

"Even today, inequality between communities, between groups, and intolerance prevail. That is not what Bangabandhu had imagined. We need to reflect on it."
PM'S INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS ADVISER GOWHER RIZVI



"I'm still in a lot of pain, but I feel the pain of my people even more."
WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER MAMATA BANERJEE
TWEETS AHEAD OF BIG RALLY IN KOLKATA



"Our goal is to make sure... to offer a credible deterrence to China or anybody else who would want to take on the US."
US DEFENSE SECRETARY LLOYD AUSTIN

CONTAINING FRESH COVID SURGE

Govt to ramp up measures

Enforce health safety guidelines strictly, introduce mobile court against violators

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A sudden surge in Covid-19 cases in the country has sparked fresh fears, forcing the authorities to issue official instructions and take up measures to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

The government has asked officials at all administrative tiers to implement the health guidelines properly and re-launch mobile court drives to punish those not following the rules. It has also ordered the health authorities to maintain adequate oxygen flow at hospitals in case the situation worsens.

On Saturday in a meeting of the Awami League Local Government Nomination Board, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who is the head of the party, instructed all to follow health safety rules strictly. She also said she was closely monitoring the Covid-19 situation.

"We're seeing a rise in coronavirus [infection]. It is alarming. We all will have to be alert and follow the health guidelines like we did previously. I'm personally

monitoring the situation," an Awami League presidium member quoted her as saying.

During her speech, the prime minister hinted that the government may reconsider extending the closure of educational institutions.

"Educational institutions will be reopened if the situation becomes normal," said the presidium member, on condition of anonymity.

As per the existing schedule, secondary and higher secondary educational institutions are scheduled to reopen on March 30, universities on May 24 and student dormitories on May 17.

Contacted, Deputy Education Minister Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury told this paper that no dates, however, were final.

"Everything depends on the transmission [of the virus] and vaccination rate," he added.

The country has been witnessing a fresh surge in Covid-19 infections and deaths for the past several days. Yesterday, the health

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Construction workers inspecting a collapsed pier cap of the Bus Rapid Transit project in front of the Polwel Carnation Shopping Centre in Uttara. The pier cap had collapsed early yesterday. In a separate incident hours later, a portion of a launching girder of the same project collapsed near Dhaka airport around 10:30am, leaving six workers, including three Chinese nationals, injured.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Shab-e-Barat on March 29

UNB, Dhaka

Muslims in Bangladesh will observe the Shab-e-Barat on the night of March 29 as the Shaban moon was not sighted in the country yesterday.

The decision was taken at the National Moon Sighting Committee meeting the last evening.

Ministry of Religious Affairs Secretary Mohammad Nurul Islam presided over the meeting.

The announcement was made after analysing data collected from the district administrations, Islamic Foundation, Bangladesh Meteorological Department, and Space Research and Remote Sensing Institute.

Shab-e-Barat is observed on the 15th night of the

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UK VARIANT OF COVID-19 At least 10 cases detected so far

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Health officials have detected over 10 people with the UK variant of the coronavirus.

"But the number may change tomorrow," said Prof Tahmina Shirin, director of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research.

The cases have been detected through genome sequencing, she told The Daily Star. Tahmina added that she would not say the highly contagious UK variant has spread across the country and also would not attribute the recent surge in new cases to the UK variant.

Researchers are working to expand the number of genome sequencing to find out more cases, she said.

"Genome sequencing is a continuous process and we are doing it regularly to find out more cases," she added.

The director did not say how much genome sequencing has already been done.

"The variant has slowly mutated from time to time. We are also looking into the mutated ones."

The UK variant of coronavirus, also known as N501Y.V1, was detected in Bangladesh on January 5.

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TORTURE IN CUSTODY Court accepts case filed by Kishore

PBI asked to probe

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday directed the Police Bureau of Investigation to launch a probe into a case filed over the torture of cartoonist Ahmed Kabir Kishore while he was in custody.

Judge KM Emrul Kayesh of the Metropolitan Sessions Judge's Court of Dhaka passed the order after accepting the case. Additional Public Prosecutor Tapash Kumar Pal told The Daily Star. The court ordered PBI to conduct the investigation with a PBI official of superintendent of police ranking and submit the probe report by April 15.

The court also asked the director of Dhaka Medical College Hospital to form a three-member medical board to examine the torture that Kishore

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BRT PROJECT SITE NEAR AIRPORT Accidents expose lack of safety

Six injured as part of launching girder falls on them; a pier cap also collapses; probe body formed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least six workers, including three Chinese nationals, involved in construction of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Line-3 were injured as a part of a launching girder fell on them while they were working near Dhaka airport yesterday.

The accident took place around 10:30am, hours after a pier cap of an elevated section of the same BRT line collapsed, exposing serious weaknesses in safety measures.

A launching girder is a type of gantry crane used for lifting and installing girders of viaducts.

All the injured were admitted to Evercare Hospital in the capital. The condition of one of the Chinese workers was stated to be critical while another was discharged from the hospital, said officials.

The Tk 4,268.38-crore project, which witnessed several revisions of both cost and deadline, is being implemented by Dhaka Bus Rapid Transit Company Limited (DBRTCL), a government-owned company, to set up a 20.50km line for dedicated bus service from Dhaka airport to Gazipur.

Though the latest deadline for completing the project is June next year, it witnessed overall progress of about 52 percent till February this year, officials said.

The project is funded by Asian Development Bank, French Development Agency and Global Environment Facility. Three government agencies -- Roads and Highways Department (RHD), Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA) and Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) -- are involved in the implementation of various segments of the project.

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No political or social gathering for 10 days

DMP urges all concerned as nation celebrates 50yrs of independence

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police yesterday urged city dwellers not to hold any political and social programme in the capital during the 10-day state celebrations, starting on March 17, marking the country's golden jubilee of independence and Mujib Borsho.

The DMP also warned of congestion on roads due to state events.

"We are discouraging political and social organisations from holding any programme during this period," acting commissioner Monirul Islam told reporters at the DMP headquarters yesterday.

"If a programme is scheduled during the period [March 17-26], please postpone it," he added.

No one should hold what he said are "anti-national" programmes.

The independence golden jubilee and Mujib Borsho celebrations are linked to the country's reputation, he said.

Monirul added that state guests would participate in various programmes during the celebrations and suggested that people keep congestion in mind when they leave home during the 10-day period.

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Gas cylinders lined up on the ground floor of a multi-storey apartment building in Ulon area of Rampura in the capital. The cylinders are kept there and connected to the kitchens upstairs using pipes as the apartment residents fear that the cylinders might explode. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

টেকসই ও নবায়নযোগ্য জ্বালানি উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষ (স্রেডা)
বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগ

জ্বালানি দক্ষ যন্ত্রপাতি স্থাপনে,
৫% হারে ঋণ গ্রহণ করুন।

জ্বালানি সাশ্রয়ের মাধ্যমে নিজে লাভবান হউন
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'What steps were taken to preserve Shaheed Minar?'

HC asks govt to report in 4 weeks
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday wanted to know what steps have been taken to implement its 2010 directives for preserving the dignity and sanctity of Central Shaheed Minar in Dhaka, which was set up to maintain the spirit of the 1952 Language Movement and show respect to the language heroes.

The 2010 HC directives include preparing a list of language heroes, publishing the list in a gazette notification, and constructing a library and Language Movement museum beside the Shaheed Minar.

Yesterday, the HC ordered authorities concerned of the government to submit a report on the steps taken to comply with the directives in four weeks and also fixed April 25 for passing further directives.

The bench of Justice Naima Haider and Justice Razik-Al-Jalil came up with the order following a contempt petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB) on March 4 against the authorities on charge of not implementing all the 2010 directives.

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A man carefully steps onto a rickshaw with his child in tow, mindful that one misstep might cause them to fall into ankle-deep sewage water. For the past two weeks, movement has been disrupted in this road front of Haji Abdur Rashid Lane in old Dhaka. Locals complain that the ward commissioner has taken no initiative to resolve the issue.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

'Some contents of Baksal should be brought back'

Gowher Rizvi says at webinar on Bangabandhu's Vision of Sonar Bangla
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some of the contents of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's 1975 reform programme known as 'Baksal' should be brought back, Prime Minister's International Affairs Adviser Dr Gowher Rizvi said yesterday.

"We should look at it. We should carefully and critically analyse the contents of his 1975 reform programme," he said, "This is to bring back the dimension of social justice as well as to create an equitable, egalitarian and secular society."

Dr Rizvi was addressing a webinar on the topic "Bangabandhu's Vision of Sonar Bangla: Bangladesh at 50" organised by Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies (BISS).

Addressing as chief guest, Dr Rizvi said the ideas in Bangabandhu's 1975 reform programme are still very much a need of the time.

He said the reform scheme got discredited even before it was given a try, and Bangabandhu was assassinated before he could implement his ideas of Bangladesh Krishak Sromik Awami League (Baksal).

The scheme that was provided in 1975 was a detailed programmatic framework for how to restructure the society, he said, adding that unfortunately, Baksal got popularly condemned as a one-party system which is far from the truth.

He said, "Even today inequality and intolerance prevail, which was not Bangabandhu had imagined. We need to reflect on it. Yes, we are celebrating, we will be celebrating (success in 50 years), but we need to reflect on these issues."

Addressing the webinar, analysts said although Bangladesh has achieved

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'Violence against girls has reached barbaric levels'

Says NHRC chairperson at webinar
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Women's empowerment has progressed significantly, but violence against women has increased as well, said National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) Chairperson Nasima Begum, ndc, yesterday.

Violence against girls has reached a barbaric level. At the same time, the most noticeable injustice they are facing in current times is child marriage, which is increasing in number, she said at a webinar organised by National Girl Child Advocacy Forum to observe International Women's Day.

"Due to Covid-19 induced income loss, many parents are marrying off their girls, considering the situation as one less mouth to feed. We must look into this," she added.

Praising the initiatives of women leaders, lawmaker Dr Shamil Uddin Ahmed Shimul, also member of the Parliamentary Caucus on Child Rights, said although child marriage has emerged as a serious issue in the pandemic, women

Monirul Islam new chief of police's special branch

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has appointed Monirul Islam, the chief of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, to lead the Special Branch of police.

With the new assignment, Monirul, also the additional commissioner of DMP, has been made an additional inspector general of police (current charge), according to a home ministry gadget notification issued yesterday.

Monirul replaced the SB's additional IGP Mir Shahidul Islam, who went on retirement yesterday after leading the unit for more than two years.

According to insiders, though more than 10 additional IGP (full fledged) exist in the force now, Monirul was appointed additional IGP (current charge) for his competence.

Being an officer of the 15th batch of BCS, Monirul earlier was promoted to the post of deputy inspector general on February 15, 2016 and additional deputy inspector general on April 7 of 2015.

On leaving CTTC, Monirul said he started working for the unit in February 2016 and worked for five years



PHOTO: STAR



A sign saying "Thank you for using the footbridge" stands in irony on Pragati Sarani in the capital, as work continues on the structure. Inset, workers were recently seen replacing the railings of the bridge.

ABRAR MEMORIAL FOOTBRIDGE

Half-baked structure now being 'retrofitted'

MATHEWS CHIRAN

When private university student Abrar Ahmed Chowdhury died in a tragic road accident on March 19, 2019 in front of Jamuna Future Park on Dhaka's Pragati Sarani road, many students took to the street in protest, and in an instant move, the DNCC mayor announced to build a footbridge on that very spot to avoid further tragedies.

As per a decision, Dhaka North City Corporation let a business conglomerate build the bridge as part of the company's social corporate responsibility. No tender was floated for the work, but DNCC monitored the project, according to its officials.

In less than two years, the bridge is having to undergo further work.

The footbridge was completed in the end of August 2019. However, a week later, it had to be closed, apparently due to the sheer volume of users.

According to locals, the situation was so bad that people had to wait for 10-15 minutes to get on the 95-foot footbridge and get to the other side. Due to the overloading, the bridge literally shook, they said, adding that it also sparked complaints and criticisms on social media.

Asked about the situation, DNCC superintendent engineer Arifur Rahman had told The Daily Star a year back

that they closed it as they needed to do some paint job and once escalators were installed on both sides of the footbridge by DNCC, the problem will be solved. He said there was no other reason for them to close the bridge. Meanwhile, the road median was kept open for people to cross the road.

DNCC set up escalators on both sides of the bridge last year. However, the 'charitable' work done by the first contractor proved to be inadequate, as DNCC had to contract another company to fix up quite a few issues.

Maisha Construction (Pvt) Ltd started the task of retrofitting the bridge last year, after getting the work tender from DNCC, said its officials.

A sign was also put up, which said the project -- "Retrofitting Works of Abrar Footover Bridge at Pragati Sarani Under DNCC" -- is ongoing, and the work duration was from 20-9-2020 to 9-3-2021. A week after the deadline, the work is still ongoing.

But there is a new problem now. According to construction officials, when the escalator is turned on, the bridge starts shaking.

"It has been only one year and within this time, the bridge needed to go through renovation work again. This shows how the bridge was built in the first place!"

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ABRAR MURDER CASE

22 accused claim innocence

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Twenty-two accused in Abrar Fahad murder case yesterday claimed innocence and demanded justice, after a Dhaka tribunal read out the charges from statements of 45 prosecution witnesses.

Judge Abu Zafar Md Kamruzzaman of Dhaka Speedy Trial Tribunal-1 recorded their self-defence statements for over two hours.

After recording their statements, the judge fixed March 31 for the defence witnesses.

During yesterday's hearing, 22 accused, who are now behind bars, were produced before the tribunal.

Earlier, the tribunal recorded 46 prosecution witnesses, including the complainant of the case.

The same tribunal on September 15 last year framed charges against all 25 accused in the case.

On October 7, 2019, Abrar, a second-year student of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet),

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SHEIKH RUSSEL ECO PARK, RANGUNIA

150 trees felled in a month

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Around 150 trees have been felled at Sheikh Russel Aviary and Eco Park in Rangunia upazila of Chattogram, which remains abuzz with people and is guarded round the clock by dozens of forest staff.

Yet, loggers managed to fell the trees and take the timber away right under the nose of forest staff, from an area situated about one kilometre from the park's entrance. The trees, most of them teak and acacia, were situated across 20 acres of land. The stumps of the felled trees now lie strewn among other smaller trees in the area.

Inside sources say the loggers have been felling the trees for about a month.

Hasibur Rahman, forest guard of the park who lives in barrack no-6 in the park, told The Daily Star that the area from where the trees were felled is a "remote place", which makes it difficult for them to look after the area.

He alleged that Danu Mia, chairman of Hosnabad Union Parishad and his son Sekandar Islam had played the key role in felling the trees as they were trying to grab the teak for long.

Hasibur said that portion of the eco park is yet to be walled off, so loggers took the chance to fell

the trees.

Forest department sources said officials found 150 stumps on Saturday.

Md Shafikul Islam, divisional forest officer (DFO) of Chattogram South Forest Division told The Daily Star that they seized the logs and will file a case regarding the felling. "A section of people previously attempted to fell the trees, as far as I remember," he said.

"We assume those people got to the trees. No matter who was involved in this, they will be brought to book. We will investigate whether there is any negligence on the part our staff. If we find any, they will be punished," added Shafikul.

Sekandar Islam, who is being accused of felling the trees, told The Daily Star that those trees were planted by them with the forest department's permission over eight years ago. "It was part of a social forestation initiative. The land was later declared part of the eco park in 2013," he explained.

"We planted the trees years ago and sought permission to cut the trees from forest department. But they did not allow it. We are the people who informed the forest official of the tree felling. If they now accuse us, that is unfortunate for us," said Sekandar.

SC clears way to shut down illegal brick kilns in Chattogram

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday upheld a High Court directive that asked the government authorities to shut down all brick kilns without valid licenses in Chattogram.

A four-member bench of the Appellate Division of the SC headed by Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain passed the order rejecting a petition filed by the owners of 18 brick kilns, seeking a stay on the HC directive.

Newly-elected president of Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) and senior lawyer Abdul Matin Khasru, who appeared for the brick kiln owners, told the court that his clients have invested crores of taka for running the brick kilns where thousands of people are working.

If the brickfields shut down, they will face huge losses, the lawyer said.

Lawyer Matin Khasru prayed to the Appellate Division to stay the HC order and allow his clients to operate for the next two months.

Writ petitioner's lawyer Manzil Murshid opposed the petition saying that brick kilns, which have no valid license, cannot run as per the provisions of relevant laws.

The owners of brick kilns have moved several petitions before this court earlier to stop shutting down their operations in Chattogram.

Manzil Murshid told The Daily Star that, following the apex court order, there is no bar to shut down the brick kilns running illegally.

The local administration has started shutting down the illegal brick kilns following the HC's January 31 order, he added.

Following a petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh, the HC on January 31, directed authorities concerned of the government to immediately shut down all the illegal brick kilns in Chattogram and submit a report after complying with the directive to it.



A sign by a canal at the capital's Hazaribagh tells residents not to dump waste into the waterbody, as directed by Dhaka South City Corporation Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh, otherwise legal action would be taken. Incassant dumping of waste has blocked the many canals of the city, and now authorities are trying to bring the waterways back to life. This photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

KIDNAP OF MADRASA BOY

Twin brothers arrested in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police arrested two twin brothers for allegedly kidnapping a madrasa boy and realising ransom from his father in the port city's Bakalia area early yesterday.

The arrestees are Jisan Uddin Rokon and Jiam Uddin Arman (21).

They were arrested from Maijjartek, said Assistant Commissioner (AC) (Chawkbazar Zone) Raisul Islam of CMP to The Daily Star.

"Before their arrest, police rescued the victim Iqbal Hasan (13) in the city," he said.

Bakalia Police Station Officer-in-Charge Ruhul Amin said, "Iqbal is a student of Madam Bibir Hat Hafizia Madrasa in Sitakunda. He came to Bakalia to board a bus to go to his Cox's Bazar residence."

"The twins lured the boy with a job in Bakalia, and took him to a secure place. The duo later phoned victim's father and asked him to pay Tk 40,000," said the OC.

"The boy's father gave them Tk 9,000 through Nagad but the accused did not release the boy. The father informed police, and we traced their location," he said.

Following police movement, the kidnappers freed the boy to avoid arrest. AC Raisul said. "The boy has identified the criminals," he added.

Man kills brother over family feud

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A young man was stabbed to death by his younger brother allegedly over a family feud in Basail upazila yesterday.

The deceased, Mazid Miah, 33, son of Sentu Miah of Bathuli Sadi village, was a cloth trader at a local market.

Deceased's wife Mili Begum alleged that Mazid and his four brothers often quarrel with each other over handloom business and ancestral land.

As a sequel, Mazid's younger brother Shafiq Miah, 30, locked in an altercation with his father yesterday morning.

At one stage, when Mazid and his another Lavlu went to stop Shafiq from quarrelling, angry Shafiq stabbed Mazid with a knife, leaving him seriously injured.

Neighbours took Mazid to Tangail General Hospital where the doctors declared him dead. Officer in Charge of Basail Police Station Harun-or-Rashid said they detained Shafiq for his alleged involvement in the murder.

Man gets life term for rape in Joypurhat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

A Joypurhat court yesterday sentenced a man to life term imprisonment in connection with a case for raping a teenage girl after abduction in Khetlal upazila in 2005.

The convict, Jahurul Islam, 40 of Banaich Alipur village in the upazila, was tried in absentia.

Joypurhat Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal Judge Rustam Ali also fined the convict Tk 1 lakh.

According to the prosecution, Jahurul abducted the 14-year-old victim when she went out of her house on April 12 in 2005. He then took her to an isolated place and forcibly raped her.

After returning home the girl, then a Class VII student, disclose the matter to her parents. Later, victim's father filed a case with Khetlal Police Station accusing Jahurul.

Police arrested Jahurul and produced him before a court that sent him to jail.

Meanwhile, Jahurul came out of jail after securing bail and remained absconding since then, Court Inspector Sunil Kumar Ghosh said.

Expat's wife murdered

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

Police recovered the body of a housewife from her in-laws' house in Jashore's Chaugachha upazila yesterday.

The deceased, Hasu Khatun, 24, was wife of UAE expatriate Alauddin of Chakla village. Police, however, detained Alauddin for quizzing.

Victim's father Mohammad Ullah father alleged a couple of days ago Alauddin returned home and demanded Tk 2 lakh from him, but he denied to pay the money, he alleged.

After hearing the news of Hasu's death, he went to Alauddin's house and found the tendons of his daughter's hand and leg cut-off.

Batighar Adarsha Library: Spreading light in silence

MIRZA SHAKIL

A library, set up at a remote rural area in Tangail by a university student (now a police officer), has been helping local people including youths and students gather knowledge and become enlightened citizen for the last one decade.

Md Kamruzzaman Sohag, former student of criminology and police science department at Mawlana Bhasani Science and Technology University in Santosh, set up the library "Batighar Adarsha Library (Lighthouse Ideal Library)" at his house at Chourakora village in Mogra union in Sadar upazila on February 21, 2010 with a slogan 'Let's read books, enlighten ourselves'.

Men and women of any age, including students, can come here and immerse themselves in the ocean of knowledge. If anyone wants, he or she can become a member of the library following certain rules. If any reader wishes, he can read the book in the library and if he wants, he can take it to home.

Meanwhile, after founder Sohag joined as an officer of Bangladesh Police in 2018, the library has been running under the supervision of a group of local young students studying in local colleges and universities. They help others become members of the library and borrow books from it and return them. Besides, they also organise different positive events at the



Students read books and newspapers at Batighar Adarsha Library at Chourakora village in Tangail Sadar upazila. Below, Md Kamruzzaman Sohag, founder of the library.

PHOTO: STAR



library.

"The library is not only about reading books. We also organise different events including general knowledge competitions among primary and secondary students, providing scholarships, recitation of poems, songs and recitations of the Quran, and holding discussion on various

contemporary issues at the library," Sohag said.

Sohag, now serving as a sub-inspector at police headquarters, also said that he has established the library as there are many people who love to read books but cannot afford to buy books regularly. "Previously it was our small effort to make it easier for them to read books," he said.

The library currently has around 700 different types of books in its collection. Such as science, literature, history, biography, religion, books on job preparation, magazines, newspapers, magazines on current affairs, academic books and juvenile literature.

"I am really grateful to those who have contributed to the development of the library with books and advice at different times," Sohag said.

Aminul Islam, a third-year honours student and also a regular reader of the library, said, "Since there is no library

nearby, we had to go to the district public library to read books, which is 12 kilometres away. So even if I wanted to, I didn't always get the chance."

"Because of the inception of this library, we are getting immensely benefitted," he said.

Anwar Hossain, headmaster of local Chowdhury Malancha High School, said that the library is playing a positive role in building reading habits among the common people. "I believe that by reading different types of books in addition to the textbooks, students are enriching their knowledge which will enlighten their future," he said.

Abdullah Khodabox, a senior citizen and social worker, said, "Reading a book has brought positive change among the boys and girls of our village. Giving time to this library instead of gossiping is keeping them away from various addictions. We hope the 'Lighthouse Ideal Library' will

move forward. The light of knowledge will spread all around."

Azaharul Islam, chairman of Mogra Union Parishad, said, "I would like to thank all those involved in the library for taking such an excellent initiative. This library is making an important contribution in building a knowledge based society. I will always be there for the development of the library."

Asked about the future plans, the founder of the library (SI Sohag) said that there are plans to further enrich the collection of books in the future, including the construction of a modern building for the library. "My father has already assured to donate a piece of land for the new library building," he said.

Apart from developing the habit of reading books among the people, initiatives will also be taken by this organisation to solve various problems of the society, Sohag said.



The dragon fruit orchard of Abu Taleb at Kumrihat village in Aditmari upazila of Lalmonirhat.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

Dragon fruit gleams prospect in Lalmonirhat

S DILIP ROY, Lalmonirhat

Lalmonirhat's first commercial dragon fruit grower Abu Taleb hopes to make around Tk 15 lakh in profit this year.

Inspired by YouTube, Abu Taleb started his dragon fruit orchard in 2019, when he was working at a private firm. He invested Tk 5 lakh on the orchard, on 65 decimals of land that he owns at his home village of Kumrihat in Aditmari upazila.

The trees started to bear fruits in only eight months and now each tree produces 12 to 15 kilograms of the fruit. Out of the first harvest, he sold only Tk 10 thousand worth of dragon fruit and he gave away the rest, worth about Tk 70 thousand, to his relatives and neighbours.

"I hope to harvest Tk 14 to 15 lakh worth of dragon fruit from the orchard this year," said Abu Taleb.

When the demand is good, each kg of the fruit can be sold for Tk 200 to 250, he said. "Even if I sell dragon fruit from my garden for Tk 50 per kg, I can still make profit... Initially, due to my lack of experience, I spent extra money to prepare my garden. But now I have gained enough knowledge to cultivate the fruit properly."

Aside from growing fruits, Abu Taleb also grows saplings of

dragon fruit. So far, he grew 2,800 saplings and he is currently making preparations to produce over 10 thousand more. He has been selling each sapling for Tk 50.

Local farmer Mohammad Abdullah bought 100 dragon fruit

Inspired by YouTube, Abu Taleb started his dragon fruit orchard in 2019, when he was working at a private firm. He invested Tk 5 lakh on the orchard, on 65 decimals of land.

saplings from Abu Taleb in January. Abdullah said Abu Taleb also explained him good techniques to cultivate the fruit.

If he finds success during trial, he will also start cultivating dragon fruit on a large scale like Abu Taleb, he also said.

Jobed Ali, an educated youth from the same village, said he became interested in dragon fruit farming

after seeing Abu Taleb's success.

He already bought 150 saplings of the fruit and he was getting prepared to plant more. "There's a huge demand for dragon fruit at the market. If the production of the fruit is as expected, it can bring expected profits," he said.

Abu Taleb said regular and proper care of dragon fruit can produce expected results and only organic fertiliser should be used in its production.

"I leased 100 decimals of land, next to my garden, where I will plant 5,000 dragon fruit saplings this year. Once the garden is ready, it will be possible for me to earn an income for the next 20 years."

I dream of standing by the educated and unemployed population in Lalmonirhat by getting them involved in dragon fruit farming," he added.

Shamim Ashraf, deputy director of Department of Agricultural Extension in Lalmonirhat, said proper and timely care is essential for cultivation of dragon fruit that grows only on higher ground.

Although many farmers are interested in cultivating dragon fruit, they are unable to do so because a huge amount of investment is necessary in its cultivation, he added.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Local Government Engineering Department Office of the Upazila Engineer Raiganj, Sirajganj www.lged.gov.bd



Memo No:46.02.8861.000.14.028.21.123

Date: 14-03-2021

e-Tender Notice 06/2020-21

e-Tender is invited in the national e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of

Sl. No	Package No	Tender ID	Name of Scheme
01	e-Tender/PEDP4/SRJ/RAI/2020-21/W10.258	557465	Repair and renovation of Raiganj URC under Raiganj upazilla, Sirajganj

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

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP system portal have to be deposited on line through any registered banks branches up to 5:00pm on 30/03/2021.

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

14/3/21

(Md. Atikur Rahman Talukder)
Upazila Engineer, LGED
Raiganj, Sirajganj
e-mail: ue.raiganj@lged.gov.bd

GD- 523

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Superintending Engineering (RHD)
Social and Environment Circle
Alenbaria, Tejgaon, Dhaka
E-mail: sese@rhd.gov.bd

Memo No. 35.01.0000.168.34.66.2021-48

Date: 14-03-2021

Corrigendum Notice

This is to notify for all concerned that the amendment of Request for Expressions of Interest notice vide Reference No. 35.01.0000.168.34.63.2021-45, Dhaka: 4 March 2021 is as follows:

Project/programme name	Required No. of Junior Engineer for Resettlement Advisory Team published in the newspaper	Actually Required No. of Junior Engineer for Resettlement Advisory Team	Remarks
Consultancy Services for Technical Support to the Social and Environment Circle, RHD	1	2	All other terms and conditions remain unchanged

Further information and guidelines are available in the website of Roads and Highways Department, CPTU and Road Transport and Highways Division.

14/03/2021

Mohammad Jahed Hossain
ID No. 601962
Superintending Engineer (C.C) RHD
Social and Environment Circle
Alenbari, Tejgaon, Dhaka

GD-522

BEHIND-THE-SCENES BIDEN ADMIN OUTREACH

N Korea unresponsive

REUTERS, Washington

North Korea has not responded to behind-the-scenes diplomatic outreach since mid-February by President Joe Biden's administration, including to Pyongyang's mission to the United Nations, a senior Biden administration official told Reuters on Saturday.

The disclosure of the so-far unsuccessful US outreach, which has not been previously reported, raises questions about how Biden will address mounting tensions with Pyongyang over its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs.

It also adds a new dimension to a visit America's top diplomat and defense secretary will make next week to South Korea and Japan, where concerns over North Korea's nuclear arsenal are expected to be high on the agenda.

The senior Biden administration official, speaking on condition of anonymity, offered few details on the diplomatic push. But the official said there had been efforts to reach out to the North Korean government "through several channels starting in mid-February, including in New York."

"To date, we have not received any response from Pyongyang," the official said.

North Korea's mission to the United Nations did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The Biden administration has so far been cautious in publicly describing its approach to North Korea, saying it

is carrying out a comprehensive policy review following former President Donald Trump's unprecedented engagement with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un.

Trump's efforts failed to persuade North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons.

The Biden administration official said it appeared there had been no active dialogue between the United States and North Korea for more than a year, including at the end of Trump's administration, "despite multiple attempts during that time by the United States to engage."

The US official declined to speculate about how the silence from Pyongyang would impact the Biden administration's North Korea policy review, which was expected to be completed in the coming weeks.

During his election campaign, Biden described Kim as a "thug" and said he would only meet him "on the condition that he would agree that he would be drawing down his nuclear capacity."

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has held out the possibility of additional sanctions, in coordination with allies, to press North Korea to denuclearize.

Sanctions have so far failed to convince Kim to give up his nuclear weapons.

A confidential UN report found that North Korea maintained and developed its nuclear and ballistic missile programs throughout 2020 in violation of international sanctions, helping fund them with some \$300 million stolen through cyber hacks.



Women mourn at a memorial site at the Clapham Common Bandstand, following the kidnap and murder of Sarah Everard, in London, Britain, yesterday. London's police force which dragged mourners from a vigil for a woman whose suspected killer is a police officer faced a backlash from the public and politicians yesterday, with the government demanding it account for its actions. The disappearance of Sarah Everard, 33, as she walked home on the evening of March 3 has provoked a huge outpouring of grief and dismay in Britain at the failure of police and wider society to tackle violence against women.

PHOTO: REUTERS



Pentagon chief sees Asia ties as deterrent against China

AFP, Honolulu

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin said on Saturday he was traveling to Asia to boost military cooperation with American allies and foster "credible deterrence" against China.

Austin kicked off via Hawaii, seat of the American military command for the Indo-Pacific region, his first foreign visits as Pentagon chief.

"This is all about alliances and partnerships," he told reporters on the trip that is to include meetings with key allies in Tokyo, New Delhi and Seoul.

"It's also about enhancing capabilities," he added, recalling that while the United States was focused on the anti-jihadist struggle in the Middle East, China was modernizing its army at high speed.

"That competitive edge that we've had has eroded," he said. "We still maintain that edge. We are going to increase that edge going forward."

"Our goal is to make sure that we have the capabilities and the operational plans... to be able to offer a credible deterrence to China or anybody else who would want to take on the US," he added.

Lloyd will be joined in Tokyo and Seoul by Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

This tour in Asia of the heads of diplomacy and defense of the United States follows an unprecedented summit of the "Quad", an informal alliance born in the 2000s to counterbalance a rising China.

GROWING US, CHINA RIVALRY

Choosing sides not an option

S'pore PM says his country, many others in tight spot as superpowers jostle for supremacy

THE STRAITS TIMES/ANN

It will not be possible for Singapore to choose between the United States and China, given the extensive ties the Republic has with both superpowers, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said yesterday.

Many other countries are in a similar situation, he added during an interview with the BBC, saying they would be hard pressed if forced to pick a side.

"I hope the time does not come," he said when asked which one Singapore will choose when the time comes.

The past few years have seen a significant deterioration in ties between the US and China, with their rivalry set to continue in spite of the change in administration in Washington.

With both sides exerting their influence on allies and partners, it has become harder for countries to stay in the middle. The administration of US President Joe Biden, for instance, has called for a review of how the country buys strategic goods, saying that it will work with like-minded countries.

Asked if it is realistic to sit on the fence in light of these developments, Lee said: "I do not think we are the only ones in this boat."

"It could happen before you expect it, if there is a mishap."

Singapore Prime Minister **LEE HSIEN LOONG** on US-China military conflict



He cited the European Union, which had signed an investment agreement with China before Biden took office.

Reiterating Singapore's position of assessing and making a judgment as to which course of action is in its best interests, Lee said: "Generally, it is that we want to be friends with both, but we have to find our own way forward."

He also noted that competition and tension between both superpowers is inevitable in the Asia-Pacific region. But he emphasised that they have to coexist.

Unlike the former Soviet Union which had an unsustainable economy and was pushed to the brink during the Cold War, China's economy has a lot of resilience, tremendous energy and creativity, and people who are on the move and

are making great progress, he added.

The US, too, may have serious political schisms and problems, but has got tremendous vitality and attraction for people around the world, he added.

"It has come back from many difficult spots before. In that situation, unless the two powers decide to coexist, they are both in for a hard time, and so are we," he said.

Asked whether the US had to accept that it is no longer number one, Lee said: "The US is still number one, but number two is not so far behind. That is what is difficult for the US to accept."

On tensions escalating, he pointed out that a real military conflict between both countries "could happen before you expect it, if there is a mishap."

However, Lee added that the odds of a military clash are not yet high, but it is more likely now than five years ago, as domestic calculations have become paramount for both sides.

"It is understandable. China is in a new position now, and you have to set a different balance in your relationship with the world," he added.

"What the world was prepared to grant you in an earlier phase now has to be reworked, and that is quite difficult for a country to accept."

NEW 'PROPAGANDA' CHARGES

Zaghari-Ratcliffe back in Iran court

AFP, Tehran

British-Iranian dual national Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe yesterday appeared in a Tehran court to face new charges of "propaganda against the system", a week after she finished serving a five-year sentence, her lawyer said.

The hearing has dashed hopes of family and supporters for a swift release of the 42-year-old, in a case that has heightened diplomatic tensions between London and Tehran.

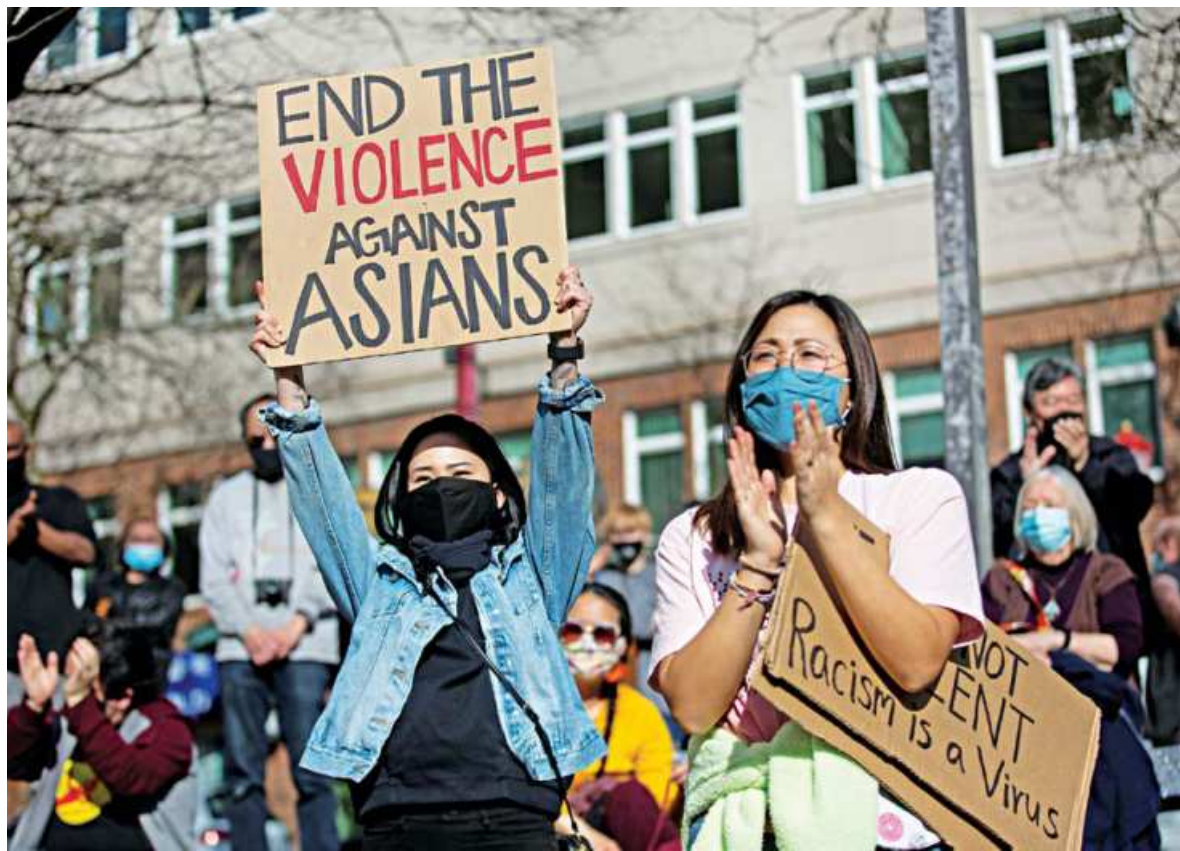
"The hearing took place in a very calm and good atmosphere, in the presence of my client," her lawyer Hojjat Kermani told AFP, adding that the judgement would be handed down at a later and unspecified date.

According to Kermani, she is now being prosecuted for "propaganda against the system for having participated in a rally in front of the Iranian embassy in London" in 2009.

"Given the evidence presented by the defence and the legal process, and the fact that my client has also served her previous sentence, I hope that she will be acquitted," the lawyer added.

In London, her Member of Parliament Tulip Siddiq said that "no verdict was given", but added that "it should be delivered within a week".

Zaghari-Ratcliffe was detained while on holiday in 2016 and convicted of plotting to overthrow the regime in Tehran -- accusations she strenuously denied. The mother-of-one was working at the time as a project manager for Thomson Reuters Foundation, the media organisation's philanthropic wing.



Dawn Cheung and Victoria Do clap and cheer while listening to speakers during a protest against anti-Asian hate crimes, organized by the Asian American Pacific Islanders Organizing Coalition Against Hate & Bias, at Hing Hay Park in the Chinatown-International District of Seattle, Washington, U.S., on Saturday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Japanese worshippers 'walks on fire' to pray for safety

REUTERS, Tokyo

Japanese worshippers yesterday prayed for the safety of themselves and their families by walking barefoot with Buddhist monks over smouldering coals at an annual festival near Mt Takaosan.

The fire-walking was more tense than usual because participants were required to wear masks and maintain social distancing due to the coronavirus pandemic. The festival was also limited to 1,000 participants. Last year, it wasn't open to the public because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

"Passing your body through the flames cleanses your soul and delivers your prayers to Buddha," said Koshou Kamimura, a Buddhist monk from Takaosan Yakuoquin Temple.

"Historically, Mt. Takaosan is an important place to pray for deliverance from plagues, so I felt we should hold the festival this year with certain precautions."

The festival, called hiwatari matsuri in Japanese, has a history of about 50 years at Mt. Takaosan.

The monks set fire to wood and Japanese cypress leaves, creating an intense bonfire. The monks then doused the flames with water, collected the embers and laid them



out in two strips, over which they walked barefoot while chanting.

Worshippers followed the monks, wearing masks due to the coronavirus. Some monks carried small children over the embers as dark smoke billowed into the air.

Tokyo is preparing to host the Summer Olympics this year, delayed from 2020 because of the coronavirus, with domestic opinion polls showing people favour limiting the number of spectators at the games.

"Coronavirus infections are spreading globally, so I prayed that it doesn't spread any further," said Eriko Nakamura, 46, as Buddhist monks chanted in the background.

Pakistan couple expelled by univ after public proposal

AFP, Lahore

A university in deeply conservative Pakistan expelled two students who embraced after getting engaged on campus, after a video of the incident spread on social media this week.

In the clip, a female university student gets down on one knee and proposes to her boyfriend; the couple can then be seen hugging and holding bouquets of flowers as onlookers cheer them on and film the scene.

The University of Lahore said the pair had acted "in violation of university rules".

It added in a statement on Friday that they had failed to appear before a disciplinary hearing and were later expelled for "serious infraction of the code of conduct".

Public displays of affection between couples -- whether married or not -- are viewed as culturally and religiously unacceptable.

Many women in patriarchal Pakistan find it hard to defy tradition, with much of the society still operating under a strict code of honour.

The couple has refused to apologise.

"We did nothing wrong, and we are not sorry for this," Hadiqa Javaid tweeted.

"Can anyone explain to us what wrong we did by proposal in public in University of Lahore?" her fiance Shehryar Ahmed said, adding that couples had previously proposed to each other on campus.

They said they had received online threats for the show of affection.

Condemning the university's decision, the Progressive Students' Collective union on Saturday tweeted that "moral policing in universities has become a norm lately".

Some universities in Pakistan have barred female students from wearing jeans, tank-tops or makeup, while others regulate interactions between male and female students.

It was an accident, not an attack

India's EC says on Nandigram incident; fiery WB CM, on wheel chair, stages rally

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India's Election Commission yesterday ruled out that there was any attack on West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee in Nandigram, saying it was an accident.

The EC, after reviewing the reports sent by two of EC's special poll observers deputed in West Bengal and the state government on the incident, concluded that Mamata sustained injuries while campaigning due to "lapse on the part of her security in charge," said the sources.

There were allegations that the door of her SUV was pushed while she was campaigning in Nandigram on Wednesday evening after filing her nomination from the constituency. Mamata fell down and sustained injuries on her left leg and waist.

Her leg in a bandage and ensconced in a wheelchair, Mamata yesterday returned to the assembly election campaign pitch and said nothing will keep her from protecting the democratic rights of the people.

The 66-year-old led a rally from Mayo Road



in central Kolkata to Hazra in the south, said "I am hurt and unwell, but my goal remains intact... I will continue to roam around Bengal on this wheelchair. If I go on bed rest, who will reach out to the people of Bengal?" she said.

The ruling came after West Bengal's ruling Trinamool Congress raise its concerns EC over the Nandigram incident, which they termed as premeditated. On the other hand, the BJP too had moved the EC and demanded an impartial probe into the incident and that the video footage of the incident be made public.

Meanwhile, Suvenhu Adhikari, who has

switched over to the BJP from TMC recently, yesterday attacked his former party saying those who have given promotions to the police officers responsible for the 2007 Nandigram police firing, which left 14 people dead, have no right to seek votes from the people of the area.

Mamata has left her Bhowanipore constituency in Kolkata to fight Adhikari in Nandigram where an anti-land acquisition movement against the then leftist government catapulted her party to power in 2011.

YASHWANT SINHA JOINS TRINAMUL On Saturday, former Union finance minister Yashwant Sinha joined the Trinamul Congress in the presence of Lok Sabha leader Sudip Bandopadhyay, Rajya Sabha leader Derek O'Brien and Bengal's minister for panchayat and rural affairs Subrata Mukherjee at Trinamul Bhavan.

"The democratic stature of our republic is in danger. Today, almost every institution of democracy has become weakened and unfortunately, the judiciary is also among them," he said as he explained why joined TMC.



Gandhi leading his followers on the famous salt march to break the British Salt Laws, March, 1930.



Women played key role during the movement by organising salt making at multiple locations.

91 YEARS OF SALT MARCH

When Gandhi's Salt March Rattled British Colonial Rule

EVAN ANDREWS

Since the late-1910s, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi had been at the forefront of India's quest to shake off the yoke of British colonial domination, otherwise known as the "Raj." The thin and abstemious former lawyer had led civil disobedience against colonial policies, encouraged Indians to boycott British goods, and had served two years in prison on charges of sedition.

Gandhi's philosophy of "satyagraha," which sought to reveal truth and confront injustice through nonviolence, had made him the most polarizing figure on the subcontinent. While the British regarded him with suspicion, Indians had begun calling him "Mahatma," or "great-souled."

When the Indian National Congress redoubled its efforts for independence in January 1930, many assumed Gandhi would stage his most ambitious satyagraha campaign to date. Yet rather than launching a frontal assault on more high profile injustices, Gandhi proposed to frame his protest around salt.

As with many other commodities, Britain had kept India's salt trade under its thumb since the 19th century, forbidding natives from manufacturing or selling the mineral and forcing them to buy it at high cost from British merchants. Since salt was a nutritional necessity in India's steamy climate, Gandhi saw the salt laws as an inexcusable evil.

Many of Gandhi's comrades were initially skeptical. "We were bewildered and could not fit in a national struggle with common salt," remembered Jawaharlal Nehru, later India's first prime minister. Another colleague compared the proposed protest to striking a "fly" with a "sledgehammer." Yet for Gandhi,

the salt monopoly was a stark example of the ways the Raj unfairly imposed Britain's will on even the most basic aspects of Indian life. Its effects cut across religious and class differences, harming both Hindus and Muslims, rich and poor.

On March 2, he penned a letter to British Viceroy Lord Irwin and made a series of requests, among them the repeal of the salt tax. If ignored, he promised to launch a satyagraha campaign. "My ambition," he wrote, "is no less than to convert the British people through nonviolence and thus make them see the wrong they have done to India."

Irwin offered no formal response, and at dawn on March 12, 1930, Gandhi put his plan into action. Clad in a homespun shawl and sandals and holding a wooden walking stick, he set off on foot from his ashram near Ahmedabad with several dozen companions and began an overland trek to the Arabian Sea town of Dandi. There, he planned to defy the salt tax by illegally harvesting the mineral from the beachside. The 60-year-old expected to be arrested or even beaten during the journey, but the British feared a public backlash and elected not to quash the march.

With Gandhi setting a brisk pace at its head, the column crossed the countryside at a rate of roughly 12 miles per day. Gandhi paused at dozens of villages along the route to address the masses and condemn both the Raj and the salt tax. He also encouraged government workers to embrace his philosophy of noncooperation by quitting their jobs. "What is government service worth, after all?" he asked during a stop at the city of Nadiad. "A government job gives you the power to tyrannize over others."

As Gandhi and his followers inched toward

the western coastline, thousands of Indians joined their ranks, transforming the small cadre of protestors into a miles-long procession. The New York Times and other media outlets began following the walk's progress, quoting Gandhi as he denounced the salt tax as "monstrous" and chided the British for "being ashamed to arrest me."

In addition to lambasting the Raj, Gandhi also used his speeches to lecture on the injustices of the Indian caste system, which labeled the lowest classes "untouchable" and deprived them of certain rights. Gandhi stunned onlookers by bathing at an "untouchable" well at the village of Dabhan, and during another stop in Gajera, he refused to begin his speech until the untouchables were allowed to sit with the rest of the audience.

Gandhi and his party finally arrived at Dandi on April 5, having walked 241 miles in the span of just 24 days. The following morning, thousands of journalists and supporters gathered to watch him commit his symbolic crime. After immersing himself in the sparkling waters of the Arabian Sea, he walked ashore where the beach's rich salt deposits rested. British officials had reportedly ground the salt into the sand in the hope of frustrating Gandhi's efforts, but he easily found a lump of salt-rich mud and held it aloft in triumph. "With this," he announced, "I am shaking the foundations of the British Empire."

Gandhi's transgression served as a signal for other Indians to join in what had become known as the "Salt Satyagraha." Over the next several weeks, supporters across the subcontinent flocked to the seaside to illegally harvest the mineral. Women took on a crucial role. Many boiled water to make salt, and others

sold illicit salt in city markets or led pickets in front of liquor and foreign cloth shops. "It seemed as though a spring had suddenly been released," Nehru later said. Some 80,000 people were arrested in the spree of civil disobedience, and many were beaten by police.

Gandhi was taken into custody on May 5, after he announced his intention to lead a peaceful raid on a government salt works at Dharasana. But even with their leader behind bars, his followers pressed on. On May 21, some 2,500 marchers ignored warnings from police and made an unarmed advance on the Dharasana depot.

American journalist Webb Miller was on the scene, and he later described what followed. "Suddenly," he wrote, "at a word of command, scores of native police rushed upon the advancing marchers and rained blows on their heads...Not one of the marchers even raised an arm to fend off the blows. They went down like ten-pins."

Miller's harrowing account of the beatings circulated widely in the international media, and was even read aloud in the U.S. Congress. Winston Churchill—no great fan of Gandhi—would later admit that the protests and their aftermath had "inflicted such humiliation and defiance as has not been known since the British first trod the soil of India."

Gandhi remained in lockup until early 1931, but he emerged from prison more revered than ever before. Time magazine named him its 1930 "Man of the Year," and newspapers around the globe jumped at any opportunity to quote him or report on his exploits. British Viceroy Lord Irwin finally agreed to negotiate with him, and in March 1931, the two hammered out the Gandhi-Irwin Pact, which ended the satyagraha in

exchange for several concessions including the release of thousands of political prisoners. While the agreement largely maintained the Raj's monopoly over salt, it gave Indians living on the coasts the right to produce the mineral from the sea.

Difficult days still lay ahead. Gandhi and his supporters would launch more protests in the 1930s and 40s and endure even more stints behind bars, and Indian independence would have to wait until 1947—only months before Gandhi was shot dead by a militant Hindu.

But while the immediate political results of the Salt March were relatively minor, Gandhi's satyagraha had nevertheless succeeded in his goal of "shaking the foundations of the British Empire." The trek to the sea had galvanized Indian resistance to the Raj, and its international coverage had introduced the world to Gandhi and his followers' astonishing commitment to nonviolence.

Among others, Martin Luther King, Jr. would later cite the Salt March as a crucial influence on his own philosophy of civil disobedience. Gandhi had sent a simple message by grasping a handful of salt on the beach at Dandi, and millions had answered his call.

Evan Andrews is a historian. The article was originally published in www.history.com on October 2, 2019.

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



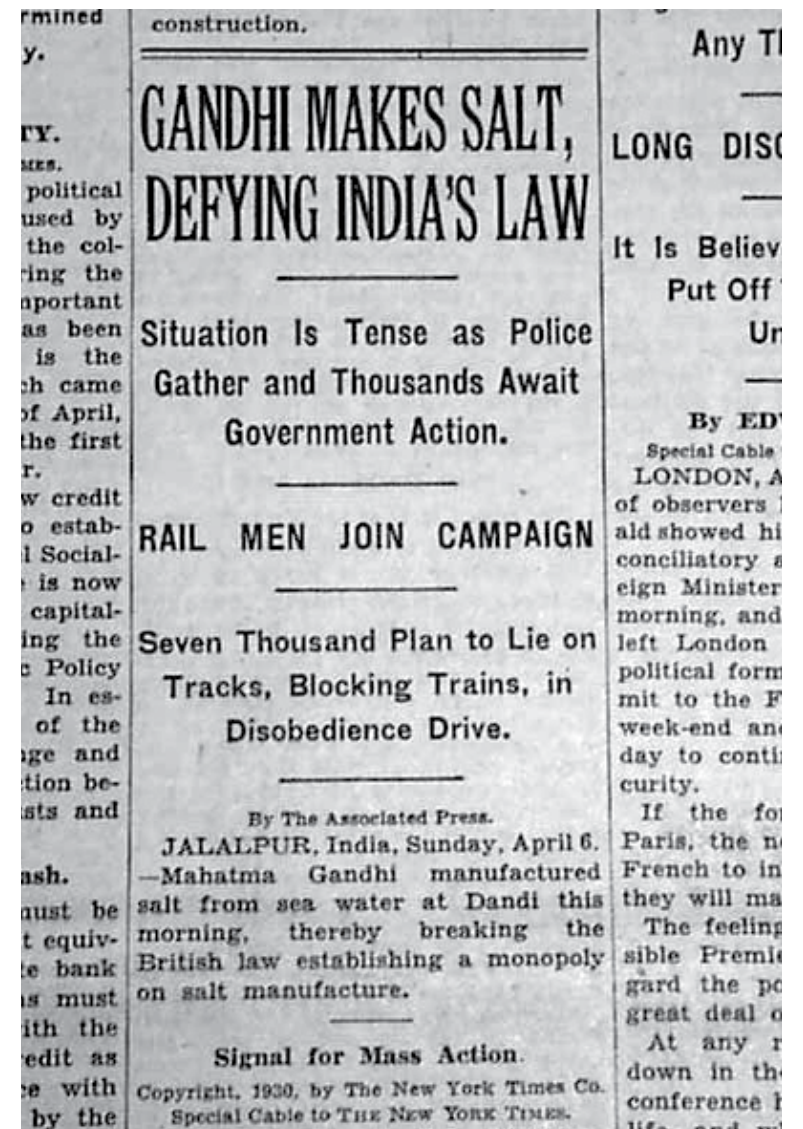
Gandhi at Dandi, South Gujarat, picking salt on the beach at the end of the Salt March, 5 April 1930. Behind him is his second son Manilal Gandhi and Mithuben Petit.



Mahatma Gandhi and Sarojini Naidu during the March.



Gandhi at a public rally during the Salt Satyagraha.



The New York Times report on the Salt March, April 6, 1930.

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA MONDAY MARCH 15, 2021, CHAITRA 1, 1427 BS

Are we ready for a third spike of the pandemic?

Govt must campaign for compliance with health guidelines

NO sooner had the virus reached a trough than we see a spike in the number of infected cases in the country. Some countries have been so badly infected, like Italy, that they have gone into another countrywide lock down. To make matters worse, different variants have emerged that might be resistant to the vaccines developed so far, certainly they are considerably more resistant to treatment than the original Covid-19 virus, and more infectious.

Statistics show that in the last four weeks the number of infected persons has shot up in the country and hospital admission has spiked tremendously, particularly in the last one week, by almost 100 percent. According to virologists, there may be several reasons for this. The fall of infection rate to below two percentage in the previous 2-3 months gave us the feeling that the pandemic was all but gone, and the minimum precautionary measures of masking and social distancing were no longer required. Added to that was the false notion that with taking of the first dose of the vaccine we could go back to business as usual. And of course, there is the new UK variant which is, reportedly, much more infectious than the old variety. Virologists also fear that due to repeated mutations, one cannot dismiss the possibility of the growth of a new local variety of the virus.

The newly infected patients in the majority of cases not only need oxygen but intensive critical care also. Unfortunately, we have been again caught off guard. The available ICUs are full to capacity, and if the current trend continues, will fall short of the requirement. As it has been reported, many patients are being turned away from some hospitals. While we take comfort from the assurance of the DGHS, that our facilities can treat the rising number of patients on the existing ICU beds and that our oxygen supply is enough and that central oxygen supply systems have been set up in many medical college hospitals and the hospitals with 250 beds, we must cater for the new wave.

The virus is so highly infectious that no facility can ever be enough. Therefore, apart from enhancing the hospital facilities, we believe that the best way to combat the virus is to prevent its transmission and growth by adopting all the protective measures as individuals. That means masking up mandatorily, washing our hands at regular intervals, and maintaining social distance. We believe that the government must start another campaign to reinforce the observance of these health guidelines. We can go back to business as usual, but only at our own peril.

Unplanned industrialisation killing the Sutang river

When will the authorities act to save our rivers?

THE rivers of Bangladesh are so crucial to its existence that they have been recognised as "living entities" or "legal persons" with their own set of rights by the High Court, and the National River Conservation Commission (NRCC) has been appointed as the legal guardian of all rivers in the country. Despite this, despite the 17-point High Court judgment from July 2019 which clearly stated that "killing a river is virtually a collective suicide for all", and despite the prime minister herself giving several directives to the involved actors to protect rivers—the destruction of our rivers and other waterbodies continues unabated.

And the latest victim is the Sutang river. According to a report in this daily, the Shoijura canal in Habiganj was re-excavated seven years ago for the crucial task of bringing fresh water from the Sutang to irrigate surrounding villages; but now, it has become a hazard affecting at least 30 villages, as well as the river itself. As is often the case, the culprits are a number of factories established on its banks that are dumping industrial waste into the canal and contaminating the water, to the extent that the Sutang river is now too toxic for aquatic life and for irrigation purposes. On top of that, locals have reported that the polluted water is causing skin diseases and damaging crops, but demands raised by environmentalists and local representatives have, so far, fallen on deaf ears. As the Sutang is connected with the Meghna, this wanton destruction is ultimately affecting one of the major rivers of Bangladesh.

March 14 was the International Day of Action for Rivers, and environmentalists and activists came together to give the government a number of recommendations on saving our rivers, which included dealing with the dumping of waste and making it mandatory for all factories to install waste treatment plants. Will the authorities take these recommendations on board, when they are failing to take even the simplest steps to stop river pollution due to unplanned and unregulated industrialisation?

In almost every report this daily has printed on the destruction of rivers, whether through industrial pollution, land-grabbing or faulty river management, there have been accusations of influential persons escaping any sort of accountability for the actions that are negatively impacting rivers. In this case too, local environmentalists allege that large companies have bought up cheap land and are now occupying and polluting the Sutang river with impunity. Even DoE officials have admitted that despite running effluent treatment plants, it is possible that untreated industrial waste is being discharged into the canal through less visible streams.

Our question is, what are the authorities going to do about it? Are they going to finally step into their role as the protector of our rivers, and take action? Or are they going to allow the unregulated industrialisation around the Sutang to destroy not just the river, but the wetlands and agriculture in surrounding areas, causing untold damage to the environment, as well as to the health and livelihoods of the local population?

Bangladesh's achievements in 50 years and making it meaningful



FAHMIDA KHATUN

MARCH is a month that carries special significance for Bangladesh. In March 1971, the country got involved in the Liberation War, which continued for nine long months. This war was the culmination of a prolonged movement for emancipation from economic, political and cultural suppression by the then West Pakistan. Thus, the Liberation War was influenced by the ethos to establish a country where the underlying philosophy of development policies were equity and justice. Independence was about achieving democratic rights, economic rights, social rights and cultural rights. The aspirations of the people of Bangladesh have been articulated eloquently in the constitution of the country.

However, Bangladesh's journey in the post-independence period has not been smooth. It has experienced turmoil in the form of assassinations, coups, counter-coups and military rule. These were coupled with corruption and bad governance. Within three years of Bangladesh's independence, the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was assassinated in August 1975, by a group of junior army officers, in an attempt to overthrow the incumbent government. Following this brutal killing, a sharp division in political ideology began to take root in the country. After a long period of instability and misrule, Bangladesh moved towards a democratic transition through parliamentary elections in 1991.

This transition, however, could not continue uninterrupted as politics could not take a developed and institutional shape and instead became highly confrontational. So, after a few elections, the democratic process faced another blow in the midst of bitter hostility among the dominant political parties in 2006, when transition of power through an election became uncertain. This resulted in the assumption of power by a military-backed non-partisan caretaker government, which took over in January 2007 with the promise to hold a free and fair election. An election was held in December 2008 and Bangladesh Awami League came into power, winning an overwhelming majority. However, the parliament became dysfunctional after the election and political opposition has become weaker over time. Hence, 50 years on, Bangladesh's political journey is still a "work in progress".

In terms of the economic situation, in 1971, Bangladesh inherited a poor and undiversified economy. It was predominantly an agricultural economy with low productivity. It had underdeveloped industrial and services sectors, a rapidly growing population and an overall poor infrastructure. Due to

decades of British and Pakistani colonial exploitation, the economy was stuck in the vicious cycle of poverty. Low levels of income, savings and investment were resulting in a low growth. On top of this, the war had caused serious damage to the economy.

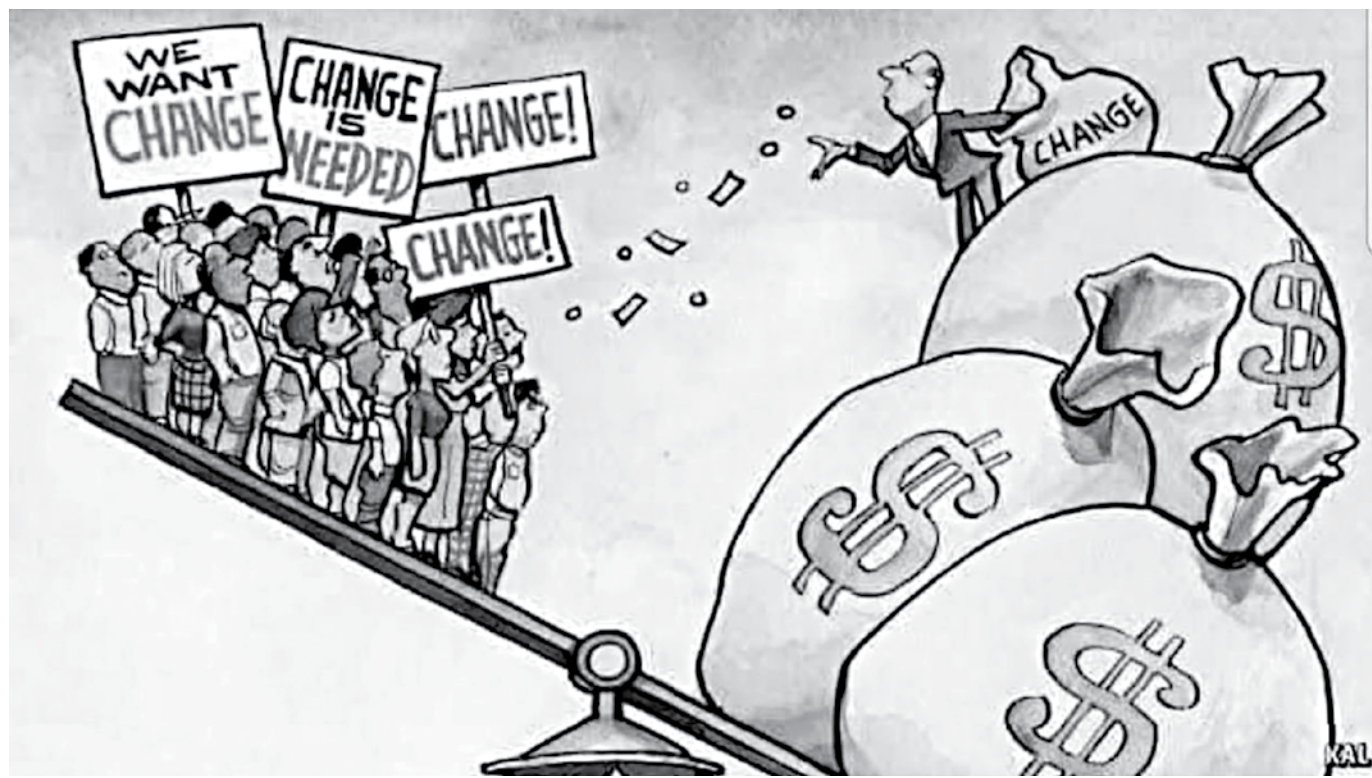
Despite such unfavourable circumstances and constraints on resources, Bangladesh has made spectacular economic and social progress over the last five decades. For one, the growth rate of its Gross Domestic Production (GDP) has been impressive. On average, the GDP of Bangladesh has risen from about 3 percent in the 1970s to 7 percent in the 2010s, and had crossed 8 percent just before the Covid-19 pandemic set in. Though the pandemic has slowed Bangladesh's growth, its GDP growth is projected to rise faster than

Economic progress has impacted the social lives of the population positively on many counts. By 2016, the share of population below the poverty line had declined from more than 80 percent in the early 1970s to 24.2 percent. Life expectancy has also increased by more than one and a half times since 1973. In a similar vein, maternal mortality has declined by almost four times and child mortality by about five times from what they were in the eighties. And there are many more visible progresses of which we are proud of.

The recognition of such progress has come from several organisations. In February 2021, Bangladesh fulfilled all three criteria to graduate from a least developed country (LDC) to a developing country, for the second time since 2018. The United Nations has recommended

increasing. With the pandemic hitting the economy hard, inequality may have widened in Bangladesh, as is apprehended in many other countries too.

Therefore, the macroeconomic numbers are only a part of the full story. GDP may continue to grow, and per capita income may also rise—but they mean nothing in the end, particularly for those who live on the edge of vulnerability. This is not only because the process of estimating GDP and per capita income are faulty and provides an incomplete picture, but also because, in the absence of major enablers of economic progress (such as participatory development process), growth will continue to suffer from disillusionment. Studies indicate that if political and economic institutions are inclusive and pluralistic, everyone will have incentives to invest and success will



that of other countries. High growth has pushed per capita income upwards by 23 times in 2020, from where it was in 1973.

The characteristics of a modern economy—that is, a graduation from being agriculturally-dependent to growing through the industry and services sector—is also being observed gradually. Currently, the share of agriculture in Bangladesh's GDP is about 13 percent, while that of industry and services sectors are about 35 percent and 52 percent, respectively. The economy has also been integrated with the global economy. Shares of exports, imports and remittances in GDP have increased over time. Moreover, high imports are possible with the help of impressive remittance flow. On the other hand, dependency on foreign aid to undertake development work has declined by almost half in terms of its share in GDP in 2020 (from that of 1973), indicating a more self-reliant growth effort.

Bangladesh's graduation by 2026. Besides, in 2015, Bangladesh became a lower-middle income country from being a low-income country, according to the World Bank's classification of countries.

It should be noted, though, that the fruits of all this progress are yet to be distributed equally to each and every member of Bangladeshi society. So, while we rejoice at the achievements we have made since our independence, it is important to remember that we have also let many opportunities pass us by. Despite steady progress in several areas, the promise of an equitable and just society has remained unfulfilled. Income inequality persists as resources and wealth are concentrated amongst a few people in society, many of whom are politically connected. The nexus between politics and business is also strong. As the number of the ultra-rich people is increasing fast, the Gini coefficient that measures the country's income inequality is also

follow. However, nations find it difficult to succeed if institutions protect the political and economic interests of only a small group of powerful people.

On the occasion of Bangladesh's golden jubilee, we celebrate the achievements made by the country with pride. A lot of blood, sweat and tears have gone into Bangladesh's independence and victory. The sacrifice of our freedom fighters can only be meaningful if tangible change in the lives, particularly of the poorest of common citizens, happens. This requires an inclusive democratic and development process. Participation of the broader section of the population in the economic and political process can make the 50 years of economic progress even more meaningful.

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.

It's time to incentivise sustainability



MOSTAFIZ UDDIN

RECENTLY it was announced that one of the world's leading online fashion companies, Boohoo, is looking at financially incentivising its leadership team for achieving sustainability targets. The business discussed this issue in a meeting with the UK government late last year and the government has now written to the company's chairman, urging him to link executive bonuses to progress on workers' rights and environmental sustainability.

We have seen talk of this kind of thing in the past but not so much in the textile and apparel industry. I believe this picture may change soon, not just because it is the only sure-fire way to ensure companies will do what they say they are going to on sustainability issues, but also because of compliance reasons.

The regulatory authorities in one of our key target markets—the EU—are more and more looking at supply chain due diligence. In other words, they are considering laws which would make companies within the EU accountable for transgressions in supply chains in Asia. So, for instance, if it was found that a brand was importing clothing that had been made using forced labour or in a factory that was polluting the environment, the brand would be held accountable and may face fines or other penalties.

I am digressing slightly, although these issues are interlinked. Let's go back to the issue of incentives. It's my belief that all actors in the apparel industry—brands, their suppliers, even workers—need to be incentivised to behave responsibly, ethically and with the environment in mind. The challenge is that this is rarely the case right now. In fact, in many instances there is absolutely no incentive to operate responsibly.

Let me use the example of my own factory. Like many other RMG operators in Bangladesh, I set out to meet the ultimate environmental and ethical standards. I have all the water and energy saving technology, I have the accreditations, I look after my staff well and strive to meet the highest sustainability standards. My factory is far from alone in that; my story is mirrored across many other, progressive factories

What is going to compel us all as an industry to do the right thing? How can we be incentivised as individuals and businesses to invest in sustainable practices?

Surely linking sustainable achievements with bonuses is a great start. There has been talk of this for years in supply chains, talk of purchasing managers being incentivised to purchase along green lines. The talk has never



in Bangladesh and, indeed, in other parts of Asia.

As factory owners we have invested in some cases because we want to do the right thing but, in many cases, because we believe there will be a financial pay-off. In other words, many owners believe brands will be more likely to use our factories—and pay a premium where appropriate—if we do things the right way.

The problem comes when this does not work out; when factories which have done none of these things and basically done the bare minimum also continue to get business and thrive. Where is the incentive to invest in green business then?

All of this was brought to mind when I related the Boohoo story earlier around linking executive pay to sustainability progress. We are talking about a universal issue here and it is one of incentives.

materialised into action. When I deal with buyers it is almost always price, price, price. Sustainability teams and purchasing teams still appear to operate separately after all these years. They should be one and the same thing or, if not, at least singing off the same hymn sheet.

The ability to purchase sustainably, to identify the best factories in terms of green practices, to understand different materials and production methods, to reward good suppliers should be the number one attribute of a good purchasing manager. It should supersede all else if we genuinely want to turn the needle on sustainability.

I talked about the shifting legislative environment earlier and the growing importance of due diligence. Here, again, incentives are a crucial factor. Governments have a critical role to play

in ensuring that businesses which operate sustainably gain a clear commercial advantage. This can be a two-pronged approach: on the one hand, heavy fines or punishments for bad practice or serious transgressions; and rewards/incentive schemes for industry leaders. These rewards could include tax-breaks and other fiscal incentives. There must be a benefit to behaving responsibly, otherwise you create an unfair playing field whereby laggards get to cut corners and save costs with no punishment. In effect, they actually gain a commercial advantage here if all are treated the same.

I see examples of all these things playing out in the broader fashion industry. For years, we as manufacturers, have known who the best buyers are—the ones who treat suppliers the fairest, the ones who do not cut corners, who pay their bills and who can generally be trusted.

Likewise, we all know the brands which are always looking to make a saving, which drive unnecessarily hard on price and do not appear to understand sustainability issues (and that the sustainable way can sometimes be more expensive).

And yet, guess what? The public often do not know the difference. They are none-the-wiser and when I see things written about our industry, it often appears that all brands are tarred with the same brush. I come back to that word again: incentives. Where is the incentive to do right if all are treated the same?

This is the issue our industry must grapple with. There has to be a clear pathway for sustainability and a suitable reward structure for those doing good, whether that be individuals or businesses.

At the moment, there are far too many cases where people and businesses are rewarded very handsomely for practices which exploit people and the planet. As long as that remains the case, where is the real incentive to change?

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

RTI: All three branches of government fall within its ambit

SHAMSUL BARI and RUHI NAZ

THE deleterious impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the operations of the Right to Information (RTI) Act has been much discussed in the last one year. We drew attention to it in several of our columns. We also highlighted the positive role it played in enhancing public awareness about the importance of the law during a crisis period. In today's column, we revert to its use in normal times.

Let's look at three examples from neighbouring India, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka—some more recent than others.

The Sri Lankan example stemmed from an RTI request filed by a local journalist, Chamara Sampath, who sought from the secretary general of the Parliament the list of Members of Parliament (MP) who had submitted Declaration of Assets and Liabilities during the years 2010-2018. The secretary general declined to release them, arguing that they were submitted confidentially by the MPs to the speaker, and he had no access to them. He also felt that the request infringed on the privileges of the Parliament.

On appeal by the journalist to the Right to Information Commission (RTIC) of Sri Lanka, the latter set aside, in a decision last month, the refusal of the secretary general and directed him to release the desired information. It based its decision on the ground that the list of MPs did not amount to personal information or information that infringed parliamentary privilege provision of the RTI Act.

The commission further held that MPs, by taking on a public role, had accepted a higher level of public scrutiny and the requested information would provide the people with crucial insights into compliance of the law by MPs who held elected office and were financed by public funds. As such, there was an overriding public interest in the disclosure of the information.

Equally significant was the RTIC ruling that

since the Parliament was a Public Authority under the RTI Act, it is of no consequence whether the requested information was in the hands of the speaker or the secretary general. The latter being the "administrative arm" of Parliament, had "institutional possession" of the information. It is remarkable that unlike many other commissions in the region, the RTIC took a constructive approach to advance the objectives of the law rather than looking for loopholes to deny it.

The example from Pakistan relates to a decision made by the Pakistan Information Commission in an RTI appeal submitted by a citizen, Mukhtar Ahmed Ali. The latter was aggrieved by the demand for proof of his citizenship by the Public Information Officer (PIO) of the National Assembly (NA) of Pakistan to whom the initial RTI request was submitted and which he considered *ultra vires*. In its June 2019 decision, the Commission allowed the appeal and directed all PIOs under the Right of Access to Information (RTAI) Act 2017 of Pakistan not to demand a certified copy of the national identity card, CNIC, of an RTI applicant, as it was not required by the law. It ordered the respondent to provide the requested information within a stipulated period.

It all began when the appellant submitted a RTI application to the PIO of the National Assembly of Pakistan, requesting information on the total sanctioned posts of the NA: the pay scale against different positions; total number of vacancies and dates since they lay vacant; number of staff members who were not regular but engaged on a daily-wage or short-term or long-term basis; total number of female staff members and persons with disabilities, etc. Though the information sought appeared innocuous, the PIO declined to disclose them and looked for a way out. Unfortunately, such a tendency is not too uncommon among PIOs in the region.

It is remarkable, however, that the



commission allowed the appeal and held that the RTAI Act 2017 did not require applicants to establish proof of citizenship for making information requests. It underlined that the elected representatives of the people who had adopted the law had not restricted the right of access to information only to CNIC-holding citizens of Pakistan because they did not want to deny its benefits to members of vulnerable groups who did not have access to CNIC. It further stated that the constitutionally guaranteed fundamental human right of access to information in matters of public importance should be interpreted by public bodies as a right of all citizens of Pakistan and not a privilege extended only to those who can first provide certified copies of their CNICs. A very positive approach indeed!

The Indian example relates to another arm of the government—the judiciary, and more

specifically, the Supreme Court of India (SCI). It has emerged as a landmark case in the annals of the RTI Act of India. It underwent a long battle for accountability and transparency waged by an Indian citizen, Mr Subhash Chandra Agarwal, against the Central Public Information Officer (CPIO) of the office of the Chief Justice of India (CJI). The latter had declined to disclose information sought by the applicant some 10 years ago, claiming that the office of CJI did not fall within the purview of the RTI Act. The request included information regarding assets and liabilities of judges.

In a remarkable judgement, delivered on November 13, 2019, the SCI held that the office of CJI was indeed a "public authority" within the ambit of RTI Act. A five-judge constitution bench, headed by the CJI himself, having considered three separate appeals filed by the CPIO, challenging the Delhi High

Court verdict of 2010 and that of the Central Information Commission of India (CIC) in the same year, upheld the verdict in three separate but concurring judgments.

"Nobody wants to remain in the state of darkness or keep anybody in the state of darkness," the judgement said, adding that: "The question is drawing a line. In the name of transparency, you can't destroy the institution." The judges also held that while public interest demands accountability, judicial independence was equally sacrosanct. They concluded, however, that bringing the CJI's office within the ambit of RTI Act would not undermine that independence.

The verdict was hailed by RTI activists of India, including former CIC of India, Wahajat Habibullah, who saw it as "the consummation of the implementation of the law and not the initiation of any new process." Former Information Commissioner, Shailesh Gandhi, well-known for his theological interpretation of the law, lamented that "it took 10 years for the Supreme Court to take this decision". Others found it marking "an advancement of the key right of the people to seek information about public functionaries" and felt that "the judgement had once again reiterated a famous adage that "sunlight is the best disinfectant and therefore transparency in the functioning of all institutions, be it a legislature, executive or even judiciary, is indispensable in a modern democracy."

We hope that RTI users of Bangladesh will find the examples instructive and a source of knowledge and inspiration for public officials from all three branches of the government and for the Information Commission itself. They edify the immense possibilities of the RTI Act to advance good governance, benefitting everybody, and the role each can play to achieve its goals.

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Why are we forgetting Lakingme?

SHOHEL CHANDRA HAJANG

BANGLADESH is experiencing an epidemic of violence against women and girls. Access to justice has long been a challenge in Bangladesh, particularly for this type of violence. On many occasions these cases were dismissed as unsolvable and were simply ignored. The Lakingme Chakma case is no different from these other examples of violence against women and girls. We are also forgetting this case like the previous cases without taking further action to bring justice for her. Lakingme case has been also ignored, mostly because she is from an indigenous marginalised group. Indigenous women and girls are one of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable segments of the country's population. They are typically deprived of basic human rights, including lack of access to education

Bazar's hospital morgue awaiting a decision as to whom the dead body would be handed over. This issue took 25 days to resolve. Finally, the court decided that Lakingme was under 18 (legally still a child) and her dead body was handed over to her parents on January 4.

Lakingme's parents finally got their daughter's dead body. But it was completely unjust and inhumane that the state machinery, the administration and everyone else concerned could not have been more responsive to her abduction on January 5, 2020, in spite of Lakingme's parents demanding her return from the beginning. It is impossible to know what kind of torture she had endured after the abduction—torture that lasted almost one year and resulted in her death. Such a heinous crime demands a fair and thorough investigation.

was abducted from her Shikhali Chakma Para home in Cox's Bazar. It has been alleged that the abductors were led by a non-indigenous man, Ataullah (23) of Cox's Bazar. Allegedly, she was later forcibly converted and married to Ataullah at a registrar's office after presenting a forged birth certificate showing her to be 18-years-old. Lakingme had just given birth to a baby girl 13 days before she died.

It has now been ruled by the court that Lakingme was a child and her father claimed that his daughter had been abducted. If she was a minor, according to our national laws, those who had abducted her and forcibly converted her have committed a serious crime. It has also been claimed by her family that Lakingme was not only forcibly abducted and converted, but that she was raped and was either murdered or forced to commit suicide to escape from her horrible situation. Lakingme's family must get justice and the accused must be held accountable for their actions. After this story went viral on social media and various news channels, we were all able to see pictures of the victim as well as the tears of the victim's parents. Not surprisingly, we saw little of the faces of the alleged abductors and their family members. Moreover, to date, no-one has been held to account for the atrocities committed against Lakingme. We would not have been able to build a strong movement to get justice for her except for the actions taken by a few human rights, women and indigenous organisations. Unfortunately, we have been unable to engage mainstream organisations and their members and to add their voices to this case. We have had this difficulty because Lakingme is from an indigenous group, is not a member of a mainstream religious community and is a poor girl from a remote area near Cox's Bazar. She was a human being and deserved the right to live! If this could be done to her, what progress in the area of human rights are we seeing in Bangladesh, even after 50 years of independence?

The existing environment continues to foster violence against indigenous women and girls because the perpetrators of violence against Lakingme believe they are above the law and will not be punished. There are five crimes related to this case: abduction, forced conversion, child marriage, rape, and suicide instigation/murder. Moreover, Lakingme's family and the indigenous communities continue feeling insecure in Cox's Bazar after this incident. It is disrespectful, both to the women of Cox's Bazar and to the ideals of human rights in general, for the state to fail taking any effective action against these crimes.

We have come to expect improvement in women's rights because the government of Bangladesh ratified international treaties like the Convention on Elimination of All Forms of

Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD), International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR). These mechanisms are supposed to ensure equal rights for men and women to enjoy civil and political rights and free them from discrimination. Moreover, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) has provisions for security and protection of indigenous women, to free themselves from discrimination and to empower them to assert their rights and preserve their culture. In addition, the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act 2000 and

section 376 of the Penal Code of Bangladesh provides that: "Whoever commits rape shall be punished with imprisonment for life or with imprisonment of either description for a term which may extend to ten years, and shall also be liable to fine." Moreover, a Bangladeshi court issued the death penalty for the first time to five convicts in a rape case after the country amended the law to include a death provision, according to official sources.

The Bangladesh government should take immediate action against the perpetrators who were involved in Lakingme Chakma's abduction and death. The perpetrators must be given exemplary punishment, after an impartial investigation is conducted into her death. There should be a divisional enquiry

made into the Police Bureau of Investigation team and Cox's Bazar Public Prosecutor for the negligent handling of Lakingme's abduction case. Those involved in forging Lakingme's birth certificate, her forced conversion and the marriage of a minor, should all be punished. Furthermore, the government should take the initiative to ensure the safety and care of Lakingme's baby. And also ensure the security of Lakingme's family and their proper compensation and guarantee that indigenous women and girls in Bangladesh have proper access to justice.

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A number of rights groups, indigenous student organisations and activists holding a candlelight vigil in front of the national parliament, seeking justice for Lakingme Chakma.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

at all levels and types, healthcare, economic and political participation and control over material and immaterial resources.

Indigenous women in Bangladesh often face triple discrimination due to their status as members of a religious minority, indigeneity or ethnicity and for their gendered position. Unfortunately, Lakingme has always had to live with this extreme level of discrimination. We have yet to see justice being served in the case of the Kalpona Chakma abduction (1996), Kritika Tripura's killing (2018), along with hundreds of assorted cases of rape and other violent actions that have happened against indigenous women and girls in Bangladesh over the years. Regrettably, such violence is also increasing every year. Indigenous peoples in Bangladesh account for less than two percent of the country's population, but experience a higher rate of violence against women and girls, according to the Kapaeng Foundation.

However, most people have known of the case of Lakingme Chakma's tragedy from December 9, 2020, when she was found dead. At the time, the body was kept in Cox's

We have learned that after his daughter's abduction, Lakingme's father, Lala Aung Chakma, went to the nearby Teknaf Police Station to file a case, but the former Officer in Charge (OC), Pradeep Kumar Das, didn't record the case of his daughter's abduction. Instead, the OC suggested that the father file a general diary (GD). In either case, the police took no action. As the police did not take any action, Lakingme's father subsequently filed a case with Cox's Bazar Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal on January 27. There is evidence that the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) did not investigate the case thoroughly enough. Lakingme's family and the indigenous society, in general, again learned how careless the state administration's response was when investigating the abduction of an indigenous girl!

If the administration and OC Pradeep Kumar Das had recorded the case at that time and the PBI had taken the case seriously, the girl could have been rescued in time.

Lakingme was a seventh-grader. She was 14 years and 10 months old on January 5, 2020, when she

পাবনা বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়

নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

তারিখ: ১৪/০৩/২০২১ ইং

স্মারক নং- পাববি/সি/স্ব/স্ব/২০২১/৪৩৬

পাবনা বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের জন্য স্থায়ী ভিত্তিতে জনবল নিয়োগের নিমিত্তে নিম্নবর্ণিত শর্তসাপেক্ষে বাংলাদেশের স্থায়ী নাগরিকদের নিম্নে দেরখাস্ত আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছেঃ

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(১) সেকেন্ড অফিসার (এস্টেট শাখা) (২২০০০-৫৩০৩০) (গ্রেড-৯)	১টি	প্রার্থীকে কোন স্বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে কমপক্ষে স্নাতকসহ স্নাতকোত্তর/সমমানের ডিগ্রির অধিকারী হতে হবে। শিক্ষা জীবনের সকল পর্যায়ে ন্যূনতম দ্বিতীয় বিভাগ/শ্রেণি/সমমানের গ্রেড থাকতে হবে। স্নাতক ও স্নাতকোত্তর ডিগ্রি পর্যায়ে উভয়টিতে ১ম শ্রেণি প্রাপ্তদের অধিকার দেয়া হবে। বয়স অনূর্ধ্ব ৩০ বছর। অথবা প্রার্থীকে কোন স্বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে স্নাতক ডিগ্রির অধিকারী হতে হবে। শিক্ষা জীবনের সকল পর্যায়ে ন্যূনতম দ্বিতীয় বিভাগ/শ্রেণি/সমমানের গ্রেড থাকতে হবে। প্রার্থীকে কোন পাবলিক বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়/সরকারি/আধা-সরকারি/স্বায়ত্বশাসিত প্রতিষ্ঠানে ২য় শ্রেণির কর্মকর্তা/সমমানের পদে কমপক্ষে ০৫ (পাঁচ) বছরের চাকুরির অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে। বয়স অনূর্ধ্ব ৩৫ বছর।

শর্তাবলী :

- আবেদনপত্র দাখিলের শেষ তারিখ ০৪/০৪/২০২১ ইং। সকল আবেদনপত্র রেজিস্ট্রার, পাবনা বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, রাজাপুর, পাবনা, বরাবরে উক্ত তারিখের (০৪/০৪/২০২১ ইং) মধ্যে কাগজের উপর সেরকারি ছুটির দিন ব্যতীত) অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে (৯:০০টা থেকে ৫:০০টা) কেবলমাত্র ডাকযোগে পৌঁছাতে হবে।
- আবেদনের জন্য বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের নিজস্ব ওয়েব সাইট (www.pust.ac.bd)-এ প্রদত্ত ফরমেটে আবেদন করতে হবে। আবেদনপত্রের সাথে নিম্নোক্ত ডকুমেন্টগুলো অবশ্যই সংযুক্ত করতে হবে এবং প্রার্থীকে আবেদনপত্রে স্বাক্ষর করতে হবে :
(ক) সদ্যতোলা পাসপোর্ট আকারের ০৩ কপি রঙিন ছবি (খ) শিক্ষাত্ম যোগ্যতা সন্বিত সকল সনদের সত্যায়িত অনুলিপি (গ) জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্র/জন্ম নিবন্ধনের সত্যায়িত অনুলিপি (ঘ) অভিজ্ঞতা (বেতনকেসসহ) সন্বিত সকল সনদের সত্যায়িত অনুলিপি (যদি থাকে বা প্রয়োজ্য ক্ষেত্রে) (ঙ) প্রকাশনা ও প্রশিক্ষণ সংশ্লিষ্ট সকল সনদের সত্যায়িত অনুলিপি (যদি থাকে বা প্রয়োজ্য ক্ষেত্রে) (চ) ব্যাক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডার।
- (ক) সকল পদের প্রার্থীদের জন্ম ০৭ (সাত) সেট আবেদনপত্র জমা দিতে হবে।
(খ) মূল আবেদনপত্রের সাথে নিজ ঠিকানা সন্বিত ১০/- (দশ) টাকার ডাকচিফটসহ ফেরত খাম সংযুক্ত করতে হবে।
- এই বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে স্বপদ/সমমানের পদে কর্মরত কর্মকর্তা প্রার্থীদের ক্ষেত্রে নির্ধারিত শিক্ষাপত্র যোগ্যতা, অভিজ্ঞতা ও বয়স এর কোন একটি শর্ত শিথিলযোগ্য হবে।
- কর্মকর্তা পদে আবেদনের বেলায় গ্রেডিং পদ্ধতির ক্ষেত্রে প্রথম শ্রেণির সমমান বলতে এস.এস.সি/সমমান ও এইচ.এস.সি/সমমান এর ক্ষেত্রে জিপিএ/সি/সিপিএ ৫.০০ এর জন্য কমপক্ষে ৩.৫০ এবং স্নাতক ও স্নাতকোত্তর পর্যায়ে জিপিএ/সি/সিপিএ ৪.০০ এর জন্য কমপক্ষে ৩.০০ বুঝাবে এবং দ্বিতীয় শ্রেণির সমমান বলতে এস.এস.সি/সমমান ও এইচ.এস.সি/সমমান এর ক্ষেত্রে জিপিএ/সি/সিপিএ ৫.০০ এর জন্য ২.৫০ এবং স্নাতক ও স্নাতকোত্তর পর্যায়ে জিপিএ/সি/সিপিএ ৪.০০ এর জন্য কমপক্ষে ২.২৫ বুঝাবে। নিয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে শিক্ষা জীবনের কোন পর্যায়ে তৃতীয় বিভাগ/শ্রেণি/সমমানের গ্রেড (৫.০০ এর মধ্যে ২.৫০ এবং ৪.০০ এর মধ্যে ২.২৫) এর নিচে গ্রহণযোগ্য হবে না এবং বিদেশি ডিগ্রির ক্ষেত্রে ইউজিসি কর্তৃক সমতুল্য সনদ থাকতে হবে/ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় সমতুল্য সনদ (Equivalence committee) কর্তৃক সুপ্রতিষ্ঠিত হতে হবে।
- চাকরির প্রার্থীদের অবশ্যই যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের মাধ্যমে আবেদন করতে হবে।
- মুক্তিযোদ্ধা কোটার ক্ষেত্রে মুক্তিযোদ্ধার সন্তান প্রার্থীদেরকে সর্বশেষ সরকারি নীতিমালা অনুযায়ী উপযুক্ত কর্তৃপক্ষের সনদপত্রসহ আবেদনপত্র দাখিল করতে হবে। মুক্তিযোদ্ধার সন্তানদের ক্ষেত্রে প্রার্থীর পিতা/মাতার অনুকূলে মুক্তিযুদ্ধ বিষয়ক মন্ত্রণালয় কর্তৃক প্রদত্ত সনদের সত্যায়িত অনুলিপি আবেদনপত্রের সাথে দাখিল করতে হবে।
- উপস্থাপিত/অসম্পূর্ণ এবং বিলম্ব প্রাপ্ত আবেদনপত্র সরাসরি বাতিল বলে গণ্য হবে।
- প্রত্যেক প্রার্থীর তাঁর প্রার্থিত পদের নাম এবং মুক্তিযোদ্ধা কোটার ক্ষেত্রে প্রয়োজ্য অংশটি বামের উপর স্পষ্ট করে লিখতে হবে।
- প্রাপ্ত দরখাস্তসমূহ প্রাথমিক বাছাইয়ের পর কেবলমাত্র যোগ্য প্রার্থীদেরকে লিখিত পরীক্ষা/মৌখিক পরীক্ষা/অবশেষে এ ডাকা হবে। এর জন্য কোন প্রকার টিএ/ডিএ প্রদান করা হবে না।
- পাবনা বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়-এর অনুকূলে জনতা ব্যাংক লিমিটেড-এর যে কোন শাখা হতে প্রার্থীদের ৫০০/- টাকার (অফেরতযোগ্য) ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডার আবেদনপত্রের সাথে সংযুক্ত করতে হবে। আবেদনপত্রে ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডার নং, টাকার পরিমাণ ও তারিখ উল্লেখ করতে হবে।
- কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে কর্তৃপক্ষ এই নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি বাতিল কিংবা সংশোধন করার অধিকার সংরক্ষণ করেন।

অধিকতর যোগ্যতা সন্বিত/বিভাগীয় প্রার্থী/পাবলিক বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে এতদসন্বিত অভিজ্ঞতা সন্বিত প্রার্থীদের অধিকার দেয়া হবে এবং বাংলাদেশ বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় মঞ্জুরী কমিশন কর্তৃক পদের অনুমোদন সাপেক্ষে কর্তৃপক্ষ বিজ্ঞাপিত পদের সংখ্যা হ্রাস বা বৃদ্ধি করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।

১৪/৩/২০২১
রেজিস্ট্রার (চলতি দায়িত্ব)
পাবনা বিজ্ঞান ও প্রযুক্তি বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়
পাবনা।

GD-521



UNSTOPPABLE SPEED forged by a basic desire

MINTU DESHWARA

12-year-old Sonia Akhter drew the applause of thousands as she finished top among 30 jockeys in one of Bengal's traditional events, the ancient competition of horse racing.

The only female amongst the lot and driven by the need to bear the expenses for her education, she stormed to the five-mile finish line "at unstoppable speed, well ahead of the pack", according to chief guest Abdul Qadir Laskar, Chunarughat Upazila Parishad Chairman.

The competition was organized by the locals of Shailghat in Chunarughat upazila of the Habiganj district on Saturday. Competitors came from all over including from Satkhira, Bogura, Tangail and Habiganj and brought with them thousands of enthusiastic



spectators.

Sonia said that continuing her education had been uncertain due to her family's financial situation, so she has been competing in behalf of others in exchange for compensation.

She added that she was now bearing the cost of her own education and lending a helping

hand to her family.

Sonia's father Matiur Rahman said that he had traveled with the sixth-grader from Bakla village of Comstapur in Chapainawabganj.

He added that his daughter began watching the events at the age of six and absorbed knowledge, assisted by a close relative.

Sonia raced on behalf of Abul Hashem from the village of Sakhipur in the district of Tangail. Hashem's patronage to others also frosted rewards as his other hickies finished scooped second and third and for their efforts won a refrigerator and television.

Former Chunarughat Upazila chairman Abu Taher said that once there were lots of horses in the area and competition thrived. He lamented that it now finds itself on the brink of extinction.

Joy's century seals Wolves whitewash

SPORTS REPORTER

Mahmudul Hasan Joy's century helped the Bangladesh Emerging team get a six-run win in the fifth and final one-dayer at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium and complete a 4-0 series whitewash against Ireland Wolves.

The first match was canceled due to Covid-19-related issues.

Chasing a target of 261, Ireland came agonisingly close before eventually ending up on 254 for 9 in 50 overs.

Needing eleven runs off the last over, Ireland kept their hopes alive by a thread. Benjamin White needed to hit a six off the last ball off Rejaur Raja to tie the game but the right-hander could only manage to score a single from a leg-by.

Opener Stephen Doherty was the top scorer for Ireland with 81. Bangladesh skipper Saif bagged three wickets.

Ireland, who had played a four-day game and four unofficial ODIs, were supposed to play two T20 games but had to cut their tour short due to Covid-19 restrictions in their country.

They will return after playing just a sole T20 scheduled to take place tomorrow.

Jamal wins hearts in Kolkata



SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national football team captain Jamal Bhuiyan will be in the hearts of Kolkata Mohammedan Sporting Club, the club's coach said

yesterday while lavishing praise on the midfielder ahead of his last match for the outfit.

Kolkata Mohammedan will play against I-League leaders Churchill Brothers and that match will be the Jamal's last appearance for Kolkata Mohammedan as he will leave Kolkata on March 18 to join the national team in Nepal.

Ahead of the match, the team's coach Sankarlal Chakraborty heaped lavish praise on Jamal, who was by his side at the official press briefing yesterday.

"We will miss him. He will be in our hearts forever," Chakraborty said after deliberating on Jamal's impact on the team.

"Jamal has been an integral part of the team. He was one of the key members of the leadership group. He always ensured that the dressing room atmosphere was good. I wish Jamal all the very best with the Bangladesh national team," said the Mohammedan coach.

Jamal joined the Kolkata outfit in January, on loan from Saif Sporting Club, and played in one all but one of their 10 matches, missing one match due to an injury. Even though the Bangladesh captain did not set the I-League on fire in his debut campaign, it has been an impressive one for the 30-year-old.

Initially, Jamal found it a bit difficult in Indian football, coming off a lengthy layoff due to testing positive for coronavirus. But with every passing game, his influence and impact on the team increased. The midfielder is satisfied with what he has done with Kolkata Mohammedan.

"Overall, it has been a good experience for me," Jamal said. "When I came it was very hard for me because of my [being infected with] coronavirus and the team was new and we didn't practise much together. After some time, I found it's a good group and I'm proud to be here."

Playing in a deep-lying playmaker role instead of the conventional central defensive midfield, Jamal had little opportunity to score but was one of the central figures of the team as the Black Panthers tried to build up their game from the back.

Mohammedan, as a team, were erratic throughout the campaign, managing to squeeze into the super six stage following a string of victories but are currently languishing in sixth position.

But it was not due to any lack of effort from the Bangladesh skipper, as the club's designated set-piece specialist showed his class with his great control on the ball and wide range of passes. Instead, his performances got better and better as Chakraborty took over following the sacking of former coach Jose Hevia in the middle of the campaign.

Jamal may be leaving Kolkata with a bit of regret for not scoring a goal or earning an assist, which he might want to achieve if he gets another call from this team or any other team. He left the door open by saying, "I cannot say what the future holds, but if I get the opportunity, why not?"

But after today, Jamal will be shifting his focus to a different challenge and a different responsibility to lead Bangladesh in the tri-nation tournament in Nepal, a responsibility he wants to wear with pride.

"Always want to give my best for the national team. You have to be proud, give your best and you have to enjoy the moment because once your career is finished, you will miss those things. So always try to give your best," Jamal said.

9TH BD GAMES Eighteen stars to relay with torch

SPORTS REPORTER

Eighteen former sports stars will carry the torch of the Bangabandhu 9th Bangladesh Games from Tungipara in Gopalganj to the Bangabandhu National Stadium in Dhaka, a meeting of the media and publicity committee of the games decided yesterday.

The meeting decided that the torch will be lit by the Bangladesh Olympic Association president and Army chief General Aziz Ahmed on the morning of March 30 at the Bangabandhu Mausoleum Complex in Tungipara and will be handed over to the association's secretary general Syed Shahed Reza. The torch will be received at the BNS by golfer Siddikur Rahman and swimmer Mahfuza Khatun Shila.



(L) Sourav of Bangladesh Police tries to get the better of Mamun of Dhaka District in a match of the Independence Day Open Wrestling Competition in Paltan yesterday. Bangladesh Ansar emerged champions, Bangladesh Army became runners-up and Bangladesh Police finished third in both men's and women's competitions. (R) Players of Narail team celebrate one of their goals during a 4-0 win over Jashore in the opening match of the Walton Women's Development Independence Cup Hockey Competition at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday. Namita Karmakar scored a hat-trick for Narail. Later, Jhenaidah beat Thakurgaon 1-0 in the second match of the day, with Nadira scoring the decisive goal.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Local cricketers breathe sigh of relief

Dhaka Premier League to begin on May 6

SPORTS REPORTER

Although things appear to be picture-perfect for the Bangladesh national cricket team on their tour of New Zealand, the scenario is at stark contrast with the circumstances of a majority of domestic cricketers.

Local cricketers have endured a long wait for the resumption of the Dhaka Premier League, (DPL) which was suspended after the first round since the pandemic started back in March last year.

Although the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) arranged two domestic competitions on a limited scale as the sport began to re-emerge during the pandemic, the majority of local cricketers -- who mainly rely on the DPL -- faced financially and mentally pressures.

Finally they can breathe a sigh of relief as the DPL is set to begin from May 6 with a new format.

The club-based domestic competition will now be played in the T20 format, informed chairman of the Cricket Committee of Dhaka Metropolis (CCDM) Kazi Inam Ahmed after a meeting yesterday. "We have decided to start the Dhaka

Premier League once more and we have decided to begin from May 6. It's a difficult situation since the schedule is very tight. It will be a T20 format. The matches [the league was halted after one round of matches] that were played last year, we decided to abandon then and start fresh," said Inam.

Six days after the beginning the tournament on May 6, there will be a break for Eid and the Tigers' Sri Lanka series.

The ODI series against Sri Lanka is expected to begin on May 20 and the DPL is expected to resume after the three-match ODI series.

Local cricketers, who were getting desperate during the pandemic with no matches taking place, began to breathe a little easier.

"It is a huge relief," said Taibur Parvez, a regular performer in the domestic leagues. He went on to add: "I think we were all waiting for the league to resume and finally the board took the initiative and made it happen. We should thank the BCB. We were having a tough time since the coronavirus started last year and although international cricket resumed and the leagues of the other cricketing nations also resumed, we were still waiting for cricket to return to Bangladesh," Parvez added.



La Liga title race wide open as Atletico lose steam

AGENCIES



La Liga leaders Atletico Madrid drew 0-0 away to struggling Getafe on Saturday, despite playing the latter stages of the game with an extra man, offering renewed hope to title rivals Real Madrid and Barcelona.

Real Madrid's Karim Benzema rescued Real Madrid again by scoring two late goals to snatch a 2-1 win at home to Elche in La Liga on Saturday and revive his side's hopes of catching leaders Atletico Madrid.

The victory lifted Real into



Real Madrid's Karim Benzema celebrates his second goal with Rodrygo during his side's 2-1 win against Elche in La Liga on Saturday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

second in the standings on 57 points, reducing the gap behind Atletico from eight points to six and are one point ahead of third-placed Barcelona, who host Huesca tonight.

The last-gasp victory also gave Real an emotional boost ahead of Tuesday's Champions League last-16 second leg with Atalanta, which they go into holding a 1-0 advantage. "This win is very positive for us, it was vital we kept

up picking points for our league campaign and also to prepare for Tuesday's game," he said. "We're a team with character, we're alive in two competitions and we're going to keep fighting hard and keep believing in ourselves."

"We have two monsters behind us who want to be where we are and it's normal that they're putting the pressure on us, we have been leaders for a long time," said Atletico Madrid coach Diego

Simeone.

"Madrid are winning games, Barcelona are full of hope and enthusiasm but we'll continue to take each game as it comes."

Atletico had been denied all three points in last week's derby at home to Real by an 88th minute equaliser from Karim Benzema but earned a significant 2-1 victory over Athletic Bilbao in Wednesday's game in hand to cement their advantage at the top.

This felt like a step back and Simeone conceded his side had not played well in the first half. "We were excited about the prospect of winning and

POINTS TABLE

Team	P	W	D	L	GD	P
Atletico Madrid	27	19	6	2	+32	63
Real Madrid	27	17	6	4	+24	57
Barcelona	26	17	5	4	+35	56

maintaining our advantage but our first half was not good, we couldn't get the ball moving well, we couldn't counterattack and we were not direct enough," he added.

"We improved in the second half and had many chances to score and overall I feel we are playing well."

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No student can be tortured, intimidated

HC observes, asks edn institutions to follow rules

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday observed that no student can be tortured, intimidated and pressurised physically or mentally as per an earlier directive of the court.

Madrasas and all the other educational institutions have to conduct academic activities in line with the constitution and relevant laws, it said.

If the laws and constitution are violated by an institution, the education ministry, directorate of education, and boards of madrasa and education boards can take appropriate legal action, the HC said.

The HC bench of Justice FRM Nazmul Ahasan and Justice Shahed Nuruddin said this after going through compliance reports submitted by the deputy commissioner and superintendent of police in Chattogram over the legal steps taken after a madrasa student was recently tortured by a teacher in the district.

The HC said the eight-year-old student of Markazul Islami Academy Hafezia Madrasa, who was beaten up by his teacher Maulana Yahya, should be able to continue his academic activities.

The DC and SP of Chattogram submitted two separate reports to the HC stating that the madrasa authorities have been cautioned.

A case has been filed against Yahya under the Penal Code and Children Act and he has been arrested, taken to a lower court, and sent to jail, they mentioned.

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Without maintaining physical distancing, people queue before a truck of Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) to buy sugar, oil and other commodities at cheaper prices. Most of them are not wearing masks either. The rate of Covid-19 infection is increasing in the country as most people are ignoring the health safety rules. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

Quader Mirza sued over violence, death

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Abdul Quader Mirza, mayor of Noakhali's Basurhat municipality and younger brother of Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader, was sued yesterday over the death of an auto-rickshaw driver in an incident of violence in Companiganj upazila.

The victim's younger brother filed the case with Noakhali Cognisance Court-4 around 1:00pm, accusing 164 named and another 50-60 unnamed people.

Mirza was made the prime accused in the murder case. He was accused of instructing his followers to engage in violence that led to the death of auto-rickshaw driver Alauddin, 22. The mayor's son Mirza Masrur Quader and younger brother Shahdat Hossain were also accused, said Shawkat Hossain, police inspector at the court.

After a hearing, the judge directed the officer-in-charge (OC) of

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Russia deploys giant space telescope in Lake Baikal



AFP, Lake Baikal

Russian scientists on Saturday launched one of the world's biggest underwater space telescopes to peer deep into the universe from the pristine waters of Lake Baikal.

The deep underwater telescope, which has been under construction since 2015, is designed to observe neutrinos, the smallest particles currently known.

Dubbed Baikal-GVD, the telescope was submerged to a depth of 750-1,300 metres (2,500-4,300 feet), around four kilometres from the lake's shore.

Neutrinos are very hard to detect and water is an effective medium for doing so.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Increasing capacity a big challenge

The country's jails have long been grossly overcrowded, with inmates and rights activists alleging of rights violations and poor conditions, among others. Currently, 83,107 inmates are incarcerated in 68 prisons, against the maximum capacity of 42,450. Allegations of rights violations, poor hygiene, illegal privileges, narcotics in exchange of money, and access to mobile phones, are rife. In light of the situation, The Daily Star's Mohammad Jamil Khan and Shaheen Mollah recently spoke to Inspector General of Prisons Brig Gen Md Mominur Rahman Mamun.

TDS: Jails are always found to be overcrowded. What steps are being taken to improve these conditions?

IG Prisons: Steps have already been taken to modernise the old jails to increase capacity. Work is already underway to re-build the Khulna, Narsingdi, Mymensingh, Cumilla, and Jamalpur district jails to increase capacity.

As emergency steps, semi-pucca tin-shade barracks are also constructed to ease jail crowding. Besides, land is being acquired for the expansion of jails.

TDS: What care do children living with their mothers in jail receive?

IG Prisons: There are around 3,222 female inmates and 349 children (170 boys and 179 girls) staying with their mothers, as they are below six years of age.

These children are getting necessary food and a diet as per doctors' suggestions. They are provided with books for education regularly, and there is a day care centre inside the jails so that they (the children) can spend time when their mothers are busy with work during the day.

TDS: What is the current state of prison medical facilities?

IG Prisons: Around 112 doctors and 86 pharmacists and nurses are now

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PK HALDER'S SCAMS BFIU seeks bank info on ex-BB dy governor, 7 more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit asked banks to provide detailed information of accounts and transactions of eight persons, including former Bangladesh Bank deputy governor SK Sur Chowdhury, current Executive Director Md Shah Alam and their spouses.

The BFIU issued the notice on March 11, less than three weeks after the issuance of a similar notice by the National Board of Revenue on February 23 for Sur and Shah Alam.

The intelligence agency, dedicated to tackling money laundering and terrorist financing, asked the banks to provide information on them by today.

Earlier, two close associates of Proshanta Kumar Halder in confessional statements said Sur and Shah Alam had assisted them to conduct the financial scams.

Following the confessional statement, Bangladesh Bank withdrew Shah Alam from the responsibility of monitoring two departments for his alleged connection with PK Halder.

Shah Alam was relieved on February

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

ROAD TO FREEDOM THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

President Yahya arrives

MARCH 15, 1971

SHAMSUDDOZZA SAJEN

A COLD WELCOME FOR YAHYA

President Yahya Khan arrived in Dhaka today. No local political leader went to the airport to meet him. All the entries of the airport were heavily guarded. Siddiq Salik, then public relations officer in the Pakistan army in Dhaka, recounts, "It was a strange, eerie atmosphere charged with a deadly stillness. There were no bouquets of flowers, no civil officials, no rows of city elite, no hustling of journalists, and no clicking of cameras. Even the official photographer was not admitted." [Siddiq Salik, Witness to Surrender, UPL 1997, pg.59]

Yahya drove quickly to the president's house in a heavily armed convoy. He could not help seeing that virtually every house sported a black flag mandated by the Awami League. The Farmgate check point was removed by Awami League to



avoid embarrassment to the president whom Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman earlier declared publicly as a guest of "Bangladesh".

Yahya had requested Bhutto to go to Dhaka but he declined on the ground that after Bangabandhu's virtual declaration of independence there was no point in making the journey. He seemed more interested in getting power than in the unity of Pakistan, commented GW Choudhury, a close confidante of Yahya. [GW Choudhury, The Last Days of United Pakistan, UPL, 2011, pg. 163]

THE LAST MILITARY CONFERENCE

In the evening of March 15, Yahya summoned the local

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3

CASE UNDER DSA Leftist leader Ruhul denied bail again

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

A court in Khulna yesterday rejected the bail petition of leftist leader Ruhul Amin in a case filed under the Digital Security Act (DSA).

Khulna Metropolitan Sessions Judge Shahidul Islam passed the order after Ruhul's lawyer advocate Begum Akhter Jahan Ruku filed the petition on behalf of her client, said the lawyer.

On March 1, Khulna Metropolitan Magistrate Court-4 Judge Atiqus Samad had also rejected Ruhul's bail prayer.

The new date for the submission of another bail

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PRAYER TIMING MARCH 15

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5:00 12:45 4:30 6:14 7:45
JAMAAT 5:35 1:15 4:45 6:18 8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



People carry an injured protester during an anti-coup protest in Mandalay, Myanmar, yesterday. More than 80 people had been killed and over 2,100 arrested as yesterday in widespread protests against the military coup on Feb. 1, an advocacy group said.

PHOTO: REUTERS

ANTI-COUP PROTESTS 14 more killed in Myanmar

Ousted MPs call for unity as China urges junta to stop violence

AGENCIES

At least 14 anti-coup protesters were killed yesterday as demonstrators across Myanmar continued to defy military rule and a group of ousted MPs urged them to "defend themselves" during the nation's "darkest moment".

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi from power in a February 1 putsch, triggering a mass uprising that has seen hundreds of thousands protest daily for a return to democracy.

The junta has repeatedly justified its power grab by alleging widespread electoral fraud in November's elections, which Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy party won by a landslide.

In response, a group of elected MPs, many of whom are in hiding, have formed a shadow "parliament" called the Committee for Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) -- the Burmese word for the country's governing bloc -- to denounce the military regime.

Yesterday, they issued a statement saying protesters had the "full right to defend themselves" under the country's penal code against security forces who are "harming and causing violence".

Soldiers and police have in recent weeks been staging near-daily crackdowns against demonstrators calling for a return to democracy, deploying tear gas, rubber bullets and live rounds to quell anti-coup protests.

More than 80 have been killed in the unrest, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners

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