and Kajora areas, they said.

The CBI's summon to Abhishek's wife is set to heat up the political scenario in West Bengal where fresh assembly poll are likely to take place in April-May.

'Thought we were going to die'

United Airlines plane lands safely after midair engine failure

AFP, Denver

A United Airlines plane suffered a fiery engine failure yesterday shortly after taking off from Denver for Hawaii, dropping massive debris on a residential area before a safe emergency landing, officials said.

A video shot from inside the aircraft -- which had 231 passengers and 10 crew onboard -- showed the right engine ablaze and wobbling on the wing of the Boeing 777-200, its cover entirely missing as the aircraft flew over a barren landscape.

There were no injuries on the plane or on the ground, authorities said. Most of the passengers have already headed to their destination by another plane. Few who refused to travel after the ordeal have been accommodated by the airlines.

"I can honestly say I thought we were going to die at one point -- because we started dropping altitude right after the explosion," passenger David Delucia told The Denver Post.

"I grabbed my wife's hand and said, 'We're done.'"

In a recording of the distress



A large piece of airplane debris is pictured in a neighborhood of Broomfield, Colorado. PHOTO: REUTERS

call obtained from the website LiveATC, which broadcasts air traffic communications, the pilot requested emergency permission to turn back to Denver.

"Three-twenty-eight, uh, heavy. We've experienced engine failure, need to turn. Mayday, mayday," he said, without obvious panic in his

voice.

"Mayday, aircraft, uh, just experienced engine failure," he said, after the tower asked him to repeat himself. "Need a turn immediately."

Meanwhile, residents in the Denver suburb of Broomfield found large pieces of the plane scattered around their community, including a giant circular piece of metal that landed in the yard of Kirby Klements.

"It was a little overwhelming," he told CNN.

"It landed square on top of my truck and fell off," he said, reporting that a separate large piece of debris had put a five-foot (1.5-meter) hole in a neighbor's roof.

United said it would "continue to work with federal agencies investigating this incident."

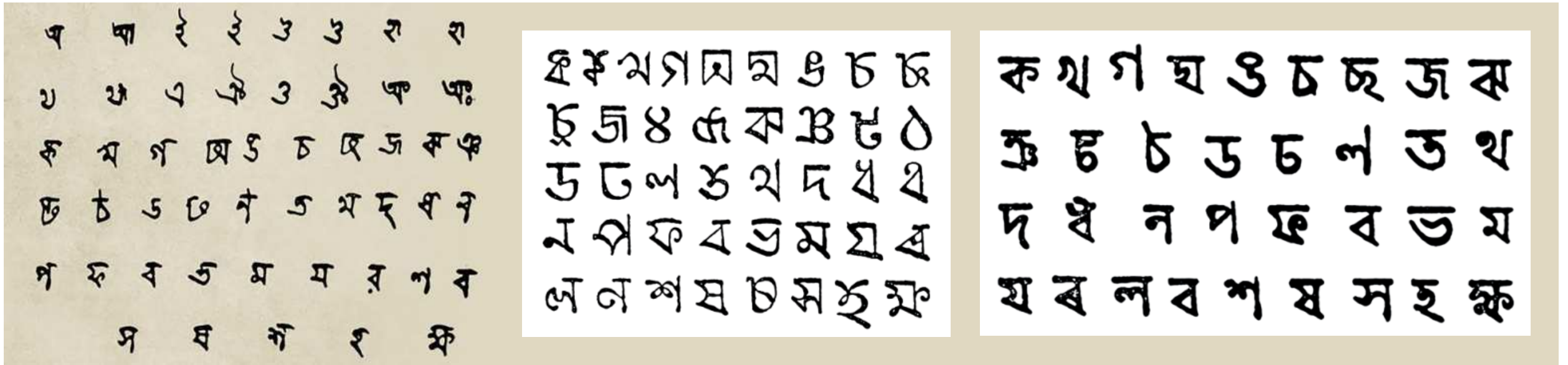
Heather Solar was running a practice at the park for her girls' soccer team when she said she heard an explosion, following by debris raining down.

"Honestly, what I thought it was at first... I thought we were being bombed," Solar told The Denver Post. "There was so much debris in the sky."



Catalan regional police Mossos d'Esquadra officers detain a protester following clashes after a demonstration against the imprisonment of Spanish rapper Pablo Hasel in Barcelona, Saturday. Protesters threw bottles at police, set fire to containers and smashed up shops in Barcelona on Saturday in a fifth night of clashes after a rapper was jailed for glorifying terrorism and insulting royalty in his songs. The nine-month sentence of Hasel, known for his virulently anti-establishment raps, has sparked a debate over freedom of expression in Spain as well as protests that have at times turned violent.

PHOTO: AFP



(L) Bengali alphabets from A Code of Gentoo Laws, 1776. Source: <http://blog.rarh.in/> (M) William Bolts' Bengali Letters, 1773. Source: <http://blog.rarh.in/> (R) Wilkins' Letters, 1778. Source: <http://blog.rarh.in/>

BENGALI TYPES AND THEIR FOUNDERS

KATHARINE SMITH DIEHL

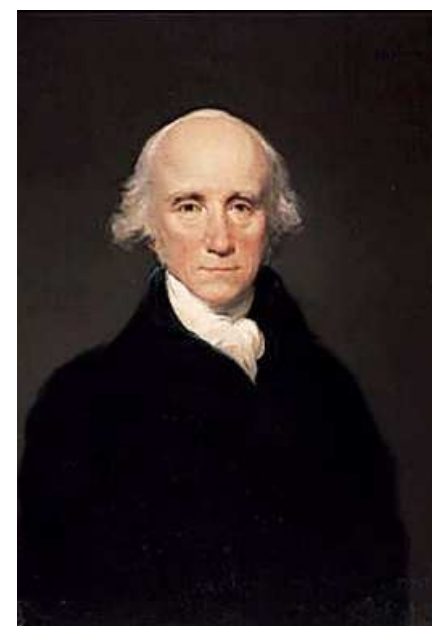
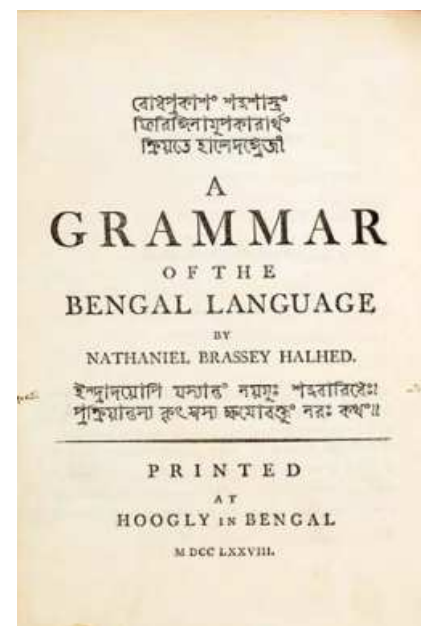
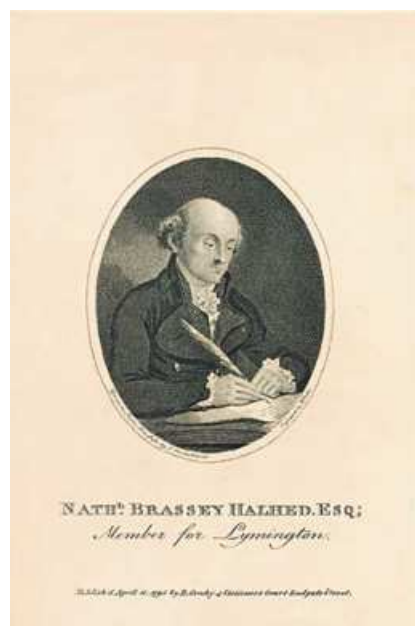
While in London about the year 1770, William Bolts required some types for printing in Bengali. Such types were non-existent, and the type foundry of Joseph Jackson was engaged to prepare a font. In 1773 or 1774 he suddenly left for India, and the types remained behind. Some years later the font, still incomplete, found its way to the establishment of William Caslon III. They were museum pieces.

Two or three years later in Bengal, Nathaniel Brassey Halhed was seriously interested in the vernaculars. The preface to his *Bodhaprakasam labdasdstratm* explains how Governor General Warren Hastings prevailed upon Mr. [Charles] Wilkins, a gentleman who has been some years in the India Company's civil service in Bengal, to undertake a set of Bengali types. "He did ... [and] he has been obliged to charge himself with all the various occupations of the Metallurgist, the Engraver, the Founder and the Printer ... [and] has thus singly with first effort exhibited his

Bengal, and the first to utilize Bengali characters for Bengali words. The workmanship is so perfect that it cannot have been the first printing from the shop! How long the manufacture required is not known. And by 1779 the Hugli address for the press had given way to a Calcutta address, closer to the center of business at the time.

Charles Wilkins, Superintendent of the Press, remained briefly in Bengal. Because of ill health he went home, but before leaving he had begun serious study of Sanskrit and planned to prepare a grammar. Using his knowledge of type preparation he tells how:

"At the commencement of the year 1795, residing in the country [in England] and having much leisure, I began to arrange my materials, and prepare for publication. I cut letters in steel, made matrices and moulds, and cast from them a fount of types of the Deva-nagari character, all with my own hands ..."



(L) Portrait of Nathaniel Brassey Halhed (1751–1830), English Orientalist and politician. (M) Written in 1778 by Nathaniel Brassey Halhed and printed in Hoogly, A Grammar of the Bengal Language constitutes the first grammar book of the Bengali language. (R) Warren Hastings FRS (6 December 1732 – 22 August 1818), an English statesman, was the first de facto Governor-General of Bengal from 1772 to 1785.



(Left) A box full of nineteenth century typographical instruments developed by Charles Wilkins, held at the British Library. (Right Top) Sir Charles Wilkins (1749 – 1836) was an English typographer and Orientalist. He is notable as the creator (assisted by engraver Panchanan Karmakar) of the first Bengali typeface. (Right Bottom) Drawings made by Charles Wilkins of Bengali letter forms. SOURCE: BRITISH LIBRARY

work in a state of perfection which in every part of the world has appeared to require the United improvements of different projectors, and the general polish of successive ages."

Along with the Bengali, a font of nasta'lik, for printing in Persian, was being made. On pages 77 and 128 of Halhed's Grammar two very brief phrases in this character appear, assuring the linguist and government servant that printing in the court language of India was also intended. This took place at the Honorable East India Company's Press at Hugli. The Grammar is a double first: the first book to be manufactured in

Printing had just begun when fire destroyed his house and shop. The matrices, punches, and his books were saved; but most of the types were either melted or tossed out on the lawn and lost. Discouraged, it was a full decade before he started over again, had types cast from his matrices, and published his Grammar in 1808. The type foundry of Fry and Figgins, London, were suppliers to the Company. Wilkins' types became part of their inventory, and fonts were manufactured and distributed by them to various printing establishments.

While cataloging the William Carey Historical Library at Serampore

College (Serampore, Bengal) I found a little book which was unknown to Bengali and foreign scholars alike: *The East Indian chronologist, where the historical events respecting the East India Company, are briefly arranged in succession from the date of their Charter in 1600, to the 4th of June, 1801, with other particulars necessary to be known, as interesting to the Inhabitants of India. Collected from the various publications now extant. In two parts. Part the First: Occurrences under the House of Stuart. Part the Second: Occurrences under the House of Hanover. Calcutta: Printed at the Hircarrah Press, 1801.*

Much of the same material appeared in *Asiaticus: In two parts. Part the First. Ecclesiastical, chronological, and historical sketches respecting Bengal. Part the Second. The epitaphs in the different burial grounds in and about Calcutta. Calcutta, Printed at the Telegraph Press, 1803.*

The clue to the authorship of the first is the signature "H" within the text at several places and at the end of the book; and to the second, the signature "Asiaticus" at the end of the volume. "H" and "Asiaticus" were the same individual. Under "H", several Arabic/Persian translations had appeared in Asiatic miscellany (Calcutta, 1786). In 1810, "Asiaticus" prepared the Rules of the Delphian Society in Calcutta; and about ten years later as first chairman of the Calcutta School Society—John Herbert Harington (or -Harrington) drew up the rules for that organization. In the correspondence related to this Calcutta School Society he admitted to having been the author of the 1810 Delphian Society's Rules. Further concerning identification of Harington is found by looking at the final phrase in the 1803 book. "In the forty-fifth year of the British Empire in Bengal ... I dedicate to them who have thrice liberally supported my literary undertakings. ASIATICUS. Calcutta, May 1st, 1803."

The third early publishing by Harington was his edition of Sa'di, 1791-95, under his proper and full name.

The East Indian chronologist, apparently a clipping file committed to print, contains many items related to weather in the Bay of Bengal and

storms in India, the Indiamen and other shipping news, books and orientalia. Under 1778 appears:

"Mr. Wilkins, the celebrated Sanscrit Scholar, aided by an ingenious Artist by the name of Shepherd, completed under the patronage of Governor Hastings, two elegant founts of Persian and Bengalese types, and the first specimen of Oriental Typography of this description appeared this year, viz. Halhed's Bengal Grammar, printed at Hoogly, and Balfour's Forms of Herkern. Gilchrist."

Gilchrist's signature was a clue to follow. His 1798 Preface, appearing in the University of Chicago copy of A Dictionary, English and Hindoostani (Calcutta, 1787-98) states on pp. xlii-

"I had the good luck to engage Mr. Shepherd, an ingenious artist, who died some ten years ago, to cast an elegant fount of Persian Types for my Dictionary. He was the man who according to his own assertions (in his last illness to myself, and I think on his death bed) assisted Mr. Wilkins from the first, and through the whole process of forming his Bengali and Persian founts, for which that Gentleman assumed or received exclusive merit, with its consequent profit and praise. The deceased ... heard with inexpressible pleasure an assurance, that if my book could convey his dying voice to posterity, it should not be suppressed by me, on any consideration whatever ... I have since from enquiry in Calcutta here been more confirmed in the truth of what he declared ... [and] since writing the above, I have been given to understand that Mr. Shepherd was regularly bred at Birmingham, as a Die sinker, and that a knowledge of this business must have been of the highest use to him in type founding."

Holmes and Co's useful Bengal Obituary (Calcutta, 1848) records on page 75 the markings on a grave stone: "In memory of / Mr. Jos. Shepperd, Engraver, / who departed this life the 27th of March 1787, / aged 34 years. / [Buried] South Park Street Burial Ground, Calcutta"

An inquiry sent to the Mayor of Birmingham was directed to the Birmingham Public Libraries. Mr. W. A. Taylor, M.C., F.L.A., under date June

13, 1967, replied,

"A search of our directories and other local indexes has failed to reveal any reference to Joseph Shepperd. Shepperd must have left Birmingham when fairly young, so it may well be that while here he was only an employee and would therefore not be listed anywhere."

Who was "an ingenious Artist by the name of Shepherd" according to The East Indian chronologist (Harington); this "Mr. Shepherd, an ingenious artist, who died some ten years ago" according to John Gilchrist; this "Mr. Jos. Shepperd, Engraver" according to his grave stone in Calcutta; who had been "regularly bred at Birmingham, as a Die sinker" according to Gilchrist's informant; this Birmingham laborer, unaccounted for in the City records?

Was he the forgotten Englishman, somewhere below the top in the Halhed/ Wilkins/Hastings printing project? Surely Wilkins, Halhed, Gilchrist, Harington were busy, and—except for Wilkins—long resident in Bengal. Wilkins represented the Sanskritists, and became loyal to the Company's College at Hertford; Gilchrist and Harington represented the Persianists, and their loyalties were with the College of Fort William in Bengal. Whatever further search may uncover, each of these men made his contribution to international communication. Each told a portion of the history of type founding at the Company's Hugli Press, at Gilchrist's foundry in Calcutta, and at Wilkins' own home in England: all of it before 1800.

Katharine Smith Diehl was a Bibliographer at the Carey Library, Serampore.

The article was first published in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 2 (Feb., 1968).

Guidelines for In Focus submissions:

The Daily Star In Focus welcomes your submissions on issues that are relevant, timely and of public interest. If you want to submit an article or pitch an idea for an article for the page please email us at tdsinfocus@gmail.com

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA MONDAY FEBRUARY 22, 2021, FALGUN 9, 1427 BS

Priceless service of young Red Crescent volunteers

We thank them for their dedication

EVER since the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic (and the consequent standstill which it caused our world to come to), every small step towards progress has been accompanied by the reality we face as a nation, of a dearth of necessary resources. Not only do we lack the proper facilities needed to accommodate patients affected by the virus and those who are sick with other diseases, there are also not enough human hands around to tend to each patient. On top of all that, there has also been the upsurge of unemployment to worry ourselves with. But while there have been lay-offs abound across all sectors, after a year of the beginning of the pandemic, there seems to be some semblance of return to our normal lives.

With the arrival of the first batches of Covid-19 vaccines and the beginning of the inoculation campaign nationwide on February 7 of this year, the vaccination centres of the country have operated in an organised, efficient way. While many were sceptical about the effectiveness of the vaccine at first, and were also apprehensive about its side effects, things have taken a turn for the better with more people registering for the vaccine each day.

One would expect the lack of human resources to be a notable concern during this campaign but very fortunately for us, the young volunteers of the Bangladesh Red Crescent Society (BDRCS)—with the help of the Directorate General of Health Service (DGHS)—have so far played a huge role in ensuring that the inoculation of each recipient is completed efficiently.

These 4,200 volunteers (aged between 18 and 30 years) are working in over 1,000 vaccination centres across the country, in exchange for one meal a day, transport costs, and the satisfaction of giving back to their community. The silver lining of university classes being held online has been to avail these young people with the time to volunteer for such an urgent national cause. Once the vaccination campaign is more spread out, a total of over 14,000 such volunteers from the organisation will also be able to help out.

For the past couple of weeks, the talk of the town has been how smoothly the inoculation process is being conducted, from registration to aftercare. Clearly, the dedication of these young individuals cannot ever be measured in monetary terms, but we can all work towards building a society that is well-deserving of such voluntary services.

Let all languages live

Take steps to preserve the near-extinct indigenous languages

AS we observed the International Mother Language Day, remembered our language martyrs with respect, expressed our love for our mother tongue and urged the government to ensure the use of Bangla in all spheres of life, including in higher education, we seemed to have forgotten about many of the indigenous communities of the country, whose mother language are facing the threat of being lost forever. As The Daily Star reported on Sunday, 14 indigenous languages—Kondo, Kharia, Koda, Soura, Mundari, Kole, Malto, Khumi, Pangkhua, Rengmitcha, Chak, Khyang, Lusai, and Laleng (Patro)—are on the verge of extinction because the number of their users have diminished. According to experts, a language is considered to be endangered when it is spoken by less than 5,000 people. Sadly, the situation of the languages we are talking about is so dire that they are now spoken by only 10 to 12 elderly people of their communities.

As Unesco describes, “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.” While this could be a major reason why these 14 languages are in such danger, there must be other economic, religious and social factors that contributed to this situation. By now we know how the dominance of the Bangla language over other indigenous languages in the hills and plainlands has led many indigenous communities to speak Bangla instead of their own language. Another major threat that these languages face is that they are not used to educate the children from these communities. Although every child has the right to study in their mother tongue up to the primary level in our country, not much effort has been made to ensure that. Moreover, the languages which do not have their own alphabets face even greater threat of going extinct compared to those that have alphabets. Observing the International Mother Language Day will be all the more meaningful when all the indigenous people of the country are able to speak their mother tongue and get educated in their own language. A lot of effort is needed from the government and other stakeholders to ensure this. And steps also need to be taken to preserve the languages that are now spoken by only a few elderly people of the communities. Only documenting these languages is not enough to save them. We think forming a language commission to save the endangered languages, as suggested by experts, would be a wise decision.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

Violence over a cricket match

What happened in Jahangirnagar University (JU) on February 19 is appalling. Students of JU were allegedly attacked by locals over a cricket match.

While the police were eventually able to get the situation under control, there have been no cases filed and it seems nothing is going to be done about it. Will this indiscriminate violence against students have no consequences? Or was there a motive bigger than just a dispute over a cricket match?

Obaidul Haque, By e-mail

How the pandemic has affected women's work in BIMSTEC region

MACRO MIRROR



FAHMIDA KHATUN

THE ongoing pandemic has adversely affected women around the world in a number of ways, including through employment and income loss. The countries within the Bay of Bengal

Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) have also suffered from its effects. These countries had made some improvements in terms of women's empowerment over the past years. Women's participation in the labour market, educational qualification, and participation in decision-making jobs have increased in these countries. However, the gender gap is still wide. The recently published Human Development Report 2020 of the United Nations Development Programme shows that in terms of the Gender Inequality Index, Bangladesh ranked 133rd, Bhutan 99th, India 123rd, Myanmar 118th, Nepal 110th, Sri Lanka 90th, and Thailand ranked 80th among the 189 countries in 2019.

The World Economic Forum revealed that in 2020, out of 153 countries, five BIMSTEC countries such as Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, and Sri Lanka ranked outside the top 100 in the Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI). Bangladesh ranked 50th and Thailand 75th on the list. All these countries have slipped in the GGGI 2020 compared to the 2018 index due to the coronavirus pandemic. Compared to 2018, Bangladesh, Thailand, and Sri Lanka lost two positions each, India and Nepal four positions, Bhutan nine positions, and Myanmar slipped down by 26 positions. The GGGI is prepared based on four indicators such as economic participation

opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment. One of the reasons for this drop is the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on women.

The impact of the pandemic has been disproportionately felt by certain sections of people. Women are among the most vulnerable sections who have been the worst victims of the pandemic. The impact of the pandemic may have long-run

did the manufacturers face losses, but the women workers also had to bear the brunt of it. Many of them have been dismissed or given leave without pay from their jobs.

In the service sector, the tourism industry has suffered due to the pandemic. In Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Nepal, the share of employment in the tourism sector is 9, 8.1, and 6.8 percent, respectively. Women's participation in the tourism sector in these countries is higher

support, out of which 75 percent were male-headed and 25 percent were female-headed households.

Despite the increased adverse effects of the pandemic on women, support measures by governments for them have been insignificant. There is a need for increased support to reinstate women's businesses and to create income opportunities for them. The stimulus packages in the form of liquidity support



Garment workers who have not been paid for months gather to demonstrate in front of their factory at Malibagh in the capital in April 2020.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Women who are self-employed in micro, small, and medium enterprises are facing serious challenges to stay afloat during the pandemic. Demand and supply disruptions have led to income erosions and even business closures in some cases.

implications on women's empowerment across countries.

Women in the region have been hit hard by the pandemic as they are mostly engaged in low-paying informal activities. As a result, as soon as the pandemic broke out, they were the first ones to lose their jobs. Those who are still employed have to accept reduced working hours and lower income. The pandemic has also increased the burden of household activities. They have experienced higher reduction in employment and working hours compared to men in most economies in the second quarter of 2020, compared to the same period in the previous year.

One of the most important sources of female employment in a number of BIMSTEC countries is the readymade garments (RMG) industry. Readymade garment manufacturing is the largest employer of women among all industrial sectors in some countries in the region. Roughly one in seven women are employed in the sector in Sri Lanka and one in nine women in Bangladesh and Myanmar. Therefore, as global buyers cancelled orders due to economic recessions in their countries, not only

than that of men. The pandemic has forced them to either go on unpaid leaves or accept lower wages; many have even lost their jobs.

Women who are self-employed in micro, small, and medium enterprises are facing serious challenges to stay afloat during the pandemic. Demand and supply disruptions have led to income erosions and even business closures in some cases.

Consequently, governments had to adopt certain policy measures in response to this. In India, 200 million women with Jan Dhan accounts were to be given an amount of Rs 500 per month for three months. Additionally, the Indian government has also announced that it will provide free LPG cylinders to women in 83 million families below the poverty line for three months under the Ujjwala scheme. In Bangladesh, an amount of Tk 20,000 crore has been allocated for the cottage, micro, small, and medium enterprises. Besides, the government has also announced that it will provide Tk 2,500 as cash support to 50 lakh (5 million) households. As of October 2020, a total of about 35 lakh (3.5 million) households (70 percent) received this

have been difficult for women to access due to various structural problems. These include lack of collaterals, bank guarantee and necessary documents, and banks' reluctance to provide loans to small businesses.

The nature of business is also rapidly changing. The pandemic has expedited the use of technology in work and in business. E-commerce has been flourishing. However, women are not being able to use this opportunity not only because of a lack of funds but also of skills. So, providing women all the necessary support to benefit from this opportunity will require upskilling and reskilling them. Clearly, women in the region will require support from the governments, the private sector, and the non-government organisations to be able to catch up with the emerging nature of business and the new dynamics of the labour market.

Dr Fahmida Khatun is the Executive Director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue. Views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the position of her organisation. The article was originally published by the Observer Research Foundation.

Sustainable energy key to Covid-19 recovery in Asia and the Pacific



ARMIDA SALSIHAH ALISJAHBANA

THE past year is one that few of us will forget. While the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic have played out unevenly across Asia and the Pacific, the region has been

spared many of the worst effects seen in other parts of the world. The pandemic has reminded us that a reliable and uninterrupted energy supply is critical to managing this crisis.

Beyond ensuring that hospitals and healthcare facilities continue to function, energy supports the systems and coping mechanisms we rely on to work remotely, undertake distance learning and communicate essential health information. Importantly, energy will also underpin cold chains and logistics to ensure that billions of vaccines make their way to the people who need them most.

The good news is our region's energy systems have continued to function throughout the pandemic. A new report, “Shaping a sustainable energy future in Asia and the Pacific: A greener, more resilient and inclusive energy system”, released today by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) shows the energy demand reductions have mainly impacted fossil fuels and depressed oil and gas prices. Renewable energy development in countries across the region, such as China and India, has continued at a healthy pace throughout 2020.

As the Asia-Pacific region transitions its energy system to clean, efficient and low carbon technologies, the emergence of the pandemic raises some fundamental questions. How can a transformed energy system help ensure our resilience to future

crises such as Covid-19? As we recover from this pandemic, can we launch a “green recovery” that simultaneously rebuilds our economies and puts us on track to meet global climate and sustainability goals?

Clean and sustainable energy is central to a recovery from Covid-19 pandemic. By emphasising the importance of the SDGs as a guiding framework for recovering better together, we must focus on two critical aspects:

build back better. If countries focus their stimulus efforts on the industries of the past such as fossil fuels, we risk not creating the jobs we need, or not moving in the right direction to achieve the global goals that are critical to future generations. The energy sector offers multiple opportunities to align stimulus with the clean industries of the future.

The evidence shows that renewable energy and energy efficiency projects create more jobs for the same investment



Investing in low-carbon infrastructure and technologies can create a basis for the more ambitious climate pledges we need to reach the Paris Agreement targets of a 2-degree global warming limit.

PHOTO: STAR

First, by making meaningful progress on the SDGs, we can address many of the systemic issues that made societies more vulnerable to Covid-19 in the first place—health, decent work, poverty and inequalities, to name a few.

Second, by directing stimulus spending to investments that support the achievement of the SDGs, we can

as fossil fuel projects. By increasing expenditure on clean cooking and electricity access, we can enhance economic activity in rural areas and bring modern infrastructure that can make these communities more resilient and inclusive, particularly for the wellbeing of women and children.

Additionally, investing in low-carbon

infrastructure and technologies can create a basis for the more ambitious climate pledges we need to reach the Paris Agreement targets of a 2-degree global warming limit. On this note, several countries have announced carbon neutrality, demonstrating a long-term vision and commitment to an accelerated transformation to sustainable energy. Phasing out the use of coal from power generation portfolios by substituting with renewables, ending fossil fuel subsidies, and implementing carbon pricing are some of the steps we can take.

The Covid-19 crisis has forced us to change many aspects of our lives to keep ourselves and our societies safe. It has shown that we are more adaptive and resilient than we may have believed. Nevertheless, we should not waste the opportunities this crisis presents for transformative change. It should not deflect us from the urgent task of making modern energy available to all and decarbonising the region's energy system through a transition to sustainable energy. Instead, it should provide us with a renewed sense of urgency.

We must harness the capacity of sustainable energy to rebuild our societies and economies while protecting the environment in the pursuit of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana is Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive Secretary of ESCAP.

WITHDRAWAL OF AGARTALA CONSPIRACY CASE

'Agartala case provided a spark for our dream of independence'

Amanullah is a former Director General of Press Institute of Bangladesh (PIB) and former Chief Editor of Bangladesh Sangbad Sangstha (BSS). The author of an upcoming book on the Agartala Conspiracy Case, he covered the historic trial while working for Associated Press of Pakistan (APP). On the occasion of the 52nd anniversary of the withdrawal of this case on February 22, 1969, he talks to Badiuzzaman Bay of The Daily Star about its backdrop, his experience of witnessing court proceedings, and how the case provided a spark for our independence movement.

How did you come to be involved with the Agartala Conspiracy Case?

It was sometime around mid-1960s when a group of Bengali officers of the Pakistani armed forces organised themselves for a planned rebellion against the government. They were able to maintain strict secrecy about their activities for quite some time. Later, it transpired that the plan was foiled because of the betrayal of one of the members of the group. Sergeant Amir Hossain surrendered and gave out their secret plan, exposing his fellow rebels to great risk. Security agencies swung into action and made a number of arrests of suspected rebels working in the defence forces of both wings of Pakistan.

I remember I was in Rawalpindi then. It was perhaps towards the end of 1967 that I could learn from a very reliable source that General Ayub Khan was thinking of trying the suspected rebels for treason. I came to know that he initially thought of trying them in a military court on camera. The government also thought of a trial on camera by a special tribunal with civilian judges. However, finally, it decided to conduct an open trial by a special tribunal with judges from Supreme Court and High Court.

SM Zafar was then the federal minister for law and parliamentary affairs, and as such, a key person in respect of the proposed trial. During my coverage of the National Assembly

proceedings before, I had come into close contact with SM Zafar, and he became a dependable news source for me. So one day, he invited me for a private meeting to assess the possible public reaction in East Bengal to the planned trial. I told him that whatever might be the procedure of the trial, either by court martial or trial by a special court, open or in camera, the Bengali reaction was bound to be angry. I also suggested conducting the trial, if they must, by civilian judges in an open court. Later developments suggest the government took the issue of public reaction seriously.

Eventually, when the trial began, I was assigned by APP's then-head Safdar Ali Qureshi to cover it along with my senior colleague HR Batalvi and Mojammel Haque. Batalvi returned to Pindi after about a week, leaving me and Mojammel to cover the case till its abrupt withdrawal on February 22, 1969 at the height of a popular movement.

What can you tell us about the trial?

I still remember the opening day of the trial in Dhaka's Kurmitola cantonment on June 19, 1968. It was well before nine in the morning when journalists entered the tribunal chamber and took their assigned seats in the small, congested press gallery, just on the right-hand side of the judges. Before entering the court chamber, we were cautioned by security men against talking during the court proceedings.



Amanullah PHOTO: BADIUZZAMAN BAY

Earlier, journalists had been issued passes for the coverage of the trial. It was shortly before nine when the 35 accused—including the principal accused Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman—were brought in and led to the dock, an enclosure with wooden railing. There was pin-drop silence in the courtroom when they entered. The seats for the accused were also fixed, possibly because of the gravity of the charges brought against them. Among the accused, the first one to enter was Bangabandhu, wearing white pajama and panjabi, and he approached his seat with confident steps. On the first day, Bangabandhu's father, Sheikh Lutfar Rahman was also present in the chamber, as were his children. It should be mentioned that

Bangabandhu was implicated in the case merely for political reasons and not for any action on his part in connection with the so-called conspiracy. Although he was described as the leader of the movement, the prosecution's statement itself showed that Lt. Com. Moazzem Hossain, who was shown as accused number two, played the most important role and Mujib's was only of a secondary character in the organisational set-up of the revolutionary group. It was Moazzem along with a few others like Steward Mujib, Sultanuddin and Noor Mohammad who were in the "process of forming an organisation for the independence of East Pakistan". During the trial and in its aftermath, I came to know Moazzem closely and was privy to many of his thoughts and decisions.

Can you recall any incidents from the trial?

There are in fact many, and in my book, I'm going to provide a day-to-day coverage of the trial. I can tell you about one particular incident. On September 4, 1968, Kamaluddin, an accused-turned-approver, complained from the witness box about physical and mental torture that he had endured while in custody, leading the prosecution to declare him a "hostile" witness. The emotional outburst of Hasina Kamal, Kamaluddin's wife, in the courtroom was hard to forget. Even the judges were moved. Kamaluddin's release on bail later may have consoled his wife and old mother-in-law. But

Hasina Kamal would still come to the tribunal where her brother Sultanuddin was still facing the ordeal as an accused. There were so many incidents like this—sometimes interesting and often tragic—involving the accused, their relatives and lawyers, prosecutors, witnesses, journalists and even judges. These incidents show that the courtroom drama was no less intense as the one unfolding out on the streets, with the people coming out in their thousands, enraged by the absurdity of the Pakistani attempt.

As a journalist, you closely observed the trial and its aftermath. How significant is the case in the history of our independence?

The Agartala case provided a spark for the independence movement. Until that point, Bengalis had in their minds the contours of some kind of a vision for autonomy or self-determination. There was a need for a conflict for the dream of independence to burst onto the scene, and this case created the occasion for that conflict—a point of no return for those still in doubt. It made the appeal of a revolt for freedom that much convincing. The history of the Agartala case is a must read for today's generation. It shows us that the Liberation War was not fought in those nine months only; it had its origin a long time ago. It also shows us that good things may come out of a bad development if we remain persistent to achieve our goal.

Remembering Maulana Azad when we most need him

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

WHEN the Indian subcontinent was pushed into violent communal turmoil and was being partitioned as its consequence, one person firmly stood out as the guardian of secularism, unity and peace. He was Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.

He was, in fact, one of the architects of India's secular constitution, the pioneer of free and compulsory elementary education in the Indian subcontinent, a preacher of Islam and a statesman of unparalleled wisdom.

However, Maulana Azad never attended a formal school, college or university. He was born in Mecca in a conservative Muslim family. He was home-schooled and self-taught and he was a prodigal learner.

By the age of 12, he could compose poetry and could write literary treatise in Urdu, Arabic and Persian. He even started to edit his first weekly newspaper *Al-Misbah*. Azad went on to complete Dars-E-Nizami curriculum which required him to study Quran, Hadith, Islamic laws and philosophy deeply.

He was deeply influenced by the pan-Islamic thoughts of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan and Jamal-al-Din-al-Afghani. He dreamt of the revival of the lost Islamic heritage by achieving freedom from the British colonisers.

In the wake of the First World War when the Ottoman Empire joined hands with Imperial Germany, Maulana

Azad published two magazines named *Al-Hilal* and *Al-Balagh* where he tried to persuade Indian Muslims against British rule and in favour of the Ottoman Khilafat.

Both of these magazines were banned by the British government; his place in Kolkata was ransacked and he was forced to leave the city. After the war ended, Maulana Azad became a key organiser of the Khilafat movement which was aimed at preserving the Ottoman Khilafat under which Maulana's pan-Islamic vision could be materialised.

Although the Khilafat was lost and Mustafa Kamal's abolitionist steps threw it into oblivion, Maulana Azad through this movement came in contact with Mahatma Gandhi which greatly changed his political career.

He was greatly inspired by Gandhi's non-violent civil disobedience movement and became extremely critical of the Muslim League's communal and often violent approach.

He left the Muslim League in 1920 and joined the Indian National Congress. After the end of Khilafat movement, Maulana Azad's focus of political activism was shifted to preserving Hindu-Muslim unity.

He vehemently opposed the two nations theory stating that "India's actual problem is economic, not communal."

Due to his firm anti-colonial stance and uncompromising dedication for Hindu-Muslim unity, he became extremely popular and was elected as

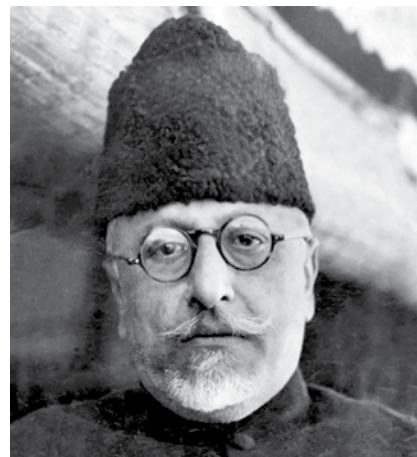


PHOTO: WIKIMEDIACOMMONS

Maulana Abul Kalam Azad (November 11, 1888–February 22, 1958).

the youngest president of Congress in 1923 at the age of only 35. In the same year, during the Delhi Convention, he made an historic remark which made him the "ambassador of Hindu-Muslim unity."

He said, "Today if a farishta (an angel) were to descend from the Heaven and declare from the heights of the Qutab Minar that India will get Swaraj within 24 hours provided she relinquishes Hindu-Muslim unity, I will relinquish Swaraj rather than give up Hindu-Muslim unity. Delay in the attainment of Swaraj will be a loss to India but if our unity is lost it will be a loss to entire mankind."

Maulana Azad opposed partition

not just as a congress leader but also as a Muslim scholar. He foresaw that the formation of Pakistan on the basis of religion would not sustain and Muslim minorities in partitioned India would face alienation and discrimination.

He said in his book *India Wins Freedom*, "There would remain three and half crores of Muslims scattered in small minorities all over the land. With 17 percent in UP, 12 percent in Bihar and 9 percent in Madras, they will be weaker than they are today in the Hindu majority provinces."

Maulana Azad's political and religious wisdom has been vividly reflected in his magnum opus *Tarjuman-ul-Quran*, an interpretation of Quran published in two volumes (one in 1930 and another in 1936).

In this partial-Urdu translation and interpretation of Quran, he discussed different tenets of Islam along with the faiths existing at the time of Islam's revelation such as: Daoism, Buddhism, Christianity, Zoroastrian and Hinduism. This modern and unifying interpretation of Islam was acclaimed internationally at that time.

As the education minister of free India, Maulana Azad took many historic steps which ultimately shaped modern India and ensured quality education for millions of minorities.

He was one of the founders of Jamia Millia Islamia, a central university of India which has become the epicentre of educational and cultural renaissance of Indian Muslims. It is today one of the top 10 universities in India.

Maulana Azad universalised elementary education and launched a massive drive for adult education to remove illiteracy. University Grants Commission, Board for Rural Higher Education and Indian Institute of Technology (IITs) were his brainchild which have qualitatively remodelled India's higher education system.

He replaced the colonial education system by an open and democratic education system where minority and marginalised communities enjoyed free access.

On his 63rd death anniversary, we have to admit that we have deviated greatly from Maulana Azad's modern, progressive thoughts. We didn't listen to his warnings and the entire subcontinent is still paying the price for it.

The passing of the citizenship amendment act in India, spread of communal and ethnic conflicts in Pakistan, Bangladesh, Myanmar prove how right he was.

Although his birth anniversary is observed as India's national education day, today he is remembered only in the Muslim majority areas of the country. Pakistanis have a mixed feeling towards him and in Bangladesh he is rarely mentioned.

However, there is no doubt that for the peace and stability of this region, it is now that we most need a progressive leader like Azad and to re-visit his modern, secular ideals.

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN is a teacher and journalist. Email: shahnawaz.khan@thedailystar.net

QUOTABLE Quote

MARK TWAIN
(November 30, 1835—April 21, 1910)
American writer

Kindness is the language which the deaf can hear and the blind can see.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Swampy area
- 6 Minnesota team
- 11 Fill with joy
- 12 Custom
- 13 Croc's cousin
- 14 Cast out
- 15 Substandard
- 17 Put in stitches
- 18 American marsupials
- 22 Corned beef dish
- 23 Where Gauvain painted
- 27 Director Forman
- 29 Mine veins
- 30 Sounds of derision
- 32 Bona fide
- 33 Lie
- 35 Toper

DOWN

- 1 Ryan of movies
- 2 - carte
- 3 Lab animal
- 4 Suddenly slam on the brakes
- 5 Long sandwiches
- 6 Underwear type
- 7 Candles makeup
- 8 Sacred bird of Egypt
- 9 River of Egypt
- 10 Hearty dish
- 16 Unconscious
- 18 Resistance units
- 19 Aspirin target
- 20 Norwegian city
- 21 Baseball position
- 24 Notion
- 25 Bluish color
- 26 Cruise stop
- 28 Horse houses
- 31 Crafty
- 34 Plumbing problems
- 35 Con man's con
- 36 Seep
- 37 Faithful
- 4 Museum focus
- 42 Mine output
- 43 Spike of film
- 44 Young fellow

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

S	L	A	T	E	C	O	A	S	T
H	E	L	I	X	A	N	W	A	R
I	N	L	E	T	W	E	A	V	E
N	O	P	R	O	B	K	E	Y	
E	R	R	R	E	E	F	E	R	S
R	E	O	T	E	X	A	N	S	
				E	I	G	H	T	
B	O	R	N	E	O	T	S	A	
M	A	N	A	G	E	R	Y	E	S
A	R	T			S	T	A	R	T
S	H	I	P	S	I	R	A	T	E
T	O	M	E	I	N	I	N	E	S
S	P	E	N	T	G	A	T	E	S

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

Turkey probes pro-Kurdish MP over 'Iraq visit'

AFP, Ankara

Turkish prosecutors yesterday launched a probe into a pro-Kurdish MP suspected of having travelled to a Kurdish-controlled region of Iraq where 13 Turkish hostages were killed in a failed rescue.

Lawmaker Dirayet Dilan Tasdemir "is under investigation for belonging to a terrorist organisation," Ankara prosecutors said, hours after the interior minister accused her in a TV interview.

Interior Minister Suleyman Soyulu said that Tasdemir, who belongs to the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP), had been in Gara in northern Iraq, where Turkish troops launched the rescue operation against the PKK group designated as "terrorists" by Ankara and its Western allies.

Turkey said last week that the PKK had executed 13 of its citizens who it had held prisoner, most of them belonging to the security forces.

The PKK acknowledged that a group of prisoners had died, but said they were killed in a bombardment rather than executed.

Their deaths have stepped up pressure on pro-Kurdish political groups in Turkey, especially the HDP.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan accuses the party of being the "political shop window" of the PKK, and dozens of its office holders and party officials have been arrested since 2016.

"The HDP is the party of the terrorist organisation. (Its elected officials) have no political personality. They are hostages of the PKK," Soyulu alleged Saturday.

Trump to give first post-White House speech at conservative summit

AFP, Washington

Former US president Donald Trump will give a speech later this month to a gathering of political conservatives in Orlando, Florida, a source familiar with the plans said Saturday, his first extended public address since leaving the White House on January 20.

The appearance was scheduled for Sunday, February 28 at the Conservative Political Action Conference (CPAC), one of the country's largest annual gatherings of political conservatives.

Trump will be "talking about the future of the Republican Party and the conservative movement," the source told AFP.

He is also expected to challenge the "disastrous amnesty and border policies" of his successor, President Joe Biden, the source added.

Trump, who was impeached for an unprecedented second time for his role in fomenting the January 6 assault on the US Capitol, nevertheless remains a potent force in US politics.

Three-quarters of Republicans want Trump to play a prominent role in the party, according to a poll from Quinnipiac University this week.

Since reluctantly departing the White House on January 20 and ceding to Biden -- despite his constant but unsubstantiated claims that the election had been stolen -- Trump has largely kept to himself at his Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida.

Stripped of his Twitter megaphone, he called into friendly cable TV news programs this week after the death of conservative radio host Rush Limbaugh, musing on far-right channel Newsmax about the possibility of a future political run.

"I won't say yet but we have tremendous support. And I'm looking at poll numbers that are through the roof."

"Let's say somebody gets impeached, typically your numbers would go down, they would go down like a dead balloon. But the numbers are very good, they're very high," he said.

And in perhaps a preview of what might come at CPAC, Trump issued a statement Tuesday ripping into top Republican Senator Mitch McConnell, who had delivered a scathing rebuke of the former president despite voting to acquit him of inciting an insurrection.

"The Republican Party can never again be respected or strong with political 'leaders' like Sen. Mitch McConnell at its helm," Trump said in the statement.

"Mitch is a dour, sullen, and unsmiling political hack, and if Republican Senators are going to stay with him, they will not win again."

Biden, who is trying to steer the United States through the Covid-19 pandemic and an economic crisis, has tried to avoid discussing Trump, at one point calling him "the former guy."



Men transport from a cart onto a vehicle sacks of flour received as humanitarian aid provided by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) at a distribution centre in the Shati camp for Palestinian refugees in Gaza City yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

UN condemns Myanmar junta's actions

FROM PAGE 12

its standards "prohibiting incitement of violence and coordinating harm" and Western countries that condemned the coup decried the violence.

US State Department spokesman Ned Price said the United States was "deeply concerned".

Security forces in the country's second-largest city had attempted to raid a shipyard and detain port staff on strike to protest against the army takeover.

Medical rescue workers said troops used live rounds and rubber bullets against a crowd of people who had started flinging rocks in an effort to stop the arrests.

"Two people were killed," said Hlaing Min Oo, the chief of a Mandalay-based volunteer emergency rescue team.

Another 30 were wounded, with half of the injuries from live rounds, he added.

A graphic video circulated on Facebook showing a teenaged victim

played on the ground and bleeding from his head as a bystander placed a hand on his chest to feel for a heartbeat.

State media made no mention of the deaths but blamed demonstrators for the affray and said protest leaders had been detained.

"Some" protesters had been injured by security forces, the Global New Light of Myanmar reported, along with three soldiers and eight police officers.

In a separate incident on Saturday, a 30-year-old man was killed in Yangon while patrolling the neighbourhood as part of an initiative to guard against night-time arrests of activists.

Tin Htut Hein's sister-in-law said he had been shot dead by police.

"His wife is now heartbroken," she said. "They have a four-year-old son."

Police claimed 20 people attacked a vehicle while officers tried to bring an injured man to hospital, the state-run broadcaster said, and reportedly fired warning shots to disperse the group.

Large crowds had returned to

the streets of Mandalay yesterday, undeterred by the previous day's violence, with rallies also staged further south in Yangon.

In the capital Naypyidaw, a funeral service was held for a young protester who died Friday after being shot in the head at a rally, reports AFP.

Mya Thwate Thwate Khaing, who turned 20 almost two weeks ago as she lay unconscious in a hospital bed, has since become a potent symbol of the campaign against military rule.

A large motorbike guard of honour accompanied her funeral procession, alongside vehicles adorned with floral wreaths and large photos of the grocery store worker.

NATIONAL UPROAR

Much of Myanmar has been in uproar since troops detained Suu Kyi on February 1, with massive street demonstrations in major cities and isolated villages across the country.

The United States, Britain and Canada have all responded with sanctions targeting Myanmar's top generals.

European Union foreign ministers will meet today to discuss their own measures against the regime.

Nearly 570 people have been detained since the army takeover, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners monitoring group.

Among those targeted have been railway workers, civil servants and bank staff, who have walked off their jobs as part of the anti-coup campaign.

Popular actor Lu Min became the latest high-profile celebrity taken into custody for denouncing the regime.

"Many police trucks came and arrested (him)," said his wife Khin Sabel Oo, in a video she broadcast live on Facebook as her husband was taken away overnight.

Suu Kyi has not been seen since she was detained in a dawn raid but has been hit with two charges by the junta, one of them for possessing unregistered walkie-talkies.

Her hearing is expected on March 1.

'We're working to ensure no language gets extinct'

FROM PAGE 1

languages currently existing in the world alongside those who have already faced extinction have been preserved in the museum.

The premier stressed the need for collecting history of the languages as the people who want to study or conduct research on those can easily do it.

She added that the International Mother Language Institute has brought good rapport for us as it has done great works internationally.

The prime minister also thanked UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) for its recognition to International Mother Language Institute as a second-grade organisation.

About the preservation of the languages of small ethnic minority groups in Bangladesh, she said, "We have given special attention to preserve the languages of ethnic minority groups or to make sure they can study in their native languages."

In this connection, she said her government has been publishing the textbooks of the ethnic minority groups in their native languages and distributing those free of cost as they can learn and speak in their languages.

Education Minister Dipu Moni, MP, Secretary of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) Mahbub Hossain, and

UNESCO Representative to Bangladesh Beatrice Kaldun virtually spoke at the function from the IMLI and UNESCO office, Dhaka, respectively.

Deputy Minister for Education Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury, MP, National Professor Rafiqul Islam, Chief Coordinator of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Birth Centenary Celebration National Implementation Committee, Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury and Director General of the International Mother Language Institute Professor Jinnat Imtiaz Ali were present on the dais.

Director-General of the Bangla Academy Poet Habibullah Sirajee read out an article titled "Bangabandhu in Language Movement" on the occasion.

Six children from separate ethnic minority groups through recorded video clips thanked the prime minister for publishing textbooks in their native languages.

National Professor Rafiqul Islam and Mothura Bikash Tripura have been conferred with the International Mother Language National Award, 2021 while Uzbekistani researcher Islaimov Gulom Mirzaevich and The Activismo Languan, a Bolivia-based organisation with the International Mother Language Award, 2021, for their contributions to flourishing language.

On behalf of the prime minister, the education minister handed over the awards.

One minute silence was observed as a mark of respect to the memories of the Language Heroes while the immortal song on Amar Ekushey "Amar Bhaiyer Rakte Rangano Ekushey February" was also played at the outset of the function.

Mentioning that the country's independence had resulted from the path of the Language Movement and Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman led the movements, Sheikh Hasina said that many knowledgeable persons and intellectuals have opposed that Bangabandhu had started the language movement.

The prime minister said the intellectuals in their arguments said that how Bangabandhu did wage for the Language Movement as he was in jail at that time.

She questioned the noted personalities why Bangabandhu was in jail at that time saying that the Father of the Nation had been arrested time and again as he had started the Language Movement and conducted a huge campaign for it.

The prime minister went on saying that one can now easily know the real history of the Language Movement by reading the Pakistani intelligence branch reports from 1948 to 1971 which was made against

Bangabandhu.

Referring to the report, she said, "Truth can never be suppressed."

The premier said many have criticized her when she first said Bangabandhu had initiated or led the Language Movement based on the intelligence branch reports.

She said after assuming office in 1996, she has collected the reports and is now publishing those as everyone can know the real history of the Language Movement and the Liberation War, adding, "Many truths of the history are coming out from the intelligence report."

The prime minister said that she had given speeches many times about the contribution of Bangabandhu in the Language Movement as people were denying his contribution.

"Now I think, I do not need to talk about this. All people can now know it more from the intelligence branch reports," she opined.

Sheikh Hasina also thanked Poet Habibullah Sirajee for presenting a rich and informative article titled "Bangabandhu in Language Movement" from which she said the people can know the history of the Language Movement.

At the end of her speech, the prime minister reiterated her commitment to establishing a developed and prosperous "Sonar Bangladesh" free from hunger and poverty as envisioned by the Father of the Nation.

Serum urges nations to be patient

FROM PAGE 12

The vaccines are produced by AstraZeneca-SKBio (Republic of Korea) and the Serum Institute of India, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

Bangladesh purchased three crore doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine from SII. The first consignment of 50 lakh arrived on January 25, with 50 lakh doses supposed to arrive each month.

Bangladesh also received 20 lakh doses of the Oxford vaccine produced in SII as gift from the Indian government on January 21.

NEW INDIAN STRAINS

Herd immunity for coronavirus is a "myth" in India because at least 80 percent people need to have antibodies for the whole of the population to be protected, Indian AIMS chief Randeep Guleria told NDTV on Saturday.

This, he said, would be difficult if one

takes into account the new Indian strains found in Maharashtra -- which could be highly transmissible and dangerous. The new variant, he said, can even cause reinfections in people who have developed antibodies to the virus.

At least 240 new strains of the virus have surfaced across India, which are behind the fresh surge of infections the state has been witnessing since last week, Dr Shahshank Joshi, member of Maharashtra's Covid Task Force has told NDTV.

Besides Maharashtra, four more states -- Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Punjab -- have been witnessing a spike in numbers.

The government's vaccination plan depends on creating herd immunity by immunising a critical mass of people. In the first phase of vaccination, the government plans to immunise 3 crore health workers and frontline workers.

After that it will be the turn of 27

crore people who are above the age of 50 years or have co-morbidities.

Explaining why herd immunity is not achievable, Dr Guleria said mutations or variants in the virus have "immune escape mechanism". They can threaten the immunity achieved by a person through vaccinations or the disease and cause reinfection.

Under the circumstances, he said it is imperative to maintain "Covid-appropriate behaviour".

"India needs to go back to aggressive measures of testing, contact tracing and isolating infections," he added.

Asked if the Covid-19 vaccines in India be effective against the new strain, Dr Guleria said the vaccines will be effective, but their efficacy might be less. For example, people might not be able to avoid getting the disease, but they will have a mild version of it.

He, however, underscored that getting the vaccine is a must.

Border killings

FROM PAGE 12

then can fix the agenda," a Bangladesh official said.

This is a follow-up of the last home secretary-level meeting held in Delhi, he added.

According to foreign ministry officials, in the run-up to the summit between Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi, at least three secretary-level and one minister-level meetings will be held.

Those include water, home and commerce secretary-level meetings.

Indian External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar will also be visiting Dhaka to meet his Bangladesh counterpart AK Abdul Momen on March 4 for preparation of the PM-level summit on March 27.

The two countries have taken up a number of initiatives to celebrate the 50th year of anniversary of Bangladesh's independence and also the diplomatic relations between the two countries this year.

JU sues 250

FROM PAGE 12

Vice-Chancellor Professor Farzana Islam.

Meanwhile the protesting students yesterday gave a 24-hour ultimatum in a press briefing to the authorities to file the case and demanded reopening of the campus and dormitories.

Samia Hasan, one of the protesting students, placed a six-point demand including ensuring security of all students who are now staying in Gerua area and providing compensation to all injured students.

Contacted, Professor Motaher Hossain, president of JU provost committee, said, "We haven't received any directions regarding reopening of dormitories. We won't take any initiative without the permission of government."

A number of male students are staying in the halls from Saturday night but the female halls have remained locked up by the authorities.

At least 30 students were injured in clashes between JU students and villagers in Savar's Gerua Bazar on Friday evening over a cricket match.

Would

FROM PAGE 12

pay respect to the language heroes, he said.

The SC authorities unveiled the "Amar Vasha" software on February 18, which uses artificial intelligence to translate orders and judgments of the apex court from English to Bangla.

The software was developed with EkStep Foundation of India, based on the original "Anuvaad" software used in India similarly to translate from English to Indian languages including Bangla, according to a statement of the Indian High Commission in Bangladesh.

Anuvaad was deployed by the Supreme Court of India as SUVAS ie 'Supreme Court Vidhik Anuvaad Software' from November 26, 2019.

Five held

FROM PAGE 12

recovered four bullets and 200 yaba pills under a couch in the shop," added the DC.

"During primary investigation, police became suspicious and started checking the CCTV footage of the shop and found that a young man placed the items under the couch while sitting on it," said the DB official.

"Scrutinising the footage, police held Faisal first and then, based on his confession, four others were arrested," he added.

Shah Md Abdur Rauf, additional deputy commissioner (ADC) of North Zone Shah, said, "The owner of the shop told police that he was in a business rivalry. Police will interrogate the arrestees in remand and look into it."

7 more die

FROM PAGE 12

The mortality rate remained steady at 1.54 percent since Saturday, the DGHS handout said.

So far, 491,367 patients (90.43 percent) have recovered from Covid-19.

The authorities have tested 3,947,673 samples until yesterday -- 14,036 in the past 24 hours.

Ingenuity

FROM PAGE 12

journey across the surface.

Now, the mission team has heard directly from the helicopter for the first time -- and it's good news.

Ingenuity is currently tucked up beneath the rover and attached to Perseverance's belly. The rover is about the size of an SUV, while the helicopter only weighs about 4 pounds.

The helicopter was able to phone home via the rover by sending data back through NASA's Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter, which acts as a communications relay between Mars and Earth and has been orbiting the red planet since 2006.

Ingenuity is comfortable where it is and isn't letting go of the rover anytime soon for a test flight. The helicopter will remain snug with the rover for 30 to 60 days.

"Ingenuity, the Mars Helicopter I carry, is working as expected. I'm currently charging it, but once I set it down, it'll rely solely on its solar panels. If it survives the brutally cold Martian nights, the team will attempt flight," read a tweet from the Perseverance Twitter account.

"There are two big-ticket items we are looking for in the data: the state of charge of Ingenuity's batteries as well as confirmation the base station is operating as designed, commanding heaters to turn off and on to keep the helicopter's electronics within an expected range," said Tim Canham, Ingenuity Mars Helicopter operations lead at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, in a statement.

"Both appear to be working great. With this positive report, we will move forward with (Saturday's) charge of the helicopter's batteries."

Ingenuity needs to power up and store energy so it can keep itself warm and maintain other vital functions during the cold Martian nights once the rover deposits the helicopter on the red planet's surface. Then, Ingenuity will be on its own.

KING NOVAK continues Melbourne reign

REUTERS, Melbourne

Novak Djokovic thanked the blue court at the Rod Laver Arena after picking up a record-extending ninth Australian Open title yesterday with a 7-5, 6-2, 6-2 win over Russian Daniil Medvedev.

With Sunday's win, the world number one took his Grand Slam tally to 18, just two shy of Roger Federer and Rafa Nadal's men's record of 20. "Last but not least I would like to thank this court," the Serbian said during the trophy presentation.

Djokovic faced a lot of flak in the lead-up to the year's Grand Slam for requesting that organisers ease strict quarantine protocols for players in Australia. He thanked the organisers for a "great effort" to host the Grand Slam amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

Much like Dominic Thiem in last year's final, Djokovic faced an opponent desperate for success and his own seat at the Grand Slam table. Unlike

HIGHLIGHT

Novak Djokovic won his ninth Australian Open title, a tournament record on the men's side, yesterday and 18th Grand Slam overall. It's his second hat-trick of titles at Melbourne Park after his 2011-13 treble. The Serbian is now within two Grand Slam titles of Roger Federer and Rafael Nadal, who each own 20 men's singles championships, making this race the closest its ever been among the three all-time greats. Djokovic now has won six Grand Slam titles after the age of 30, equalling Nadal's record.

Thiem, who pushed Djokovic to five sets, Medvedev never really threatened in his second Grand Slam final.

Djokovic made a mockery of the Russian's 20-match winning streak and his pre-match barb that all the pressure to win was on the champion. He broke him seven times for the match and closed out the one-sided contest with a net-rush and a brilliant leaping

volley.

Having extended his unbeaten record in nine finals at Melbourne Park, the Serb roared in triumph and wrapped up his team in a group hug.

Djokovic also had words of encouragement for Medvedev.

"I really like Daniil as a person, off the court he's great," Djokovic said. "Always very friendly... On the court, he's definitely one of the toughest players that I ever faced in my life. It's a matter of time when you hold a Grand Slam that's for sure. If you don't mind waiting a few more years. I would like everyone

... to appreciate what he has done, 20-match winning streak in the last couple of months. Amazing."

ATP Finals winner Medvedev acknowledged it was not his best day and hoped he will soon be holding a Grand Slam trophy after losing his second major final after defeat to Rafa Nadal at the 2019 U.S. Open.

"Never easy to speak when you just lost a final of a Grand Slam," Medvedev said. "But I'll try to do my best, better than on court I hope."

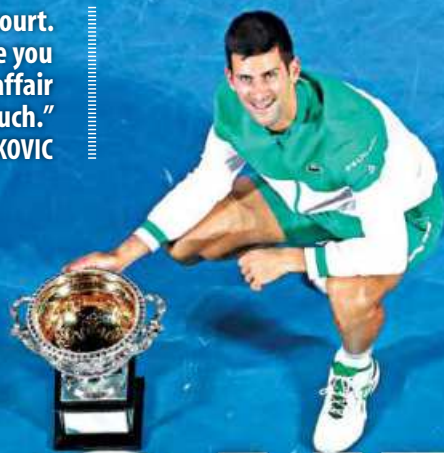
"Just to tell you a small story, guys. I first practised with Novak when I was like 500-600 in the world in Monaco. He was already number one. Just won Wimbledon. I thought okay he's not going to speak to me or something, because the guy was a God for me. Because I was shy so I didn't speak. He was asking the questions, talking to me like a friend. I was really surprised. It never changed since I was 600 in the world or four in the world, you're a great sport, great person. So congratulations."

"Never easy to speak when you just lost a final of a Grand Slam. First of all, congrats to Novak and your team. Nine Grand Slams in Australia. 18 in total is amazing and probably not your last one. I have no words to say."

DANIIL MEDVEDEV

"Last but not least I would like to thank this court. I would like to thank Rod Laver Arena. I love you each year more and more. It's been a love affair that keeps growing. Thank you so much."

NOVAK DJOKOVIC



MELBOURNE



'It's important for seamers to remain patient'

SPORTS REPORTER



After being ignored and avoided in the two-match Test series at home against the West Indies, when the Tigers' team management opted for just one seamer in the playing XI, there will be a lot of focus and emphasis on the pacers when the Bangladesh team take flight for New Zealand for three-match ODI and three-match T20I series starting from March 20.

The 20-member squad features seven seamers including Rubel Hossain, Taskin Ahmed, Al Amin Hossain, Hasan Mahmud, Shoriful Islam, Mustafizur Rahman, and all-rounder Saif Uddin.

There are sky-high expectations that they will deliver on seam-friendly conditions in the limited-overs format, but a lack of match preparation and experience in utilising pace-friendly wickets has often left the Bangladesh pacers unable to extract the most from surfaces.

The Bangladesh team management will surely want to utilise the opportunity this time around but one of the most consistent and regular performers in the longest format, Abu Jayed, will not be a part of the fast-bowling contingent.

The right-arm pacer performed strongly in the second Test in Dhaka, where he bagged six wickets after being left out of

the Dhaka Test and, more importantly, showed a lot of hunger and promise.

Despite being amongst the wickets, Jayed has had to accept his reality as a Test specialist. According to 27-year-old, it is the urge to improve every day that can have a positive impact on the mindset of a bowler.

"I think it's important for seamers to remain patient. This is the key to success for any fast bowler. Although I play the longest version, even when you play limited-overs cricket you need to bowl in the right areas consistently. Obviously, the batters want to go hard at you in the limited-over formats, where variations come into play for bowlers," Jayed told The Daily Star.

"At times, pacers may get carried away when they see a lot of bounce and swing in the surface but it is essential to hit the right areas and utilise the bounce."

Although Jayed is not part of the Tigers' limited over set-up, the Sylhet native believes the Tigers' pace attack has got variety with a blend of youth and experience that could play a big role in any condition.

"We have got a good bunch of fast bowlers at the moment. There are few youngsters who showed a lot of promise along with the likes of Taskin, Rubel and Mustafizur, who offer a lot of experience. I think we can be a good fast-bowling force in world cricket in the coming days," he added.

Late penalty disrupts Barca's winning run

REUTERS, Barcelona



Lionel Messi marked his record 506th appearance for Barcelona in La Liga by scoring a penalty but the Catalans could only draw 1-1 with Cadiz on Saturday after conceding a spot-kick late on.

The Argentine overtook former team mate Xavi Hernandez in the all-time list of Barca appearances in the league and opened the scoring in the 32nd minute by calmly passing the ball into the bottom corner from the spot after Pedri had been tripped by Cadiz's Iza.

Fielding the same starting 11 that had been thrashed 4-1 at home to Paris St Germain in the Champions League on Tuesday, a rusty looking Barca failed to build on their lead and paid the price when Clement Lenglet gave away a penalty for striking Cadiz forward Ruben Sobrino as he tried to clear the ball.

Cadiz's Alex Fernandez made no mistake from the spot in the 89th minute to disrupt Barca's run of seven straight league wins as the Catalans failed to take advantage of La Liga leaders Atletico Madrid's surprise 2-0 defeat by Levante a day earlier.

Barca are third in the standings on 47 points, trailing leaders Atletico by eight points and second-placed Real Madrid by five points. Cadiz are 14th on 25 points.



Barcelona superstar Lionel Messi, who put his side ahead in the 32nd minute against Cadiz, looks dejected after an 89th-minute equaliser from Alex Fernandez at the Camp Nou on Sunday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

AFC can't bow down to Afghan pressure

Time the Asian football body reconsidered its plan on WC qualifying fixtures

ATIQUE ANAM



The governing body of Asian football, AFC, on Thursday issued a statement following discussions with its member associations, saying that a majority of the remaining World Cup/Asian Cup qualifying fixtures of Round-2 have been deferred to June in light of existing travel and quarantine restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic across the continent.

The statement also said AFC has been working with member associations grouped together to help them make their own arrangements and play out the remaining games at one venue.

The second statement, given AFC's rigid stance on finishing the remaining matches by June 15, has put countries such as Bangladesh in a pickle.

How? To understand that we need to take a look at where Bangladesh stand in terms of their qualifying campaign.

The men in red and green have played five of their eight matches -- each team in a group of five teams was originally scheduled to play twice against every other team, home and away -- and they have played four of those five matches away from home.

While Bangladesh only managed one point from those five matches, they were banking on the remaining three matches, or to be more precise, on the two matches against Afghanistan and India to earn some valuable points and move up from the fifth position that they currently occupy.

While qualifying for the next round of World Cup qualifiers was never realistically on Bangladesh's agenda, there was a genuine conviction among the

Bangladesh ranks that a third or even a fourth place finish in the group, which could ensure them a direct berth in the next round of Asian Cup qualifiers, was not out of their reach -- a conviction strengthened by their fighting draw against India in Kolkata and a narrow defeat at home against Qatar, both taking place in 2019.

But those hopes could very well be dashed or at least suffer a huge blow if AFC's plans, with consent from a majority of members under unique circumstances shaped by Covid-19, are realised.

The plan is, as stated before, to stage the remaining matches of the group at a centralised venue -- likely in Qatar or Oman -- during the May 31-June 15 FIFA window, so that the travel restrictions and quarantine issues could be somewhat mitigated.

But that puts Bangladesh, who were supposed to play these matches at home, in a very tricky situation. Home advantage is always a big one in football for obvious reasons and the fact that home advantage becomes even more significant for countries like Bangladesh is well documented too -- that performance against Qatar in 2019 and the 2011 World Cup qualifying home-leg win against Lebanon are two cases in point.

Bangladesh coach Jamie Day asserts how important the remaining matches are for his team and how crucial the home advantage could be.

"We all want the games to be in Bangladesh as it would be an unfair disadvantage for us if the games are held at a neutral venue. It would also mean we play five out of six games away from home, which is not acceptable," the coach said during a conversation with The Daily Star.

While it looks increasingly

likely, although not absolutely certain at this stage, that Bangladesh might have to play against India and Oman at a centralised venue overseas, there is still a strong possibility of hosting Afghanistan in Sylhet on March 25 as per the original schedule.

That possibility, though, hinges on a verdict from the AFC, to be delivered on February 23, following presentation of arguments from Bangladesh on staging the match in Bangladesh and arguments from Afghanistan against it.



What we know so far is that Afghanistan have appealed to AFC to play this match at a centralised venue in June, citing a lack of preparation time ahead of the match due to their players' engagement in leagues of different countries together with the issue of quarantine protocol in Bangladesh.

The argument, by default, is a weak one in light of clear guidelines on club versus country conflicts when it comes to national team engagements. The match falls in a FIFA window, which should suffice to compel Afghanistan to muster their resources and pack their bags for Sylhet.

Any other concern from the Afghans regarding the Covid situation in Bangladesh should logically be summarily dismissed by the AFC, which has already given its go-ahead to four matches to take place as per previous schedule, among those is Nepal hosting Australia in Kathmandu on March 30.

Nepal's current Covid situation is not much better than Bangladesh's in nature, if not magnitude, and Australia face the same predicament as Afghanistan when it comes to quarantine

protocols and players' availability. So why is Afghanistan not willing to come to Bangladesh while Australia is happy to travel to Nepal? Probably because Australia know they would be too strong, even without a few of their first-choice players, against Nepal while Afghanistan fear they might lose away to Bangladesh even with their full-strength side.

"We are preparing our case with a few specific points: the improved situation of Covid-19 in the country, the FIFA friendly matches held against Nepal in November, the ongoing leagues in the country and recent cricket series against the West Indies

held in Dhaka and Chattogram," Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) general secretary Abu Nayeem Shohag told The Daily Star.

Jamie Day, however, was less forgiving in his assessment of the situation.

"I think if teams refuse to travel to Bangladesh to play, then we should be given the points," Day said, his comment likely based on the benchmark that the likes of FIFA and AFC have come to set.

Day has every reason to feel a little frustrated, given that among all five nations in the group, Bangladesh stand to lose the most if the remaining fixtures are moved to a centralised venue. Only Bangladesh have all three home matches left while Qatar have none, Afghanistan and Oman have one each and India have two home matches left.

And given the tight competition at the lower end of the points table, home advantage could play a big part in deciding the final standing -- a win over Afghanistan would see Day's men catapult to third position ahead of both Afghanistan and India.

We would like to be hopeful, though, and believe that the strong arguments in favour of Bangladesh trample those by Afghanistan and would further hope that a smooth staging of that match in Sylhet would convince AFC to move away from its intended path and back to the original plan, even if it needs a bit of flexibility regarding deadlines and enduring the obvious hassles of decentralised football in pandemic times.

With Covid vaccination gathering pace across the globe and travel restrictions easing off, we could be in for much less complicated times come June anyway.

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GUINNESS
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RECORD HOLDER
RECOGNIZES
World's Largest VRM
SHAH CEMENT

SUPPLY OF COVID-19 SHOTS Serum urges nations to be patient

Expert warn about Maharashtra strain

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Adar Poonawalla, CEO of Serum Institute of India, yesterday urged countries to be patient for supplies of Covid-19 vaccine Covishield as the company has been directed to prioritise the "huge needs" of India.

Apart from making efforts to meet the requirements of India, the company is also trying its best to balance the needs of the rest of the world, he tweeted yesterday morning.

"Dear countries and governments, as you await #COVISHIELD supplies, I humbly request you to please be patient. @SerumInstIndia has been directed to prioritise the huge needs of India and along with that balance the needs of the rest of the world. We are trying our best," Poonawalla said in the tweet.

On February 15, the World Health Organization (WHO) listed two versions of the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine for emergency use, giving the green signal for these vaccines to be rolled out globally through Covax, the global vaccine alliance.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



The mangled remains of a bus after the vehicle collided head-on with a stone-laden truck on Dhaka-Rangpur highway early yesterday. According to bus passengers, the bus was overtaking a vehicle at speed when the crash happened. The accident left six people killed and 13 others injured in the College Gate area in Bogura's Sherpur upazila.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Reckless driving kills 6 in Bogura

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bogura

At least six people were killed and at least 13 others injured when a Bogura-bound bus crashed into a truck coming from the opposite direction in Sherpur upazila of the district around 5:00am yesterday.

Fire fighters, police and villagers rescued the injured and took them to hospitals.

Bus driver Babul Shaha, 55, and his assistant Idris Ali, 45, of Sherpur upazila; truck driver Saddam Hossain, 21, of Khulna; and passengers Aktar Hossain, 45, Easin Ali, 70, and his wife Hosne Ara Feroza, 60, of Bogura, died at the scene, said Ratan Hossain, station officer at Sherpur Fire Service and Civil Defense office.

Of the injured, four women and two children were admitted to Bogura Shaheed Ziaur Rahman Medical College Hospital.

Two of them suffered critical injuries, said Abdul Wadud, deputy director of the hospital.

"The bus driver was reckless and he crashed while overtaking another vehicle at speed," said Baniul Anam, traffic inspector at Sherpur Highway Police Camp, quoting drivers of the other vehicles and passengers of the bus.

Five held for trying to frame shop owner

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Detectives yesterday arrested five people, including two impersonating journalists, in Nasirabad area of Chattogram for attempting to frame a shop owner by planting bullets and yaba pills in his shop early yesterday.

The arrestees are Iftekhar Karim Chowdhury, 48, Md Sohel, 26, Md Faisal, 20, Md Nazrul Islam, 42, and Md Jamal Hossain, 41, said police.

Among them, Nazrul introduced himself as the driver of Chittagong University (CU)'s Vice-Chancellor Prof Shireen Akhter but police said they were verifying the information.

However, despite repeated attempts, the VC could not be reached for comments over phone.

Two ID cards of "Dainik Mukto Khabar" newspaper were also seized from Iftekhar and Nazrul.

Muhammad Ali Hossain, deputy commissioner of DB north division of CMP, in a press briefing, said, "The five had planted bullets and some yaba pills inside a shop named 'Hair and Fair' in front of MES College to frame the owner. When police got the information on Saturday, the DB men raided the shop and

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

DEATHS OF ANTI-COUP PROTESTERS UN condemns Myanmar junta's actions

Large crowds return to streets with rallies; Facebook shuts down military's page for inciting violence

AGENCIES

A lethal attack on anti-coup protesters in Myanmar sparked fresh UN condemnation of the country's new military regime yesterday, as mourners held a funeral for a young woman who has become a national symbol of resistance to the junta.

Authorities have gradually ratcheted up their tactics against a massive and largely peaceful civil disobedience campaign demanding the return of ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

Saturday marked the deadliest day so far in more than two weeks of nationwide street demonstrations after two people were killed when security forces fired upon a rally, while a third man was shot dead in Yangon overnight.

As dusk fell in downtown Yangon, Monywa and Myitkyina, there were singing and candlelight prayer ceremonies to pay tribute to the dead protesters.

United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres condemned the use of "deadly violence" against the crowd in Mandalay.

"The use of lethal force, intimidation & harassment against peaceful demonstrators is unacceptable," Guterres wrote.

Facebook deleted the military's main page for repeated violations of

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

7 more die of Covid, 327 infected

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh saw a rise in Covid-19 related deaths and a decline in new cases in the 24 hours until 8:00am yesterday.

Seven coronavirus-related deaths and 327 new cases were reported. On Saturday, five deaths and 350 fresh cases were confirmed.

Bangladesh reported its first cases on March 8 and the first death on March 18.

The daily infection rate was 2.33 percent on Sunday which was 3.14 percent yesterday, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

So far, 543,351 Covid-19 cases have been confirmed, including 8,349 fatalities.

According to the latest figures, the overall infection rate stood at 13.76 percent which was 13.8 percent on Saturday. The rate is expected to fall further as a countrywide coronavirus vaccination drive is underway.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

Ingenuity helicopter phones home from Mars



CNN ONLINE

The Ingenuity helicopter, sidekick and traveling companion of Nasa's Perseverance rover, has checked in with a good report and is "operating as expected," according to the agency.

If successful, Ingenuity will be the first helicopter to fly on another planet, leading to an "extraterrestrial Wright Brothers moment," said Thomas Zurbuchen, associate administrator of Nasa's Science Mission Directorate.

The rover landed safely on the surface of Mars Thursday after launching from Earth on July 30. Perseverance has already sent back an impressive set of images to show that she's safe and ready to go through a "checkout" phase before starting her

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

SC JUDGEMENTS Would be translated into Bangla if need be

Says CJ

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court judgments and orders that are delivered in English will be translated in Bangla through software if felt necessary, said Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain yesterday.

Those verdicts and orders will be translated into Bangla so that most of the people can easily understand them, he said.

He made the remark after paying homage to the 1952 Language Martyrs at the Central Shaheed Minar, Supreme Court Spokesman Saifur Rahman told The Daily Star.

Around 50 judges from the Appellate and High Court Divisions of the SC, along with the chief justice, placed floral wreaths to the Central Shaheed Minar to

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

ATTACK ON STUDENTS JU sues 250 unnamed villagers

JU CORRESPONDENT

Jahanginagar University authorities yesterday filed a case against 250 unnamed locals who allegedly attacked students on Friday evening over a cricket match.

JU Assistant Registrar (security) Jefrul Hasan confirmed the matter to The Daily Star.

"I, from the university authority, have filed the case mentioning 250 unnamed attackers with Ashulia Police Station, the number is 59/21," he said.

On Saturday, this decision was taken at an emergency syndicate meeting chaired by JU

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6



PRAYER TIMING FEBRUARY 22

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5:20 12:45 4:30 6:03 7:30
JAMAAT 5:55 1:15 4:45 6:07 8:00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Two children, who came to the Central Shaheed Minar with their parents, paying tribute to the language movement martyrs by placing flowers at the Shaheed Minar altar as yesterday was the International Mother Language Day. Amidst the pandemic, people from all walks of life thronged there to pay homage to the brave sons of the soil who laid down their lives in 1952 for their mother tongue Bangla.

INDO-BANGLA HOME SECYS MEET Border killings prominent on agenda

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh-India home secretary-level meeting will be held in Dhaka on February 27, a month before Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's planned visit to Dhaka on March 26-27.

Bangladesh Home Secretary Mostafa Kamal Uddin and his Indian counterpart Ajay Kumar Bhalla will lead the respective countries in the meeting.

"It is a regular meeting. Our regular issues will be discussed in it," an official concerned told this correspondent yesterday.

He said border killing is among other issues that would be highlighted.

Border killing has been a thorny issue between the two countries, and Bangladesh on various occasions raised it, urging for zero deaths on the border.

The Indian side says not only Bangladeshis, almost a similar number of Indians are also killed on the border. Even, members of Indian Border Security Force (BSF) were also killed and injured on the border.

They said people from both the sides are involved in criminal activities on the border. Criminal gangs also sometimes shoot the border security forces, leading to casualties.

Indian High Commissioner Vikram Doraiswami recently told this correspondent that joint border management, augmenting economic activities and border awareness can bring the border killing to zero level.

"We will hold a preparatory meeting on Monday and

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