



# The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



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## ICU demand keeps rising

*Infection rate still over 10pc; WB gives \$500m loan for vaccination*

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

As coronavirus transmission has been rising from the second week of this month, the demand for ICU beds in the capital's hospitals has also increased.

As of yesterday morning, only 76 ICU beds out of 281 in Covid-19-dedicated hospitals in Dhaka were vacant, according to a press release from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Meanwhile, the World Bank's board of executive directors yesterday approved \$500 million in financing to help Bangladesh vaccinate 54 million people against Covid-19. Bangladesh's ongoing vaccination drive with the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine entered its 40th day yesterday.

Many ICU beds remained vacant during January and February this year as the transmission went down with the daily positivity rate dipping below five percent.

After March 9, however, the positivity rate started rising again with 10.04 percent of samples testing positive in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

"Over the last two months, there was no extensive demand for ICU beds in our Covid-19 unit. But now, we receive many requests every day. Today [Friday], I received at least 10 phone calls for

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## 50 YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Sri Lankan counterpart Mahinda Rajapaksa, along with other guests, stand for the national anthem of Bangladesh on the third day of the 10-day celebrations programme, marking the Mujib Borsho and the golden jubilee of independence. The photo was taken at the National Parade Square. PHOTO: PID

"We are pledge-bound to enlighten all with education and ensure food, housing, clothes and healthcare for them."  
**SHEIKH HASINA**

## Bangladesh is flourishing

*Lankan PM Rajapaksa says at Golden Jubilee celebration*

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The success of Bangladesh and its people is the best honour to the name of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Sri Lankan Prime

Minister Mahinda Rajapaksa said. "Bangladesh continues to flourish ... It is an economic powerhouse in South Asia. That's the best honour to the name of Bangabandhu," he said at the twin celebrations of Mujib

Borsho and the golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence at the National Parade Ground yesterday.

He joined the event as the guest of honour, after arriving in Dhaka

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## MIGRANT WORKERS IN LEBANON Caught in the crunch

*Economic, political fallout and US dollar shortage deal them a heavy blow in a foreign land; over 5,000 applied for repatriation at Bangladesh mission*

JAMIL MAHMUD

In the space of two years, Rubel Miah has seen the value of his wages at his job in Beirut plummet to one-fifth of what he could earlier convert to US dollars and send home to his family.

His wife, elderly parents, and siblings back home in Brahmanbaria's Nabinagar depend on his monthly remittance to pay for food and other needs.

But Rubel, a migrant worker in Lebanon since 2015, could remit money home only twice this past year as a crippling liquidity crunch in the crisis-hit country drastically limited access to US dollars, with workers like him suffering the brunt of the backlash.

"I earn around six lakh Lebanese pounds a month, which is supposed to be equivalent to around \$400 as per the regular exchange rate. But that amount has been slashed down to almost nothing," said the 29-year-old cleaner.

The rapidly depreciating Lebanese pound used to be exchangeable for dollars at a fixed rate, but banks have now restricted withdrawals of the US currency and its value has plummeted on the parallel market.

This devaluation means Rubel actually gets only one fifth of his salary. "Two years ago, my monthly income could be converted to around Tk 32,000. But the same earnings now fetches around Tk 6,000. It's hard to live here," said the frustrated youth, who sought the Bangladesh embassy's support to return home.

Like Rubel, around 1.30 lakh Bangladeshi migrant workers in Lebanon have been facing acute financial hardship amid an economic downturn,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



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## TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR

### Mr. and Mrs. Gould



Left: Gouldian Finch....., Darwin, Australia. Right: Mrs. Gould's Sunbird, Satchori, Bangladesh.

PHOTOS: IHTISHAM KABIR

I became interested in the work of the Goulds after noticing that two of the prettiest birds I have seen bear that name. John Gould (1804-1881) was an English ornithologist and author. His wife Elizabeth Gould (1804-1841) was an artist. The aforementioned birds are Mrs. Gould's Sunbird and Gouldian Finch.

John Gould was trained as a taxidermist. He excelled in it and was sought after by contemporary ornithologists to preserve their avian specimens. Soon he was appointed Curator and Preserver at the museum of the Zoological Society of London where he was responsible for stuffing and mounting bird specimens sent from around the world to the Society.

One day John's co-worker introduced him to his sister Elizabeth. John and Elizabeth were married shortly. Soon Elizabeth started drawing and painting the birds that John preserved for his customers. John, an instinctive businessman, recognized her artistic talent and started selling her artwork to his taxidermy customers. In 1830 the Society received, from India, a shipment of birds of the Himalayas. While preserving them, John saw an opportunity to make a book. He would write

and Elizabeth would illustrate this book. Before starting the project, however, Elizabeth learned a new technology, lithography, which allowed her to make nicer pictures than the woodcuts she was doing. This book - their first - on the birds of the Himalayas included 80 hand-coloured lithographs of 100 bird species of the Himalayas, along with text written by John.

These books were not mass-produced like today. Instead, the author announced a limited number of copies and sold subscriptions to them in advance. In addition to Gould, the subscription method was employed by John James Audubon in the United States to support his work.

In recognition of Elizabeth's work, one of the birds of the Himalayas - a sunbird - was named after her.

In 1838, the Gould family travelled to Australia and started working on birds there. One result of this trip was the seven-volume *Birds of Australia*. They returned to England in 1840. Sadly, Elizabeth died shortly thereafter after giving birth to her eighth child.

In his prolific career, John Gould published eleven illustrated books on birds. In addition to his magnum opus on Australian birds, he produced seven volumes on the

birds of Asia and five volumes on the Birds of Europe. He also made books devoted to Trogons, Toucans and Partridges. He made a fortune from selling these books.

We may never fully know the extent of Elizabeth's contributions to these works. As was often the case with women in Victorian times, she has not one to claim credit. Eight books that John Gould published during her lifetime all bore only his name as the author, but when a collection of her letters was discovered in 1938, it became clear that her contributions to these books went substantially well beyond her illustrations.

After she died, John Gould named a pretty Australian bird after her: the Gouldian Finch. He never recovered emotionally from Elizabeth's death nor did he remarry. In his later years he developed a passion in Hummingbirds, contributing to a Hummingbird craze in Europe. When he died in 1881 John Gould had 5738 hummingbirds in his collection. Today the world remembers him and Elizabeth for their books and birds and animals named after them.

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

## 'They'll lose councillorship if found involved'

DNCC mayor warns councillors on canal grabbing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka North City Corporation Mayor Md Atiqul Islam yesterday said if they find allegation of canal grabbing against any councillor and if it is proven, he or she will lose their councillorship.

"If it is verified through probe that a councillor has grabbed a canal land then his/her councillorship will be cancelled. Even if we get evidence of their involvement with the grabbing, they will lose their councillorship," he said.

The DNCC mayor said this while inaugurating the Khidirkhal after its re-excavation at sluice gate point in Uttara sector-11.

The canal was blocked by a structure constructed illegally by an influential person. Atiqul said though the canal ran through both sides of the sluice gate, during a visit on March 16 he did not see any connectivity as an illegal structure was blocking it, he added.

"I have dismantled the structure by taking help from local lawmaker, councillors, Awami League leaders and locals," he said. Atiqul said he has already

directed his chief estate officer and local councillor to identify the width of the canal observing the last map.

If necessary, they will have to break the wall of the adjoining hospital and they have already got positive consent from its director, the mayor said.

Pointing towards Rajuk and other government agencies, the mayor said their mentality has to be changed. They should not only allot plots; but also keep space for dumping yards.

"Also, check CS, RS and city survey maps before allotting any plot... If you allot plots without verification, people will have to suffer for that. You have to visit the location first before allotment," the mayor said.

Pointing towards a road nearby, the mayor also said, "See how the road became narrow due to encroachment." He said they will continue their drives to free canals from grabbers with the help of public representatives and locals.

Among others, chief executive officer of DNCC Md Selim Reza, chief estate officer Md Mozammel Haque, ward-51 councillor Mohammad Sharifur Rahman, councillor (reserved seat) Jakia Sultana were present.

Zillur Rahman's anniversary of death today



CITY DESK

Today is the eighth death anniversary of former president Zillur Rahman, a veteran politician and Language Movement hero, an organiser of the Liberation War, and one of the close associates of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Zillur Rahman died of old-age complications at a Singapore hospital in 2013.

He started his political career as a volunteer of Awami League and was inducted as the

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MOUDUD LAID TO REST... Flanked by party leaders and activists, BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir pays tribute to Moudud Ahmed at Central Shaheed Minar in the capital yesterday. People from all walks of life paid their respects to the veteran politician and eminent lawyer who breathed his last on March 16 at a Singapore hospital. Barrister Moudud was buried last evening in his family graveyard at Manikpur village in Companiganj, Noakhali following his sixth namaz-e-janaza in the district. His funeral prayers were also held in Singapore, and High Court and Nayapaltn party office premises in Dhaka.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## Youths stage climate march in Barishal



PHOTO: COLLECTED

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

In solidarity with the Global Climate Strike -- a movement against climate change -- youths representing different organisations held a climate strike march at Barishal yesterday.

At the march, participants called for the implementation of the Paris Agreement, including putting pressure on developing countries to limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The procession started from Barishal Central Shaheed Minar at 10am and moved across different roads of the city, ending in front of Ashwini Kumar Hall.

The event was organised by the environmental organisation Youthnet for Climate Justice, Protiki Jubo Sangsad, and the Coastal Youth Action Hub. Throughout the march, youths shouted slogans expressing concerns for climate and environmental protection.

Chairperson of Protiki Jubo Sangsad Aminul Islam, programme manager Mayuri Akhter Tumpa, coordinator of Youthnet for Climate Justice Sohanur Rahman, president of Aranyak Kathak Biswas Joy and others spoke at the rally.

The speakers called on all countries to come forward to control global warming. They also urged the country's youth to be more vocal about this pressing issue.

## 3 killed in Sirajganj road accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Three people were killed when a speeding truck hit a CNG-run three-wheeler on Nagarbari-Bogura highway at Shahzadpur upazila of Sirajganj early yesterday.

The deceased were Rashedul Islam (26) and Sakib Sheikh (17) from Dariapur Uttarpara and three-wheeler driver Ashik Ahmed (20) from Shahzadpur.

Hatikumrul Highway Police Station OC Shahjahan Ali said the accident took place around 3am. Police seized the truck but the driver managed to flee.

Our Dinajpur correspondent reports, a man was killed after being hit by a running train in Rangpur city yesterday morning.

The deceased is Md Wasim Ali (38), a resident of Rangpur Railway Slum at Patbari. Railway officials said the trucker was washing his vehicle near the rail track in Patbari area. He died on the spot when a Parbatipur junction-bound commuter train from Lalmonirhat hit him.

## Boimela sees weekend crowd

Precautionary measures against coronavirus in place

MATHEWS CHIRAN

Although a little late, the Amar Ekushey book fair is taking place again after a year. The delay was obvious -- like everything else, the Covid-19 pandemic disrupted the Boimela too.

Bangla Academy sources said despite their initial dilemma, they eventually decided to host the fair following requests from publishers, who have been facing losses ever since the pandemic hit.

But the impact of Covid-19 was visible at the fair yesterday, on the second day.

At the entrance, law enforcers were seen reminding everyone to wear masks. Sanitisers are installed at the gates as precautionary measures, while temperature is also being checked at the gate. Announcers are shouting pandemic health guidelines in frequent intervals, while stalls bear "no mask, no service" signs.

On the second day, which was also a Friday, it was mostly young people flocking to the fair. They said this was a great opportunity for them since it has been a while they last got to visit a public event.

"We had no way to go anywhere

during the pandemic. This book fair gave us a destination. We're really glad to be here today," said Raisa Islam, who came to the fair from Santimagar with her university friends.

Asked if they are concerned about their health, she said, "We honestly are. We are wearing masks and brought sanitiser with us."

As usual, couples were there to roam out in the open and enjoy the festivity of the fair too.

Tarikul Islam, who came to the fair with his better half Nasreen Jahan, said, "We are just browsing today, but you never know, you always come across something interesting at the book fair."

This year the academy didn't allow Children's Hour, one of the major attractions at the fair, to take place keeping in mind the risk for children. However, children along with their parents -- wearing masks -- visited the fair and were seen browsing through books.

Meanwhile, Tanzila Ridhi from Reza publication said, "We only sold a few books till the evening." To her wish, as the sun started to set in, the crowd also started increasing, this correspondent saw.

"Around 3pm in the afternoon, people were less in number. Now at 5pm, its brimming with people. I guess we need to go out now or else physical distance cannot be maintained," said Faruk Ahmed, leaving the fair with his wife Tarin Akter.

The fair wasn't hosted without hiccups. At the gates, sanitiser bottles ran out and volunteers were seen rushing to fill those up.

Abdullah Towhid, a volunteer at the gate near Bangla Academy, said, "The whole day, there was nearly no crowd but now they are here. Maintaining a big crowd is tough indeed. But we have enough sanitisers in stock, nothing to worry."

This year, 834 units have been allocated to 540 publishing houses and organisations to facilitate sale of books and other publications. The authorities have allotted 154 units on the Bangla Academy premises to 107 organisations and 680 units at the Suhrawardy Udyan to 433 organisations.

The area of this year's fair is 15 lakh square feet and there will be 33 pavilions in the fair including the academy's three pavilions.



In prior years, half of the weekends were reserved as Children's Hour. Though this was cancelled this year due to health concerns, the Boimela still saw a number of little ones yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Resolution introduced by US Congress

Commemorating 50yrs of Bangladesh's Independence

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US House of Representatives has introduced a resolution congratulating the people of Bangladesh on the 50th anniversary of the country's independence, hailing the courage of the valiant freedom fighters in the struggle for freedom and democracy.

It also lauded the contributions of Bangladesh for hosting Rohingya fleeing genocide in Myanmar.

The resolution titled "Commemorating the 50th anniversary of Bangladesh's independence" was introduced in the US House of Representatives on March 16, 2021, according to a statement issued Thursday by the Bangladesh Embassy in Washington DC.

Democratic Congresswomen Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (New York) submitted the resolution in the first session of the 117th Congress. Three democratic representatives Rashida Tlaib (Michigan), Jimmy Gomez (California), and Chair of House Committee on Foreign Affairs Gregory W Meeks (New York) co-sponsored the resolution.

It has been referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

The House of Representatives in the resolution mentioned that on March 26, 1971, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman declared Bangladesh's independence from West Pakistan.

The Congress resolution cited Senator Edward Kennedy's speech on February 14, 1972, at the University of Dhaka, where he said, "The struggle of the people of Bangladesh... evokes the greatest memories of our past."

The resolution highlighted the history of Bangladesh's long struggle for self-determination culminating in the War of Independence in 1971.

CRIMINAL CASES

## Witnesses to get court dates via SMS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Witnesses of criminal cases can now digitally know the dates of their appearance before the courts concerned.

The government on Thursday launched a programme to digitally inform the scheduled dates about their appearance before the courts through SMS along with current system of issuing summons.

The ministries of law, and post and telecommunication collectively inaugurated the event as a pilot programme for Cumilla and Narsingdi to ensure the presence of witnesses before courts on fixed dates to place their statements.

Speaking as chief guest at the inauguration in secretariat, Law Minister Anisul Huq said absence of witnesses or their irregular appearances before courts are one of the main causes for long delay in disposing of cases. This programme will reduce the time and cost of litigants and the state, he said.

Post and Telecommunication Minister Mustafa Zabbar was also present at the programme.



## NEWS IN BRIEF

## Afghan govt, Taliban agree to accelerate peace talks

The Afghan government and the Taliban yesterday agreed to try to accelerate peace talks, at a meeting in Moscow that followed an international conference there on the peace process, Afghanistan's top peace official and a Taliban spokesman said. The United States, Russia, China and Pakistan called on Afghanistan's warring sides to reach an immediate ceasefire at the conference, held in Russia just six weeks before a deadline agreed last year to withdraw US troops. Moscow hosted the international conference on Afghanistan on Thursday, at which the nations involved issued a joint statement calling on the Afghan sides to reach a peace deal and curb violence, and on the Taliban not to launch any offensives in the spring. They also said they "did not support the restoration of the Islamic Emirate."

## Crucial UN biodiversity summit set for October

The United Nations' biodiversity summit, COP15, will take place in October in the Chinese city of Kunming after being delayed a year due to the pandemic, the UN said yesterday. The meeting is seen as a vital chance for nations to set guidelines for protecting nature and slowing the catastrophic pace of species loss. The UN said the summit would be held October 11-24, just a few weeks before a parallel UN conference on climate change, COP26, takes place in Glasgow. A preliminary biodiversity session will be held in August, it said, although a location is yet to be announced. Since 1970, wild animal populations of birds and fish have declined by nearly 70 percent, according to a WWF assessment. The UN said in September that nations had missed every one of the 20 ten-year targets to halt biodiversity loss they set themselves in 2010.

## ICC gives Israel month to ask for war crimes probe delay



The International Criminal Court has given Israel and the Palestinians one month to ask the tribunal to postpone its war crimes investigation, provided they can prove they are carrying out their own probes. The ICC's chief prosecutor announced on March 3 that she had opened a full investigation into the situation in the Israeli-occupied territories -- infuriating Israel, which is not a member of the Hague-based court. A deferral notice was sent on March 9 to all member states of the ICC, including all states that would normally exercise jurisdiction -- including Israel and Palestine, "an official in the prosecutor's office told AFP yesterday. The notice, sent under Article 18 of the court's founding document, the Rome Statute, gives countries a month to tell judges they are investigating crimes similar to those being probed by the ICC. The probe will mainly focus on the 2014 Gaza War but also look at the deaths of Palestinian demonstrators from 2018 onwards.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



A Palestinian demonstrator argues with Israeli troops during a protest against Israeli settlements, in Yatta in the Israeli-occupied West Bank yesterday. A Palestinian was shot dead by Israeli soldiers when clashes erupted during a demonstration in the Israeli-occupied West Bank yesterday, the Palestinian health ministry said. Palestinians gather on Fridays across the West Bank to protest against the expansion of Israeli settlements, which are deemed illegal under international law.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## US, Chinese diplomats clash in Alaska meet

REUTERS, Anchorage

The first high-level US-China meeting of the Biden administration got off to a fiery start on Thursday, with both sides leveling sharp rebukes of the others' policies in a rare public display that underscored the level of bilateral tension.

The run-up to the talks in Anchorage, Alaska, which followed visits by US officials to allies Japan and South Korea, was marked by a flurry of moves by Washington that showed it was taking a tough stance, and by blunt talk from Beijing.

"We will ... discuss our deep concerns with actions by China, including in Xinjiang, Hong Kong, Taiwan, cyber attacks on the United States, economic coercion of our allies," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told his Chinese counterparts in a highly unusual extended back-and-forth in front of cameras.

"Each of these actions threaten the rules-based order that maintains global stability," he said.

China's top diplomat Yang Jiechi responded with a 15-minute speech in Chinese while the US side awaited translation, lashing out over what he said was the United States' struggling democracy, poor treatment of minorities, and criticizing its foreign and trade policies.

"The United States uses its military force and financial hegemony to carry out long-arm jurisdiction and suppress other countries," said Yang. "It abuses so-called notions of national security to obstruct normal trade exchanges, and incite some countries to attack China," he added.

What is typically a few minutes of opening



US says China threatens rule-based order, global stability

China says US abuses national security

remarks in front of journalists for such high-level meetings lasted more than an hour, and the two delegations tussled about when media would be ushered out of the room.

Afterwards, the United States accused China of "grandstanding" while Chinese state media blamed US officials for speaking too long and being "inhospitable".

Both sides accused the other of violating diplomatic protocol by speaking too long in opening remarks.

Adding to tensions, China on Friday tried a Canadian citizen on espionage charges, in a case embroiled in a wider diplomatic spat between Washington and Beijing.

## 'It is time to bury the past' with India: Pak army chief calls for peaceful resolution of Kashmir issue

AGENCIES

Pakistan's powerful army chief has called on arch rivals India and Pakistan to "bury the past" and move towards cooperation, an overture towards New Delhi that follows an unexpected joint ceasefire announcement last month between the two countries' militaries.

General Qamar Javed Bajwa stressed however that the burden was on India to create a "conducive environment" and said the United States had a role to play in ending regional conflicts.

"We feel it is time to bury the past and move forward," Bajwa said on Thursday while addressing a gathering of scholars and experts discussing national security issues at a seminar in the capital, Islamabad.

"But ... our neighbour (India) will have to create a conducive environment, particularly in Indian-occupied Kashmir," he said, referring to the part of the Himalayan territory India administers.

Unsettled disputes between the two South Asian nuclear rivals are "dragging this region back to the swamp of poverty

and underdevelopment," said Bajwa at the conference meant to highlight the Pakistani government's new security policies.

There was no immediate comment from India.

Pakistan's powerful army has ruled the country for nearly half of its 73-year existence, and the military has long controlled foreign and security policies.

Kashmir is split between Pakistan and India but claimed by both in its entirety. The two countries have fought two of their three wars over Kashmir since gaining independence from Britain in 1947.

Relations deteriorated in 2019 after New Delhi stripped its part of Kashmir of the special status.

Bajwa said the economic potential of South and Central Asia had "forever remained hostage" to the India-Pakistan disputes. "It is important to understand that without the resolution of the Kashmir dispute through peaceful means, the process of sub-continental rapprochement will always remain susceptible to derailment," he said.

## Austin visits India with China high on agenda

AFP, New Delhi

Pentagon chief Lloyd Austin yesterday arrived in India for the first face-to-face meetings between New Delhi and the Biden administration, with shared alarm about China set to figure highly.

India is a key US ally in the region and the visit comes hot on the heels of frosty first talks between Secretary of State Antony Blinken with top Chinese officials in Alaska.

Prior to that, Austin and Blinken visited Japan and South Korea.

The two-day visit to New Delhi will see Austin meet PM Narendra Modi, a senior US official said, as well as Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Ajit Doval, a national security adviser.

As well as deadly clashes on the border, Beijing has irked New Delhi with its support for arch-rival Pakistan, as have Chinese investments in Indian Ocean nations such as Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Nepal. India and China have also engaged in a tussle of "vaccine diplomacy", competing to supply other countries with coronavirus shots to secure goodwill and influence.

In 2016, the United States designated India as a "Major Defense Partner", and they have since signed a string of deals easing the transfer of advanced weaponry and deepening military cooperation.

## US House passes bill to protect 'Dreamers'

REUTERS, Washington

The US House of Representatives on Thursday passed bills providing a pathway to citizenship for immigrants nicknamed "Dreamers," who are living illegally in the United States after entering as children, as well as for a large number of immigrant farmworkers.

The two measures now go to the deeply divided Senate where they face a difficult climb.

By a vote of 228-197, the Democratic-controlled House passed the Dreamers bill with only nine Republicans supporting it. The legislation would allow Dreamers to live, work, serve in the military and continue their educations without the threat of deportation and to eventually win US citizenship if they meet a set of requirements.

The House then approved the farmworker bill, 247-174, to shield about 1 million immigrant laborers, many of whom have been in the United States for decades, from deportation.

Both measures are among several attempts by Democrats to reverse former President Donald Trump's hard-line immigration policies.

Dreamers, numbering around 1.8 million young immigrants, made the dangerous journey on their own, with parents or hired hands, often to escape gang violence in Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador and other countries.



## Finland: world's happiest country

AFP, Helsinki

Covid-19 has done little to alter the ranking of the world's happiest countries, with Finland at the top for a fourth year running, an annual UN-sponsored report said yesterday.

The researchers behind the World Happiness Report, now in its ninth year, used Gallup data asking people in 149 countries to rate their own happiness, also taking into account measures such as GDP, social support, personal freedom and levels of corruption to give each nation a happiness score, which is an average of the past three years.

Once again, the top spots were dominated by European countries -- with Denmark coming second, followed by Switzerland, Iceland and the Netherlands.

New Zealand, falling one place to ninth, was again the only non-European nation in the top ten.

Other climbers included Germany, up from 17th to 13th, and France, rising two to 21st. The UK, meanwhile, fell from 13th to 17th place, while the US fell one spot to 19th.

African nations Lesotho, Botswana, Rwanda and Zimbabwe came at the bottom of the table, but ahead of Afghanistan which was classed as the world's unhappiest nation this year.

The authors also compared this year's data to previous years' averages to gauge the impact of the pandemic, and found "significantly higher frequency of negative emotions" in just over a third of the countries. But, surprisingly, positive emotions increased in 22 countries.

Author Jeffrey Sachs meanwhile warned that "we need urgently to learn from Covid-19," adding that "we must aim for wellbeing rather than mere wealth."

Finland's top spot in the happiness list has previously been met with raised eyebrows in the country whose population of 5.5 million is said to shy away from spontaneous demonstrations of joy, valuing instead the quiet and solitude of the country's vast forests and thousands of lakes.

The northern country's long dark winters were reputed to be behind high levels of alcoholism and suicide, but a decade-long public health drive has helped cut rates by more than half.

Finland's residents enjoy a high quality of life, security and public services, with rates of inequality and poverty among the lowest of all OECD countries.

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## Dhaka, Colombo to sign 5 MoUs

FROM PAGE 2

Lanka, it might not be a great idea. What we need to do is to utilise the Colombo Port facilities and the expertise of Sri Lankans in the services sector," said a foreign ministry official.

According to officials, one-fourth of the West-bound ships from Bangladesh conduct transshipment in Colombo Port, while the rest are done in Singapore and Port Klang.

"The cost of transport can be up to 25 percent less and transport time can be reduced to three to four days if our ships can use the Colombo Port," said the official who deals with Sri Lankan affairs.

A coastal shipping agreement with Sri Lanka can, therefore, be a very beneficial deal, he said.

On the other hand, several hundred thousand Sri Lankans work in Bangladesh garment and other sectors in merchandising and mid-level management. They are also eventually investing in Bangladesh in various service sectors.

The Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) from Sri Lanka to Bangladesh is about \$400 million. Many of the Sri Lankans are

opting to invest abroad because of high cost of doing business in Sri Lanka, an island country with a population of 22 million.

"We should think of how we can go for collaboration on utilising the Sri Lankans' skills in service sectors," the official said.

Bangladesh has got large areas of sea, but it does not have skills in deep sea fishing, which Sri Lanka has. Bangladesh can learn from Sri Lankan experience, he observed.

On the other hand, Sri Lanka needs expertise in agriculture and inland fishing from Bangladesh.

Foreign Minister Momen said Rajapaksa assured Dhaka of voting for Bangladesh in the next membership election to the UN Human Rights Council.

Bangladesh also seeks Sri Lankan support in its election as the regional director of WHO's South East Asia Regional Office (SEARO) in 2023.

Momen also sought Colombo's proactive support in Rohingya repatriation as Sri Lanka is a friendly nation of Myanmar.

The Sri Lankan premier assured that his country would remain beside Bangladesh in resolving the crisis.

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PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDIMORSHED

## Gems of Nazrul's Independence Day tribute to release on March 26



As a tribute to Bangladesh's Golden Jubilee of Independence in the birth centenary year of the Father of the Nation, a special musical production by Gems of Nazrul will be telecast on Channel I at one minute past midnight on March 26.

The 16th production by Gems of Nazrul will feature a hundred artistes performing two songs - "Eyi Amader Bangladesh" and "Durgomo Giri". The vocals are performed by leading Nazrul exponents Shaheen Samad, Sadya A Mallick, Dalia Nausheen, Fatema Tuzzohora, Yasmin Mustari, Shahid Kabir Polash, Bijon Mistri, Mahmudul Hassan, and the younger generation of artistes. The videos will be available on the official YouTube channel of Gems of Nazrul and associated social media pages.

Conceptualised by noted Nazrul singer and cultural personality Sadya Afreen Mallick, the music is directed by Ibrar Tipu and the video production by Rommo Khan. The song will be accompanied by a dance performance choreographed by noted Manipuri dancer Warda Rihab and performed by Dhriti Nartanalaya. The production has been supported by Standard Chartered Bank Bangladesh.

The performance pays tribute to the leadership and sacrifice that culminated in the country's independence. The songs of Nazrul Islam, the Rebel poet bestowed with the title of the country's National Poet is noted for both its fiery and patriotic lyrical beauty.

## Mamo talks 'Contract', latest projects

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Zakia Bari Mamo came into the limelight with Lux Channel i Superstar. Since then, she has carved a space for herself in the fields of television and films, winning the National Film Award for her role in "Daruchini Dwip" (2007). Mamo stars in the web series, "Contract", alongside Arifin Shuvoo, Chanchal Chowdhury, Rafiath Rashid Mithila, Shamol Mawla and others. The show is currently streaming on ZEE5 Global. On the other hand, her film, "Sphulingo", directed by Tauquir Ahmed, was released yesterday. In a recent chat with *The Daily Star*, Mamo talks about working on these two projects, and more.

"Contract" is an action-packed political thriller, based on renowned Bangladeshi author Mohammad Nazim Uddin's novel of the same name. How was your experience of working on it?

I got to work with a skilled and dedicated team on "Contract." My co-actors, Arifin Shuvoo and Chanchal Chowdhury, are brilliant in it. We have made this series with a lot of love.

You play the character of Meena in "Contract". What can you tell us about her?

I do not want to give out any spoilers, as it is best if the audience watches the series without knowing anything. All I can say

is "Contract" is a completely new territory for me. The character is unlike anything that I have played before.

"Contract" is free to watch on ZEE5 Global for viewers in Bangladesh. What would you say makes the series stand out from other shows on OTT platforms?

I am confident about "Contract". Bangladesh has been doing really well in recent times, in terms of web content. Our directors and writers have come up with some brilliant scripts. I think the key to success for any show is good storytelling, and "Contract" offers just that to the audience.

After "Contract" started streaming on ZEE5 Global from March 18, your film, "Sphulingo", was released yesterday. Were you nervous before their releases?

The two projects are very different from one another. I was nervous before their releases, but I took it positively. As an artiste, I feel blessed to be able to entertain the audience through different mediums.

Do you have any message for your fans?

My fans give me the strength to keep working. I hope that they continue to support good stories, and I am excited for them to watch "Contract" and "Sphulingo".

Translated by Shababa Iqbal



PHOTO: STAR

## 'Futures Beyond the Self' underway at Kala Kendra

RASHEEK TABASSUM MONDIRA

An art exhibition titled 'Futures Beyond the Self', a multidisciplinary artiste engagement is currently underway at Kala Kendra in Mohammadpur. The exhibition was inaugurated on March 10.

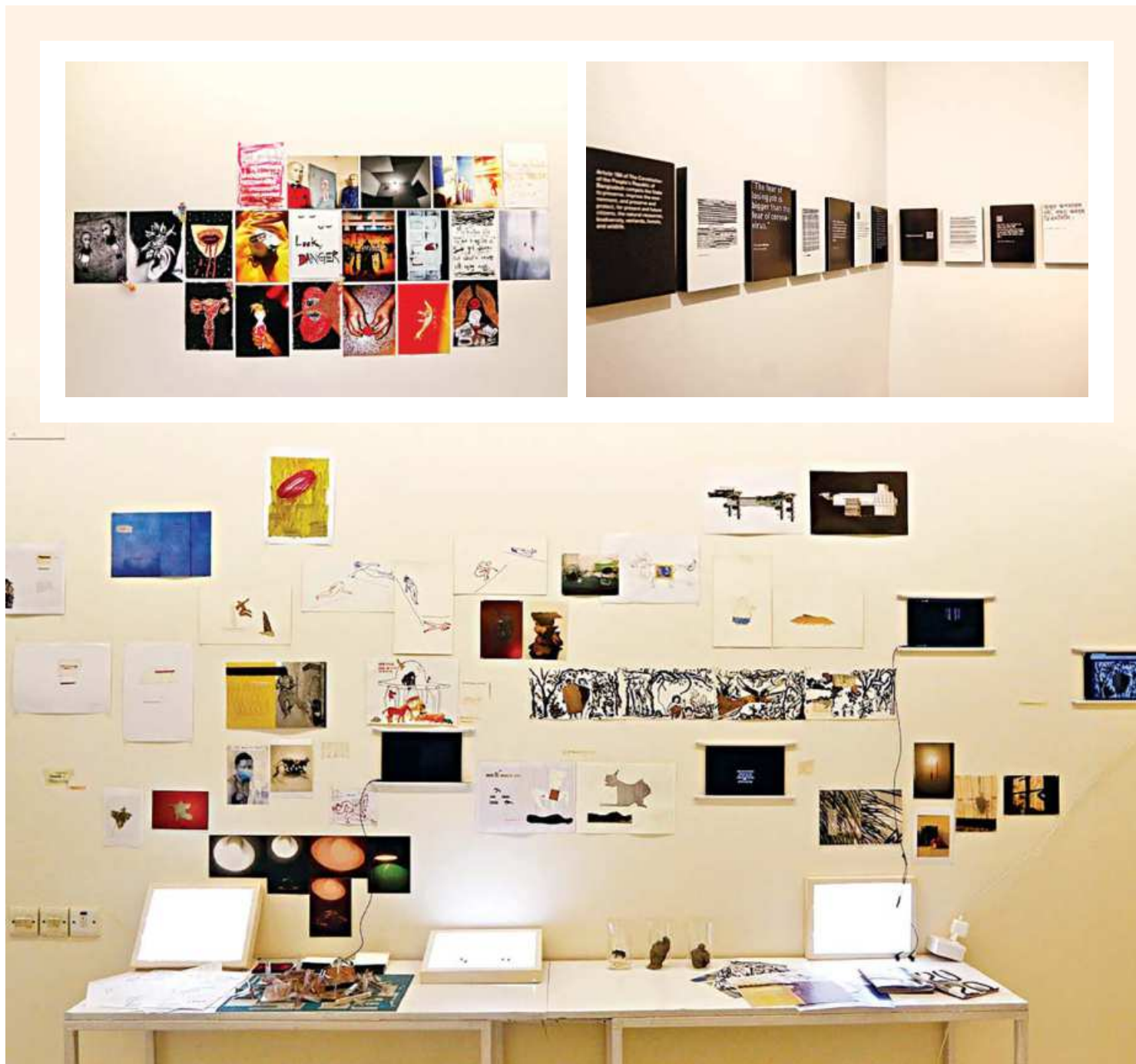
Goethe-Institut Bangladesh, in partnership with Kala Kendra, arranged the exhibition, featuring eleven multidisciplinary artiste works. 'Futures Beyond the Self 2020' project, initiated by Goethe-Institut Bangladesh, invited artistes of Bangladesh to present



their perspectives and ideas about the future they envision for the world. The participants applied for funding in late September and after a rigorous selection process, eleven awardees were selected to exhibit their work.

Tayebe Begum Lipi, visual artist and Trustee/ Founder of Britto Arts Trust, Dr Meghna Guhathakurta, Executive Director, Research Initiatives Bangladesh, Tanzim Wahab, Chief curator, Bengal Arts Programme & Bengal Foundation and Wakilur Rahman, curator, Kala Kendra, along with Dr Kirsten Hackenbroch, and K Md Mahmud Hassan from Goethe-Institut Bangladesh served in the jury panel.

The exhibition portrays and reflects on individual and collective engagement in society; envisioning the future world relating to others and self. The ongoing pandemic has



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDIMORSHED

changed and reshaped our individual and collective approach to life, questioning our deep-rooted beliefs, creating awareness about the present world at large and challenging to build a better sustainable future. The eleven exhibits reflect the thoughts of these artistes, as they look beyond themselves and explore different thoughts and ideas.

"The participants are multidisciplinary artistes, some of them are researcher, musicians, performance artiste and many more," shares Wakilur Rahman, curator, Kala Kendra. "To transform these works into a visual form was quite challenging, nonetheless it was enjoyable, and these experiments of portraying anything in a visual form presented us with a learning opportunity."

Samsul Alam Helal's photography collage exhibit, 'Strange Space', explores the artiste's imaginative world as he investigates the relationship between politics and pandemic, raising questions about future threats. Tahia Farhin Haque's visual art exhibit, 'Duality in Reality' portrays the hard facts about our disconnection with reality.

Priyanka Chowdhury's 'Pandemonium Chronicles', along with Pranabesh Das and Toukir Ahmed Tanvee, explores the relationship between different elements of our society, questioning our ability to participate in the cruel, inhumane practices around us. The exhibit features the woes and struggles of garment workers during the pandemic, also as a whole, along with other elements of inhumane behavior in our society. Sumana Akter's performance art, 'Gloomy Kantha', portrays the artiste's anguish and despair during the pandemic, weaved into the intricate designs of the Kantha.

Other installations feature Tehai Interdisciplinary Art Initiative's 'Agni Mangal' by Akramul Momen, 'Food as Community, Food as Praxis' by Parsa Sanjana Sajid, 'Aungmakhai Chak and Zakaria Hossain, '2020 Decode Moments' by Murshed Jahangir, Arifur Rahman's video installation, 'Haghere- an Era of Homelessness', 'Screenlife Film' by Shahla Islam, Emran Sohel's visual installation and Karkhana Collective.

The exhibition features several artiste' talks as well and is open for all every day from 4:00 pm to 8:00 pm till April 08.



## Government employees donate 25% of salary for city's decorations

OSAMA RAHMAN

Red lights. Green light. Then blue lights. And some yellow lights. It doesn't matter when the colours stop representing what they are meant to because we don't have enough of those colours. The fact is, the lights must go and they will because of the forced generosity of a few.

Government employees in Chapasthan's capital of Dhoka have decided to donate 25% of their monthly salary to help fund the city's decorations.

Whether the move was voluntary or not, however, has not been officially stated.

Citizens are visibly excited for the uplift with many sharing pictures of those buildings already sporting the lights.

"We just love the string lights of the same colour every year. Nothing says the country is doing great more than string lights. Think about it; everyone complains of the blackouts outside the city and sometimes in the city, but to know we can waste so much energy on making our buildings look cool brings me a lot of relief," Shaheen Islam, a citizen, said.

"It is a sign that we are indeed a country with a lot of electricity, which is great," Shaheen said while constantly looking over

his shoulder.

Aftab Akhter, the minister of corruption, said, "Government employees already make a lot of money under the table. So for them to give up some of their official income is not a big deal."

Pointed out that some employees may not be making any income on the side, Aftab burst out laughing.

The city, meanwhile, is ready to wear a festive look whether anyone likes it or not. "We are not giving most of our citizens basic amenities. Some don't even have running water. We don't even have any rent control policies in place. The least we can do is give

them the same boring lighting schemes on different public government buildings," a spokesperson for the Happy Citizen Standing Body said.

Contacted, a government employee on the condition of anonymity, said she was indeed very proud to be able to donate the money. "We didn't actually donate anything. They cut our wages during the Covid-19 pandemic and still haven't changed that. The buildings look nice, sure," she said.

Samiha Alam, another government officer, said she too was happy with the donations. "We. Love. The. Government. Long. Live. The. Government," she said.

## Anti-social enterprise issues half-baked apology for refusing Gaur a job at dairy farm

SHUDH MIAH

Pillage a Village, one of the country's largest dairy farms, yesterday expressed regret over the "unfortunate" experience of a Gaur who was refused a job at their dairy farm, over what the Gaur claimed was "blatant speciesism."

"The negative interview experience faced by a prospective candidate at one of our interview boards -- which doesn't even deal with our tea estates -- is unfortunate and does not comply with our values," a spokesperson for the dairy farm said.

When asked what they meant by their "values", the spokesperson said, "Empowerment. Justice. Profits."

"We have contacted the Gaur and expressed our regret," they said, after a video of the interviewee sharing her experience went viral on social media.

In a viral video, a Gaur, a bovine considered to be at a vulnerable stage and only found in a few pockets of the country's few pockets of forested areas, alleged that Pillage a Village's interview board had refused to hire her because she did not agree to lose her muscles and make her appearance that befitting a timid cow.

"I can produce up to one and one-and-a-half litres of milk a day. My milk is considered to be nutritionally superior than cow or goat milk," the Gaur said.

"As a vulnerable species, much like students in our country who have to work hard to pay through school, I wanted the job to help my family. I even requested them for any other position where I could fit, but they said no, that I had too many muscles," said the Gaur.

The video went viral on social media soon, drawing calls to boycott the anti-social enterprise.

"As an equal opportunity employer, Pillage



PHOTO: MIKE SUAREZ ON UNSPLASH

**Cows in the dairy industry suffer their entire lives. Treated like commodities, they are forcefully impregnated every year. The only respite comes at the end of their cruel life.**

a Village upholds cow dignity and inclusion rights for all, regardless of species," the spokesperson for Pillage a Village said.

"Muscles are never considered in our recruitment decision, until this particular case. In our team, comprising more than 50,000 cows, we have bovines from all over the world, but not a gaur," they added.

When asked what the statement meant and if they were going to hire the Gaur or not, the spokesperson said, "We will ensure that our interview boards are conducted to reflect our values and will also hold sensitivity training for our staffers."

When asked again whether the Gaur will be hired and whether this obvious

case of discrimination will be stopped, the spokesperson said that any Gaur who feels they had been improperly judged during an interview can contact the organisation's human resources department via email.

When asked once again whether the Gaur will be hired, or whether such a policy of not hiring Gaurs was actually in place, the spokesperson said, "We want our conduct to reflect our core values of empowerment, justice and profits."

When this exasperated journalist asked the spokesperson to reply either in the negative or positive, the spokesperson immediately said the word "positive".

No more answers were forthcoming.

## MAN WITHOUT MASK MAD AT UNMASKED MAN FOR SNEEZING

MAHBUB ALAM MUNNA

In the early days of the corona outbreak, it was a herculean task to find a single person without a mask. Many creditors failed to collect money as they couldn't identify their debtors through the masks. But with the passage of time and the availability of vaccines, things have changed.

Now, it is a herculean task to find a masked person.

Meanwhile, the number of Covid-19 patients is increasing, but it's not a big deal. A mere 5,62,000 patients were recorded and thousands are being recorded every day. But people know the truth: no mask, no corona.

Abul, an unmasked hero (who thinks fighting corona without a mask is a

heroic task), lost his cool with another unmasked man for sneezing at him while buying groceries. "You uneducated-unconscious stupid cannot wear a mask, but still sneeze on others? If you don't have money to buy a mask, let me buy you mask and then sneeze however much you want," Abul raged as his spittle flew through the air.

People were stunned at the incident. "Let me ask you a question, son of Bill Gates. Where's your mask? If you have that much money, buy a mask for yourself or let me launch a fundraiser to buy you a mask," the second person retorted with equal rage.

This heated, unmasked conversation drew the attention of many people.

A group of aware and obviously unmasked people suggested them not to shout in such a crowded place without masks as it could risk others' lives. One of them said loudly, "Listen very carefully. We are going through a very tough time. We should be more careful about health precautions, suggested by our country. We shouldn't hold unnecessary gatherings everywhere and always forget to wear mask every time."

From this crowd, a semi-woke and proudly unmasked person asked the lecturer where his mask had been. The lecturer replied, "I am a well-known conscious citizen. All my masks were outdated. So I came to the grocery to buy a new mask." Soon the crowd departed, but the lesson was clear: Wear a mask and if unmasked, don't draw attention to yourself.



## Amar Ekushey Boi Mela celebrating the Liberation Spirit

Health guidelines must be maintained to make it successful

THE eagerly awaited Amar Ekushey Boi Mela 2021 has finally begun—delayed by almost a month and a half because of the pandemic. Having the book fair in March, however, has its own relevance as this month will mark 50 years of the nation's independence and the birth centenary of Bangabandhu the Father of the nation. Thus it is most befitting that the Boi Mela would be dedicated to the martyrs of our Liberation War. The importance of the Boi Mela is amply demonstrated by the fact that the prime minister has inaugurated it virtually, launching an English translation of Bangabandhu's "Amar Dekha Noya Chin" (New China 1952) and her distributing the Bangla Academy Literary Award 2020 among recipients.

The Amar Ekushey Boi Mela is a tradition and symbol of our nationhood, our cultural identity and the spirit of our Liberation War. It denotes the supreme sacrifice made by young students during the Language Movement, to establish their mother tongue when it was under threat of cultural appropriation. It is representative of the resolute movement to free ourselves from the oppressive regime that was determined to keep us subjugated, powerless and deprived of basic rights as citizens. Having it in March has given the book fair greater significance as it has encompassed the spirit of the Language Movement and the Liberation War as well as paying respect to the leader who sparked the fire of resistance and led us to freedom.

This is why this is not just a book fair but a celebration of what we have achieved as an independent country, especially in giving the Bangla language the place it deserves. Started in an informal way in 1972 in the premises of Bangla Academy, the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela has become a permanent festival every year and hosted by the Academy. And every year the fair has been visited enthusiastically and spontaneously revealing the inherent love for books that Bangladeshis have.

The fair has had to expand its space with it now being held at both the Bangla Academy premises and Suhrawardy Udyan. The Boi Mela is an opportunity for publishers to showcase their productions and make good sales and for book lovers to acquire books by their favourite authors and poets as well as explore new talents. The festive mood and interactions of readers, poets and writers makes this an intellectually stimulating event that is truly unique among all the festivals we celebrate. Though the fair has started amid an unexpected surge in Covid-19 infections, the organisers are trying to ensure the health guidelines of physical distancing, wearing masks and keeping hand sanitisers at various points. We hope all visitors will comply with these guidelines so that everyone can safely enjoy the Boi Mela.

## Bangladesh's air quality takes another nosedive

Urgent steps needed to clean it

A report published by Swiss-based air quality information company IQAir on March 17, 2021 has termed Bangladesh as the most polluted nation and Dhaka as the second-most polluted city in the world regarding air pollution. The fact that Bangladesh has ranked top in the list of the countries with the worst air proves once again that steps taken by the concerned authorities have not really changed air quality.

According to the aforementioned report, around 13-22 percent of deaths in the South Asia region are linked to the health effects of exposure to polluted air, while the economic cost of this menace is 7.4 percent of the combined GDP of this region. The Swiss company had collected data from 106 countries around the world and found out that the average annual PM 2.5 (fine particles found in polluted air) concentrations in Bangladesh was 77.1 mcg/m3, which is seven times above the tolerable exposure as stipulated by the World Health Organization (WHO).

The report has also pointed out that during the Covid-19 crisis last year, many locations around the world have observed visibly cleaner air, which shows that improvements in air quality are possible if urgent and collective actions are taken. Even Dhaka's air quality had vastly improved during the lockdown periods. A report by *The Daily Star* on March 18, 2021 mentions an official of the Department of Environment (DoE) echoing the same line of thought. Seeking anonymity, this official also claimed that the government has already taken up various steps to contain this public health concern which includes conducting regular mobile court drives against the polluters.

But, treating only the symptoms without diagnosing the root causes will not help in finding a lasting solution to the challenge of air pollution. The concerned authorities have to find out what were the reasons that led to the dramatic improvement in Dhaka's air quality during the lockdown and take necessary measures to turn them into permanent remedies to this problem. Over the years, numerous reports have identified the brick kilns around Dhaka city as the top emitter of elements that degrade the air, while a recent report by Dhaka University's Air Quality Research and Monitoring Center has found a new culprit, which is black smoke coming out of unfit transport vehicles.

The authorities have to get rid of these brick kilns and substandard vehicles to make Dhaka's air breathable again. Finally, existing laws like the nine directives issued by the High Court in 2020, the Environment Conservation Act 1995 and Motor Vehicles Ordinance 1983 have to be implemented strictly and also, the newly proposed Clean Air Act-2019 by the DoE has to be turned into an active law as soon as possible to make a clear difference in air quality.

# The saga of a three-finger salute



BLOWN' IN THE WIND

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

NEWS of the pandemic waves of Covid-19 and political waves of the three-fingered salute is making the rounds. The confidence that we mustered with the advent of vaccines is being punctured by the rise in the number of affected coronavirus patients. At the same time, the hope of democratic process in the region is being shattered by the military coup in our neighbouring South East Asian countries; the antidote is an iconic salute. Taking their cue from popular culture, protesters first in Thailand, then in Hong Kong, and now in Myanmar, are trying to take a symbolic stance against respective authoritarian regimes. They have borrowed the three-finger salute from the literary and film series *The Hunger Games* and used this gesture to demonstrate an act of defiance. Like the vaccine, it has the potential to be effective, but its potency is yet to be tested.

The salute became popular in the wake of an earlier Thai military coup in 2014. The coup coincided with the release of the first part of *Mocking Jay* based on Suzanne Collin's last book of the trilogy *Hunger Games*. In the movie, the young female protagonist Katniss Everdeen (played by Jennifer Lawrence), led an uprising against the tyrannical rulers of a fictional country called Panem. In the manner of Katniss, Thai political activist Rittipong Mahapetch flashed this now-famous three-finger salute standing on a pedestrian overpass in Bangkok against the backdrop of soldiers occupying the streets. The image caught the imagination of the protesters around the world.

In the novel, Katniss explained the salutes "an old and rarely used gesture of [her] district, occasionally seen at funerals. It means thanks, it means admiration, it means goodbye to someone you love." Talking to the newsmen, however, Rittipong equated the spirit of the salute with the three principles of the French Revolution: liberty, equality, and fraternity. Rittipong's colleague Sombat, who is also credited for popularising the gesture, added, saying, "It's not about one country, it's a symbol for all people who want freedom. It's universal." It needs to be mentioned here that generations of Boy Scouts and Girl Guides have been using this three-finger salute since their inception in 1908 to reiterate their oaths of keeping themselves physically, mentally and morally straight. For this new generation of youth, it seems, the salute has a new political significance. It is a spin-off from the popular culture that enters the political domain with new possibilities: "Umbrella Protests" in Hong Kong used it as a demand for universal suffrage, and now the anti-coup demonstrations in

Myanmar are using it for their free Suu Kyi movement.

This is a classic example of culturalism where the culture becomes a political ideology. The meeting of the three middle fingers with the thumb crossed over to meet the pinkie is a symbolic confluence of youth-led movements against authoritarianism. It symbolises the way these young people devise their strategies against powerful enemies, render support for one another, and add momentum to their efforts. The *#MilkTeaAlliance* is a case in point that

and eventually to realpolitik suggests that change is inevitable and natural.

The pandemic has been a hot seat of change. The Tom and Jerry chase involving the virus and the vaccine is akin to the way the oppressor and the oppressed are acting and reacting. We are living in a world where we have espoused many abnormal elements as the new normal. Lockdown is a good example; self-isolation is another. Many cynics who follow the Thai political scene believe that the lockdown there is largely political. Despite the heavy economic toll, the Thai government is

plenty.

Then there are other kinds of realpolitik. One may argue, why the younger generation of Myanmar did not speak against the same military junta when they exterminated an entire ethnic community in the Rakhine province? Why did one action of the military receive endorsement by the protesting mass, while the other one did not? How are antibodies created within a body? What prompts reactions? What does not? If we are to talk of democracy, then should we not think of all members and groups living in a democratic society?



A pro-democracy student raises a three-fingered salute, with 'freedom, equality and brotherhood' written on their hand and a white ribbon around their wrist.

PHOTO: REUTERS

emerged as an online campaign through which Asian activists from Taiwan to Myanmar expressed solidarity with each other. The activists from this region are using new technologies to form regional, albeit global alliances. One of the key figures of the Hong Kong movement Joshua Wong, for instance, was invited to address a protest rally in Thailand to add momentum to their efforts. But the Thai authorities deported Wong before he could give his speech. Wong found more traction online as his live-streamed address via Skype reached more people than originally anticipated.

The meeting of the fingers is therefore a symbolic meeting of cultures. It is an act of solidarity and resistance. More importantly, it is a sign of adoption and adaptation. The journey of the three-finger salute from scouting to a fictive resistance

not relaxing its health restrictions as it is important for them to arrest the political unrest.

The subtle politics is symptomatic of the sophisticated authoritarianism that the military governments in these countries employ. They too have evolved from the crude form of martial law. They now get involved in the electoral process and try to give legitimacy to their military rule by producing proxy civilian figures. When their puppets stop serving their purposes, they are thrown into jail or removed forever. Think of the former State Counsellor Suu Kyi going to the Hague and defending the genocide of the very junta that has now brought in charges of bribery to end her political career for good. Vigilance against such anomalies often turns violent: the streets of Yangon and Bangkok are replete with examples

Can we be selective in lifting our fingers or pointing fingers at someone?

I am intrigued by this politics of fingers. The three-finger salute is a recognisable gesture, thanks to the massive popularity of *The Hunger Games*. The western world can immediately relate to what is being said through those raised fingers. Through this salute, the east meets the west. Then again, this gesture has been appropriated to serve a very local purpose. It is both an action and a reaction. Analogous to vaccines, it promises resistance, it promises hope. The only danger is that the enemy has many strains, too; and it has the equal power to constantly mutate and mutilate its enemies. We await a day when the three-finger turns into two to signify victory.

Shamsad Mortuza is Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB), and a professor of English at Dhaka University (on leave).

## Cheap marketing tactics only hurt the brand



ARAF MOMEN AKA

BANGLADESH is an ever-growing hub of business. We see businesses of every kind—from e-commerce businesses such as online shopping platforms and ride sharing companies (like Uber), to simple brick and mortar businesses, such as food joints—lining our streets and occupying our virtual spaces. Among all this clutter of a myriad businesses, marketing your brand to potential customers and prospects is necessary, especially if you want to stand out. And the more your business stands out, the more word of mouth, and thus free marketing, you get within the market.

Unfortunately, in this rush to get attention, there are a growing number of brands that use deceitful or unsavoury means on online platforms, such as Facebook, and conventional televised/print media platform. These include misleading campaigns that have been reported to have swindled customers out of their money, to vulgar or sexist campaigns that are simply distasteful to say the least.

When the term "marketing activities" is used, the responsibilities associated with that term does not stop at advertising. It spans around all the sections of the supply chain, up until the product (whether it is a good or a service) is in the ownership of the final consumer.

To start off with a recent and very blatant example, there was an advertisement of a pizza restaurant that went viral all over Facebook not too long ago. The advertisement grotesquely announced their 21-inch pizza with a suggestive image of a woman kneeling down while looking up at a piece of their pizza. It is shocking that such blatant objectification of women could even be considered to have been approved for an advertisement. Unfortunately, this is not the only such advertisement. There have been many more examples of women being objectified for the sake of marketing a product, and we do not even have to look too far in the past to notice those examples.

Another cheap marketing tactic is the act of misleading the consumers with false promises. For instance, there are several allegations of defrauded customers who bought products from online shopping platforms. An article in the *Prothom Alo* talks about how e-commerce sites in Bangladesh make use of several loopholes in their terms of services.

According to the article, Bangladeshi e-commerce businesses are able to loosely allude to how late delivery dates can go way past the stated delivery date,

Unfortunately, this trend seems to be on the rise because of the unbound attention these strategies seem to rake in. The term "any publicity is good publicity" seems to be the driving factor for these brands, and they could not be any more incorrect.

When you market your brand under the methods of such questionable campaigns to the public, the public has a notion of viewing your brand under the image you portrayed with the marketing campaign. Sleazy marketing campaigns will mark your brand with the tag of "sleazy",



how orders can be randomly cancelled by the online shopping platform, etc. A condition of one of the online shopping platforms justifies these terms by stating that an order can only be fulfilled if the product is in stock, while still listing that product to be available for sale. The article also pointed out that the Directorate of National Consumers' Rights Protection (DNCRP) received 4,091 complaints from e-commerce consumers alone from July 2020 onwards, where consumers felt misled about the services the e-commerce sites offered.

These are just a few examples of the many cheap marketing strategies brands have used in the Bangladeshi market.

misleading campaigns will tarnish your brand's image in the future with the "fraudulent" tag, derogatory campaigns will have retaliation—whether it is from the competitor(s) or the segment of the consumer base being made fun of.

An advertisement follows a set trend of the Hierarchy of Effects model—from noticing a brand through advertisements to purchasing products from the brand. There are three stages to this model: the cognitive stage (awareness and knowledge) where customers perceive the brand and keep it in mind, the affective stage (liking and preference) where the customers consider the pros and cons of purchasing the brand's product, and the

conative stage (conviction and purchase) where customers are convinced to purchase the brand's products.

The notion of "any publicity is good publicity" does not hold up as strongly as it used to. In an era of more socially conscious consumers, negative publicity often does not get past the cognitive stage of the Hierarchy of Effects model in the long run. If the brand is lucky, a cheap marketing tactic may make customers jump to the conative stage, but it will often not last for long, as the brand only gets past the cognitive stage because of the brand becoming a "trend". Trends do not last long. There are plenty of alternatives for a customer to consider within any of the Bangladesh markets, competitors are always ready to capitalise on any mistakes the competition makes. And consumers can shift their attention at any time on trends once realisation sets in.

The only way for a brand to save itself from backlash is proper PR activities and, if the situation goes too far, rebranding. PR activities do work, but they are tricky to carry out—since there are a lot of stakeholders to appease (like consumers, authorities, suppliers, communities, etc.). And not every company can afford a PR team. Rebranding, if things go too far, is much more expensive and focuses on completely changing the image of a brand. Smaller firms cannot afford rebranding and renowned brands often do not retain as much clout after a marketing fiasco.

While what marketing campaigns should be cannot be set in stone, since marketers should aspire to pleasantly surprise a customer base with any offerings a brand puts forward, there must be a code of ethics when marketing a brand. Themes of love, familial bonds and patriotism often strike a good chord with customers. Cultural celebrations like Ramadan and Pohela Baishakh stand as opportunities to market your brand too.

The point is, unethical marketing methods that promote sexist notions, that misrepresent a product and that uses cheap tactics of demeaning a competitor do nothing but damage the image of the brand. The campaigning brand may enjoy its cheap thrills for a short while, but it does not last.

Araf Momen Aka is an intern at the Editorial department of *The Daily Star*.



# Nepal-Bangladesh Relations: Beyond Bilateralism

SUNIL KC

**N**EPAL was the 7th country in the world to recognise the independence of Bangladesh on January 16, 1972. The two countries established formal diplomatic ties on April 8, 1972. The two countries are also the founding members of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and member of the United Nations, contributing to UN Peace Keeping Missions worldwide and other regional frameworks.

With a great zeal to enhance the bilateral cooperation, Bangladesh opened its full-fledged Embassy in Kathmandu on October 3, 1971, and Nepal opened its Embassy in Dhaka in 1976. From the early days, Nepal and Bangladesh have maintained cordial relations and extended support in regional, multilateral, and sub-regional cooperation. For instance, Nepal and Bangladesh are active members of the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical Cooperation (BIMSTEC), and Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal Initiative (BBIN)—a sub-regional grouping body in the region. **Trade, transit and economic ties** Soon after entering formal diplomatic ties, Nepal and Bangladesh signed a Trade, Transit and Payments Agreements in 1976. The Bangladesh government had also allowed Nepal six transit points for entry and exit for trade purposes through Bangladesh. However, till date, it has not become wholly functional. Bangladesh had offered Nepal the use of the Chittagong

and Mongla Port in 1997 after opening the Kakarvitta-Phulbari-Bangabandhu route with additional rail route to Nepal Rohanpur in Bangladesh to Singhabad India, but Nepal is yet to make use of them despite Nepalese traders having shown deep interest.

In 2015, Prime Minister KP Oli announced foreign trade through Bangladeshi ports due to border issues with India. Nepal and Bangladesh had also signed an Agreement for the Avoidance of Double Taxation and Prevention of Fiscal Evasion concerning taxes on income on March 5, 2019. Until 2014, the bilateral trade was in favour of Nepal, but with a fall in the export of lentils from Nepal, an eventual trade deficit was observed. There was an export of NPR 954 million and an import of NPR 5.29 billion in 2019-2020. The two have done well in joint-ventures set up of Nepal-Bangladesh Bank Limited. The IFIC Bank (Bangladesh) has 40.91 percent shares, and it is one of the biggest FDIs from Bangladesh in Nepal. While the progress is slow, the two economies hold the potential to grow cooperation in years to come.

**Power and connectivity** With a growing industrial base, Bangladesh has emerged as an energy-hungry nation. Nepal is among the top investment destinations for Bangladesh for the purchase of 9,000 MW electricity by 2040. It has already pledged USD 1 billion for Sunkoshi II Hydroelectricity Power Plant with 1,110 MW capacity and Sunkoshi III with 536 MW capacity. During the

Nepal Investment Summit in 2017, PRAN-RFL a leading conglomerate of Bangladesh pledged USD 2.4 billion for the food and infrastructure sectors in Nepal. However, an unstable political scenario in Nepal has kept the investors hesitant.

Bangladesh is awaiting the Bilateral Investment Protection Agreement (BIPPA) with Nepal, which may see an initial investment of USD 3 billion together. It will be the most significant single country investment to help make a trade surplus with Bangladesh through power trade. Nepal could also become a net energy provider to Bangladesh, using the Indian transmission lines for the border trade, which India had already agreed upon. In this regard, Bangladesh has signed an MoU with India to purchase 500 MW electricity at NPR 7.71 per unit for 25 years.

Bangladesh is also keen in developing the waterways terminal in landlocked Nepal, allowing it sea access with the Bay of Bengal in collaboration with the government of Nepal. During the tenure of Bangladeshi Ambassador to Nepal Mashfee Binte Shams, there was significant discussion with the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BITWA). Similarly, the leading private waterways terminal operator from Bangladesh, Summit Alliance Ports Limited, has shown interest to develop Terminals in Koshi and Narayani River. The Bangladesh government is also keen on connecting Nepal through their



President Abdul Hamid at a meeting with his Nepali counterpart, Bidhya Devi Bhandari, at her residence in Kathmandu on November 13, 2019.

PHOTO: PID

railways connectivity via India till Kakarvitta and Biratnagar for cost-effective trade. Ambassador Mashfee Binte Shams was very much vocal for the timely execution of BIN Motor Vehicle Agreements, but it could not materialise. Also during the tenure of Ambassador Shams, Nepal Bangladesh Business Forum (NBBF), an annual bilateral forum was created in 2016 in collaboration with AIDIA with the sole objective of promoting trade, business and investments in both countries. There is a realisation within the private sectors that BIN could be a game-changing platform for Nepal to access Bangladesh and South East Asia's connectivity through Myanmar, so Nepal has to ratify the agreement as soon as possible.

Other than trade and investment, Nepal and Bangladesh can join hands together with Indian railways and waterways authorities in the trilateral agreements for the rail and waterways development in the sub-region. It will allow better connectivity with the aim of easy, free movement for cost-effective trade. BIN can develop the Hindu and Buddhist circuit for the sub-regional religious tourism as Bangladesh has both Hindus and Buddhists like Nepal and India. Bangladesh is a new "Tiger" in Asia, overlapping the Indian economy due to its growing garments sector in recent years. However, Bangladeshi garment industries are yet to see the potential in Nepal as a market. Nepal should think of setting up Bangladeshi garment

industries in its territory to use the Special Economic Zones properly. Pharmaceuticals is another potential point of cooperation as Bangladesh has plants in the US, North America and the Middle East.

In 2019, Bangladesh president's goodwill visit to Nepal and a visit by the Nepalese Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali to Dhaka in February 2020 was focused broadly on multimodal transport connectivity, investments in the power sector, improvement of the bilateral trade and developing the infrastructure facilities in the border areas. Meanwhile, the slow pace of progress is yet to exploit the full potential of this great bonhomie between Nepal and Bangladesh. As a promising FDI partner for Nepal and connectivity gateway for foreign trade, Bangladesh will assist Nepal in tapping into the global business opportunities. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent commitment to support Nepal with the supply of 50,000 MT of Urea in a critical shortage period shows goodwill between the two countries. Therefore, firm commitments with a great desire in enhancing our bilateral ties with a much better and more hopeful future shall be the way forward. In this light, the Nepalese president's upcoming goodwill trip to Bangladesh scheduled for March 22-24 would be a milestone in taking forward the bilateral ties to a greater height.

Sunil KC is Chief Executive of Asian Institute of Diplomacy and International Affairs (AIDIA), a Kathmandu based foreign policy think-tank.

# Foggy road ahead in Myanmar crisis

China and the US are rapidly zeroing in on the Myanmar crisis, threatening to derail initiatives by Asean, particularly those of Indonesia and Thailand, Asia News Network reports.

**F**OUR events on Sunday (March 14) are proving pivotal to the outcome of the escalating crisis in Myanmar.

First, the acting leader of Myanmar's ousted lawmakers under an entity called the Committee for Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH), backed by the US, issued a call to arms for the protesters to defend themselves in a "revolution".

Second, unidentified assailants set fire to scores of garment factories in an industrial zone—some of which were Chinese-owned. Both the protesters and the junta are blaming the other for the arson attacks. The incidents followed weeks of "hate" messages in social media over China's opposition alongside Russia when the UN Security Council sought to condemn and impose sanctions on the Myanmar military junta over the February 1 coup.

Third, deaths of anti-junta protesters on Sunday hit a high of at least 39, bringing the total death toll to well over 100.

Fourth, the Tatmadaw, as the Myanmar military is known, has imposed martial law in two townships, one of which is in Yangon. More were underway afterwards.

The upsurge in violence comes as a blow to Asean, which was hopeful of further engaging the Tatmadaw to convince it to open a dialogue with all stakeholders, including the National League for Democracy; and also to allow a humanitarian channel to aid the people as Myanmar already faces an uphill task controlling the Covid-19 pandemic.

Separate initiatives by Indonesia and Thailand, which managed to establish preliminary "trust" with the junta as evidenced by the visit of Myanmar Foreign Ministry representative Wunna Maung Lwin to Bangkok on February 24 to meet Thai Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai and Indonesian Foreign

Minister Retno Marsudi, now appear to be in tatters following Sunday's call to arms and the consequent violence.

Greater involvement by superpowers and their taking sides in the conflict could further complicate matters.

The US had earlier initiated a series of sanctions on Myanmar military personnel and stopped the military junta from withdrawing Myanmar's USD 1 billion deposit in New York, as well as a World Bank loan freeze. The US has backed the CRPH, which is now seeking recognition as a government in exile. It is also trying to bring on board the ethnic minorities, including those who have been fighting for independence under a federal principle.

These signals are heightening the challenges for the Tatmadaw to hold the country together and avoid a potential civil war, a scenario which Asean, especially Thailand and as well as China, is most wary of. Unlike the 1940s when the Tatmadaw began as the only institution in Myanmar able to build a nation state, now the NLD and its allies have a blanket presence in all parts of the country, although with few arms.

Meanwhile China, with its controversial economic relations with Myanmar plus complex activities along the borders, is poised for greater intervention following Sunday's arson attacks on the properties of Chinese investors.

China had earlier signalled its intention to enter the fray. Foreign Minister Wang Yi was unequivocal in stating: "China and Myanmar are a community with a shared future through thick and thin. China will not waver in its commitment to advancing China-Myanmar relations, and will not change the course of promoting friendship and cooperation, no matter how the situation evolves."

One Thai diplomat, who did not



Police fire a water cannon at protesters demonstrating against the coup and demanding the release of elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi, in Naypyitaw, Myanmar, February 8, 2021.

PHOTO: REUTERS

want to be named, expressed his apprehensions. "We are naturally worried because as the conflict intensifies, the reactions from major nations, especially western ones, will increase, with the consequent danger of everything getting irretrievably out of control. As we are seeing, moral support, financing etc to keep the protests going may lead to supply of arms and weapons. The entire environment can lead to this as well as external interference reaching various groups of people, including ethnic minorities to fight the military government, triggering chaos. So, what does this lead to—a problem for Asean, particularly Thailand [sharing long borders with Myanmar]."

"If we talk about patience, we don't want to say if they [the US] have or don't have—but we would like them to have the same objectives and good aspirations for Myanmar. That's what we would like to see," he added.

Thai observers believe that co-existence of the Tatmadaw and the NLD is the best of the alternatives before Myanmar.

And there is nothing better than a return to normalcy. "It's best for them to walk forward together, as it had proven throughout recent years that by sticking together, trying to depend on one another, or even with sporadic conflicts at times, it is the optimum option for their country," Thai Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai had said in an earlier interview with Asia News Network.

Don stressed the importance of dialogue and trust to achieve a peaceful resolution of the conflict in Myanmar.

Thais believe that if the two sides had tried to stay together and accommodated each other and not sought to annihilate the other, the crisis would not have taken place. And if they can nurture the relations as they did in the past several years, it would have

created a "special" characteristic in themselves, and the role of the military would have then steadily evolved in tandem with domestic politics, benefiting the people in the process.

The failure at mutual accommodation had precipitated the present crisis, which is escalating by the day.

Amid threats of a civil war and martial law imposed on two townships and more, the chance of the Tatmadaw imposing a nationwide martial law, blocking access to the internet and all communication with the outside world cannot be ruled out.

The Tatmadaw has woven tightly the fabric of the Myanmar nation for long and has become used to being in control of virtually every facet. The soldiers are industrious, serious, brutal, ruthless, and aloof, with distrust of everyone. It is as if the world changed little in the post-colonial time, and everybody is a virtual enemy.

But the world has changed from the time when the military held the country in a tight leash. The people of Myanmar strongly believe that life would be better for them with a democratically elected civilian government, and communication technology.

There is a fear in Asean that the crisis could spiral out of control and become complicated like in some other countries, such as foreign fighters intruding, or the use of drone bombs from outside. Even the Tatmadaw would not be in a position to tackle such a scenario.

A Thai diplomat added that Thailand had not talked to China, but if Beijing offered a solution that could work, it would be welcomed. And Bangkok is open to combining its approach with the Chinese and work together for mutual benefit.

But Thailand maintains that if trust and dialogue can be established without outside interference, it is best

for Myanmar because it doesn't have to share the "cake" with anyone.

While several Asean members have supported Indonesia's initiative, they are sceptical of Thailand's approach. "Yes, trust is key, but Thailand is mistaken in thinking that its special relationship with Myanmar could protect the region," one Asean diplomat commented.

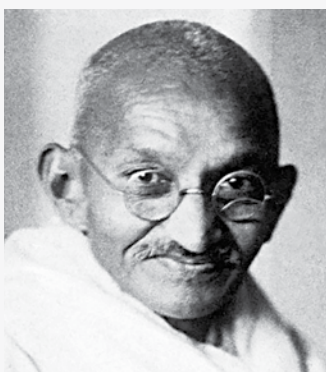
Meanwhile, on the ground the military still has the upper hand. A Myanmar source said the Tatmadaw is determined to carry out its objectives, despite the strong and inspired protests. There has been no significant switching of sides by soldiers and police to annul the coup, which is seen as a key determination of the outcome as international pressure has not been effective at the moment.

Some Myanmar analysts believe the best hope right now is to have a free and fair election after a year or two. The key challenge will be how best to hold the military accountable for its promises including maintaining basic human rights, freedom of the press and freedom of information flow. And also to make sure that Myanmar does not become a pariah state so that its citizens can recover from the Covid pandemic. Policy engagements are needed from the international community rather than isolation.

But they conceded that the fate of the NLD is not good unless something can be salvaged. In addition to voter fraud charges, the military is now piling on corruption charges. It is widely surmised that Aung San Suu Kyi's political career is likely over. Some blamed her stubbornness and political naivete for a series of actions leading to the coup.

The events of Sunday have stirred more uncertainty about the end-game, as the competing interests and geopolitics of China and the US further muddy the waters.

## QUOTABLE Quote



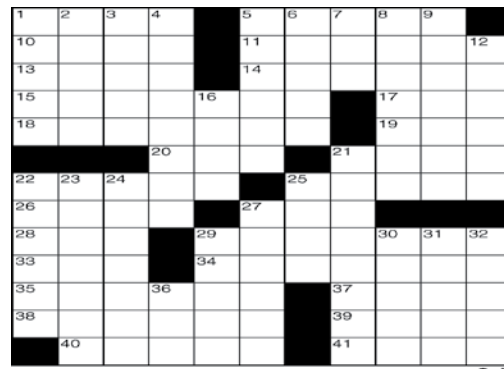
**MAHATMA GANDHI** (1869-1948) Indian lawyer

*In a gentle way, you can shake the world.*

## CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

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|---------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>ACROSS</b>             | 28 Angry state              | 7 Barracks bed       |
| 1 Rose part               | 29 Texas senator since 2013 | 8 Window over a door |
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| 13 Smell                  | 37 Nights before            | 21 Italian nobleman  |
| 14 Change genetically     | 38 Entertain                | 22 Fast pitch        |
| 15 Toothed wheel          | 39 Dispatched               | 23 Tiaras' kin       |
| 17 Gun owner's org.       | 40 Hits the sauce           | 24 Way back when     |
| 18 Apartment door feature | 41 Whirlpool                | 25 Young ones        |
| 19 Sonar user             |                             | 27 Past and present  |
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| 21 Method                 | 1 Get a goat                | 30 Spoke wildly      |
| 22 Frighten               | 2 Right now                 | 31 Tip over          |
| 25 Not feral              | 3 Ham it up                 | 32 Full of flavor    |
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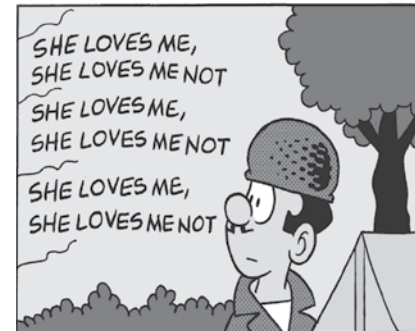
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## YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



## BEETLE BAILEY



## BY MORT WALKER



## BABY BLUES



## BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



# Bangabandhu: A People's Hero Against Corruption

AHMED AHSANUZZAMAN

Essentially a people's hero, the most unique "disruptive leader" of Bengal, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (1920-75) solved a number of the "wicked problems" that the West Pakistani feudal-colonial overlords orchestrated and let loose on his nation before its independence in 1971 "by challenging the existing cultural hegemonies that fail to serve communities through concentration of power and the marginalisation of stakeholders" (Ryan, Christian N 2016, 108). Under his charismatic leadership subaltern Bengalis fought their glorious war of

further increasing the miseries of the poor and distressed on whom the war had its heaviest toll. He was quick to realise that Bangladesh's independence would be at stake if the rat-race of the crooked worshippers of Mammon continued unrestricted.

One is reminded of the award-winning, star-studded blockbuster *Alor Michil* (Procession of Light, 1974) directed by the celebrated film-maker Narayan Ghosh Mita. Mita's film reflects the clash of values at a micro level — precisely in a family — in post-independence Bangladesh as

to know about the conspiracy, rushes to the concert hall where her dear *choto mama* is set to sing, and dies as she covers him up and is hit by the bullet in the process.

Indeed, Bangabandhu identified corruption as the primary evil, hindering Bangladesh's development. In many of his speeches during 1972-75 across the country, he repeatedly pointed it out. And with a view to building a corruption-free, exploitation-free, secular, welfare Bangladesh, he launched his campaign for the Second Revolution in 1975 which, with his brutal killing along with most of his family members excluding his two daughters, the incumbent Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana on 15 August 1975, came to an abrupt halt. In this piece, I will revisit two significant speeches in my translation which Bangabandhu delivered in 1975. In these speeches he gave reasons for his decision to shift to the presidential form of government from that of the parliamentary system, and at length discussed corruption and how it impacted the country. The first of the two was made at the National Parliament on 25 January after it agreed to the Fourth Amendment Bill to the Constitution. The other speech was delivered at his last public appearance at the Suhrawardy Uddyan in Dhaka organised to celebrate the 4<sup>th</sup> Independence Day of the country on 26 March.

Importantly, Bangabandhu's idea of corruption is overarching. Black guards like black-marketeers, hoarders and bribe-takers are obviously corrupt. However, if one does not discharge one's duties and obligations by the book, s/he is also corrupt according to Bangabandhu's perception of corruption. Thus if government employees act like "masters" of the people when they are constitutionally their "servants," (25 January Speech; in Hasina, Sheikh and Baby Moudud, 2015) they are corrupt. Similarly, teachers are corrupt when they fail to inspire their students to grow as "proper humans" (26 March Speech). In these two speeches the Father of the Nation turned as hard as nails on corruption and the corrupted section of his people.

Nevertheless, Bangabandhu was convinced that the ordinary people of the country were not corrupt; that

they never engaged in corruption even when they did not have food to eat. He said in his 26 March speech, "Who commits the corruption I'm talking about? Are my farmers corrupt? No. Are my workers? No." The "educated 5 per cent," the social elites, are the "black-marketeers," "foreign agents," "hoarders," and they "launder money abroad." In the same speech he promised stern action against the miscreants, and asked his compatriots to help him catch them: "I won't forgive anyone. Whoever I catch, I won't spare. . . I'll visit village after village. We've to protest in such a way that the corrupt ones, bribe takers, profit mongers, and smugglers who smuggle my goods abroad are socially boycotted. We've to remember it. We've to arrange meetings in villages to identify the culprits — there's a thief to be caught, there's a bribe taker to be identified." With a heavy heart he added, "I don't know where all these thieves came from. Pakistan took away everything and left these thieves. We would have been saved had they taken away the thieves. Some brokers left; I would have been relieved if the thieves had gone away too." He then lashed out at the so-called "educated society" which, with its colonial mindset, treated the poor with disdain although they were the ones who provided money to create "engineer shahibs, doctor shahibs, officer shahibs, politician shahibs, member shahibs, all the shahibs": "What are you giving them? What are you returning? Critique yourselves. Speeches can't do any good. Writing great columns in the morning after having black marketed broadsheet of newspaper at night doesn't mean anything. Big talk in the morning after having black marketed medicine at night is useless. Talking about honesty after drinking at the Hotel Intercontinental is rubbish. Critique yourself, cleanse yourselves. Only then will you become humans."

Such scathing criticism of the supposedly educated section in the speech reveals that Bangabandhu did not have any illusions about that class. He knew well that the liberation war of 1971 was truly a people's war fought at the field level mostly by farmers and labourers. Hardly affected by the war, some amongst the educated few were

already on missions to build their own fortunes, sacrificing the interest of the ordinary people, as Bangabandhu quickly discovered. And he did not hesitate at all to slam these white-collared miscreants.

Bangabandhu presented the picture of an all-consuming hydra headed monster called corruption in his 25 January speech at the Parliament as follows: "Today you'll see corruption wherever you go. You'll find corruption in road constructions we're doing. There's corruption when you want to buy food. There's corruption when we want to buy goods. There's corruption in getting foreign handouts." And once more he identified the corrupted few unambiguously: "We, the five per cent comprising the educated society — we're the most corrupt people in the world." They were the ones who betrayed Bangabandhu and robbed the poor of their means of survival: "I bring food for them from abroad, the corrupt ones steal the food. I bring money for them, the corrupt ones steal the money. I will bring food with their money — you'll steal it and eat! I'll bring money — you'll launder it abroad." A deeply passionate Bangabandhu appealed to his compatriots to stick firmly to the four pillars of the Constitution — nationalism, democracy, socialism and secularism — in order to save the country and the people. He called upon them to "overthrow the corrupted few, backhanders and smugglers."

Bangabandhu's indictment of corruption and the corrupt occupies a prominent position in his political philosophy. He attacked corruption in the Pakistani regime; he slapped it down in his own administration. The Second Revolution he introduced few months before his assassination aimed at bringing "smiles on the faces of the distressed people" to ensure which it became absolutely necessary to "stop oppression, repression and injustice" and every sort of corruption.

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liberation, subverted the power structure, and liberated themselves through a nine-month long bloody war which claimed three million lives. However, Bangabandhu, the "Friend of Bengal," who had unequivocally condemned all-devouring corruption eating up Jinnah's "mutilated, moth-eaten" rickety Pakistan, to his utter anguish and disgust, discovered that in his very own *Sonar Bangla*, the Golden Bengal, a section of dishonest, greedy people was busy serving their own gods,

the younger brother, like million other freedom fighters, returns home triumphantly from the war with big dreams surrounding a prosperous, golden motherland, and the elder brother who, like thousand others, sets to hoarding and trading on the black market, and becomes rich overnight. The conflict intensifies; the elder brother, absolutely possessed by his greed of money, plans to liquidate his own sibling. However, their loving niece, Alo, the light of the family, gets

## REVIEWS

# A Review of War heroines Speak: The Rape of Bangladeshi Women in 1971 War of Independence

BY ZAKIA AFRIN

Dr. Nilima Ibrahim. Translated by Dr. Nusrat Rabbee. ISBN-10 : 1098357574. February, 2021.

It took Dr. Nilima Ibrahim 25 years to publish the narratives of rape victims of 1971 whom she interviewed almost immediately after the war. Another twenty-five years later, Dr. Nusrat Rabbee's translation, *War Heroines Speak: The Rape of Bangladeshi women in 1971 War of Independence* offers a mirror to a society riddled with violence against women and subjugation all around. The narratives have remained sincere to the Bangla version with a translated work of poignant and relevant language. Yet, it seems the stories have taken on many layers of meaning for the generation born after the liberation war. It's the 50<sup>th</sup> year of independence, but how liberated are we truly?

The English translation stays true to the original Bengali version. "In these quiet narratives, the young women and children clearly express: how they went from an idyllic childhood to the horrors of genocide; how they continued to live with painful memories and social exclusion after the war" writes Dr. Nusrat Rabbee in the back flap. An expert of statistics and machine learning, Dr. Rabbee took this task upon herself continuing the legacy of her family's intimate sacrifice during the liberation war.

We follow Mrs. T Nielsen on her journey to Denmark from Dhaka as she finds family oceans away from her own—Meherjan, who preferred to

live with the enemy in Pakistan rather than her natural home; Rina, who was brought back from the verge of leaving Bangladesh and later found a loving family. Shefali's strong rebuke of Bengali men who failed to save the women — "I have faced you and I have seen you from head to toe. I even had the misfortune to see your soul inside your body" — continues with the woes of Maina, whose trials and tribulations went on long into her married life. We witness Mina finding her old life after initial challenges. And then there is Fatema, the most tortured and affected one suffering a mental breakdown and coming back from hell to life. These stories are filled with deep melancholy that transcends the physical torture these women endured. After the war, a population ever so obsessed with detailed descriptions of rape incidents (how many were there? How long did they keep her? What was she wearing when she was found!) focused on that part of the history where *Birangonas* were rescued, given the honorary titles and put in Government care for rehabilitation. For generations, we have been memorizing the 3 million martyrs and 200,000 *Birangonas* who sacrificed themselves during the independence war. We have not so much discussed the treatment they received from their families, neighbours, friends and the

community in general.

As Nusrat Rabbee correctly points out in the preface, rape as a weapon of war has not received its due attention and urgency of international community. The first charges of rape/sexual violence came in the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in the early 90s. Prior to that, a definition of Rape was non-existent in International Law. The Bangladeshi ordeal just may be one of the worst cases of sexual violence documented in history. Dr. Rabbee applauds the domestic War Crimes Tribunal and justly demands accountability from Pakistan, a country who has not only refused to acknowledge the genocide but also rallied the international community to condemn the effort as religious oppression.

One could read the book to learn or revisit history, to get a glimpse of daily lives around Bangladesh during the conflict, and even to understand how religious conservatives have played a horrifying role in the violence inflicted on women. Then there is the opportunity to explore the much avoided discussion of parallel of the treatment of rape victims in today's Bangladesh. The victim blaming continues in the form of pointing to clothing items, roaming after hours, being with male friends and a list of activities trying to blame the wom-

an. Victims are forced to marry the rapist and many times carry a child conceived through rape. Women are constantly advised on how to dress, how to carry themselves in educational and professional spaces. Recently, for the first time, the Bangladesh High court ordered a rapist to marry his victim, a minor girl. The timing is particularly haunting—the 50th anniversary of independence, of the history of genocide, crimes against humanity, rape camps, and of the birth of the *Birangonas*. While a daughter of the Martyr intellectual Dr. Fazle Rabbee offers the new generation the legacy of heroism and resilience, the mirror she holds casts a shadow over our determination to build a socially just Bangladesh. It shows us how Government action without social acceptance can never last and patriarchy must end in all shape and form to offer women agency of their own lives.

It is a must-read for international readers interested in understanding Bangladesh and a guidebook for Bangladeshi youth to build a country envisioned during the liberation war. It is high time to revisit the aftermath of the war and our lessons unlearned. This translated work from Dr. Nusrat Rabbee is just the right place to start.

Zakia Afrin is a Human Rights Activist and Academic based in San Francisco, CA.

## WAR HEROINES SPEAK The Rape of Bangladeshi women in 1971 War of Independence

from Ami Birangona Bolchi  
by Dr. Nilima Ibrahim

Translated by  
Dr. Nusrat Rabbee





Bangladesh cricketers are already battling it out in their first ODI against New Zealand at the University Oval in Dunedin today. The Tigers, who are in search of their first international victory against the Kiwis in their backyard, had their last practice session in Dunedin yesterday ahead of the three-match ODI series, which will be followed by three T20Is.

PHOTO: BCB

## NZ T20Is a dress rehearsal for the future

MAZHAR UDDIN

Bangladesh cricket is nearing a transition period as the fantastic five of Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Tamim Iqbal, Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim and Mahmudullah Riyad are all in their mid to late 30s. Now is the time to prepare for the vacuum that will be created when these stalwarts, inevitably, leave the scene. The selectors have already moved on from Mashrafe, who retired from T20Is in 2017 and quit the ODI captaincy in March last year, giving opportunities to young seamers like Hasan Mahmud and Shoriful Islam and handing over the captaincy to Tamim. Apart from Mashrafe the four others are still expected to go on playing till the 2023 World Cup as

well as in the longest format, fitness and performance permitting. However, with Tamim set to miss the three-match T20I series against the Kiwis due to personal reasons and Shakib having skipped the tour for the birth of his third child, the time has come for the selectors to inject fresh faces in the T20 format. Despite being the most successful batsman for Bangladesh across all formats, perhaps Tamim is also assessing his game when it comes to the shortest format. It would not be surprising if he makes way to allow youngsters to settle in. Shakib on the other hand is arguably the most effective T20 cricketer that Bangladesh have ever produced but the star all-rounder is picking and choosing which games he plays. Shakib had earlier asked for a break from the upcoming two-match Test series against Sri Lanka scheduled for April to take part in the Indian Premier League, and the

BCB had granted his request. Now, the main challenge for the Bangladesh think tank is to act keeping the long-term view in mind and start preparing the next lot of cricketers who could take responsibility for the Tigers' future and transform themselves into the new seniors. Even Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) President Nazmul Hassan had stated recently that cricketers who are not interested to play a specific format need to inform the board so that selectors can form the squad with a long-term view. Much like Shakib and Tamim, Mushfiqur or Mahmudullah also falls in the same category and might start prioritising their game and choose to play a specific format in the coming days keeping their fitness in mind. Like any other cricketing nation Bangladesh cricket will also face the vacuum when these seniors eventually

make way in future. T20 cricket requires energy and excitement and the likes of Naim Sheikh, Nazmul Hossain Shanto, Soumya Sarkar and Liton Das have got the potential, which has been reflected in the past. But these players also need faith, freedom and time from the board, selectors, team management and also from spectators so the new lot of cricketers can grow in confidence, which has been the one thing found missing over the years. Bangladesh will be without their two poster boys Shakib and Tamim in the upcoming three match T20I series against New Zealand, which follows the ODI series. While Shakib and Tamim's absence always poses a challenge for the Tigers, one good omen could be that the Tigers won their last T20I without the duo convincingly by nine wickets against Zimbabwe back in March 2020.

## Rimon relishing left-back battle

SPORTS REPORTER

With regular left-back Rahmat Mia sidelined by Covid-19, newcomer Rimon Hossain of Bashundhara Kings is likely to step up as a replacement in the national team, who had their first training session in Kathmandu yesterday ahead of a tri-nation tournament starting on March 23. Rimon, who hails from Naogaon, is eager to show his worth by facing the challenge head on irrespective of who is ahead of him in the pecking order and has succeeded in carving out a place in defending champions Bashundhara Kings' starting eleven. "To be honest, I don't want to think much about who is playing at left-back in the national team. I really like taking on the challenge of securing a spot in starting elevens, like I did with Bashundhara Kings," Rimon told The Daily Star on the eve of his departure for Nepal on Thursday. "I am ready for the challenge of securing a place in the national team but it is not that I must play for the national team on my first call. I want to utilise the opportunity in the best way whether I am given five minutes or 90 minutes," the lanky left-back, who was rewarded for consistent performances in the domestic circuit, added. Rimon's biggest strength is one-on-one defending, with an ability to not let players get past him or whip in crosses. Further up, he is always on the overlap, ready to cross. The younger left-back received high praise from Bashundhara Kings coach Oscar Bruzon for getting the better of Abahani's finest forward, Kervens Belfort, in the first meeting of the ongoing season. Rimon gave all the credit to his academy - Shamsul Huda Football Academy in Jashore, which is producing a lot of top-

flight footballers. "To be honest, I could never have reached this level if I did not get a chance in 2015 to train in the Shamsul Huda FA, which gave me everything for five years to mature as a footballer. Without the academy, I would perhaps have been playing second or third division football," he said, also thanking his parents for supporting him since childhood. Rimon helped Bashundhara Kings become third in the Pioneer Football League in 2016 before playing for Arambagh Football Academy in the 2018 3rd Division League. He then played for Social Friends in the 2019 2nd Division League before finally returning to Kings in the Bangladesh Premier League in 2020 and cementing a place. "I never thought I would get a national call-up. After nine league matches, Jamie Day sent me a text saying that I had been playing well and if I kept it intact, I could train with the U-23 national team and the national football team. After receiving an SMS from Jamie, I realised that I was going to get a call-up for the national team. "I haven't come here to disappear. My target is to stay in the national team for a long time by performing for both my club and the national team."



Bangladesh players engage in a group training session - their first since arriving in Nepal on Thursday - at the ANFA Ground yesterday ahead of a tri-nation tournament also featuring the hosts and a Kyrgyzstan U-23 side.

PHOTO: BFF



Paul Pogba came off the bench at half-time and scored the decisive goal within two minutes as Manchester United beat AC Milan 1-0 at San Siro on Thursday night for a 2-1 aggregate win in their Europa League Round of 16 fixture.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Bayern draw PSG; Real face Liverpool

AFP, PARIS

Holders Bayern Munich will face last year's beaten finalists PSG in the quarterfinals of this season's Champions League, while Friday's draw for the last eight also threw up a clash between Liverpool and Real Madrid. The draw also pitted Premier League leaders Manchester City against Borussia Dortmund, with Chelsea set to play Porto in the other tie. The first leg is set to be played in Germany on April 6 or 7, with the return in Paris a week later. City will be strong favourites against Dortmund, with the winner of that tie going through to a semi-final showdown with either Bayern or PSG.

### CHAMPIONS LEAGUE DRAW

**QUARTERFINALS**  
Manchester City v Borussia Dortmund  
Porto v Chelsea  
Bayern Munich v Paris Saint-Germain  
Real Madrid v Liverpool  
First legs April 6/7, second legs April 13/14  
**SEMIFINALS**  
Bayern Munich or PSG v Manchester City or Borussia Dortmund  
Real Madrid or Liverpool v Porto or Chelsea  
First legs April 27/28, second legs May 4/5  
**FINAL IN ISTANBUL ON MAY 29**

## Baki, Munna fail in Delhi

SPORTS REPORTER

Though there was a slim chance of grabbing Tokyo Olympics quota places due to the absence of some European nations and the presence of already-qualified shooters in the ISSF World Cup in New Delhi, the Bangladeshi shooters failed to take that opportunity as they failed to reach the final round in 10m air rifle event yesterday. Two-time Commonwealth Games silver medalist Abdullah Hel Baki finished 19th among 39 shooters in the qualifying round after scoring 624.5 points, 3.1 points less than Korea's Byounggil Choo, who qualified as the eighth shooter to qualify for the eight-man final round. Rabbi Hasan Munna finished 18th with a score of 624.6 points while Indian shooter Arjun Babuta (631.8) and Divyansh Singh (629.1) moved into the final round finishing third and sixth in the qualification round. In women's 10m air rifle event, Syeda Atkia Hasan Disha (618.3), Rithika Chowdhury (617.4) and Sharmin Akter Ratna (608.8) finished 39th, 42nd and 46th respectively among 48 shooters. However, Disha, Rithika and Ratna moved to the final round of women's 10 air rifle team event with a score of 1844.5 points.

## Stokes welcomes pressure of India T20I 'final'

AFP, Ahmedabad

Ben Stokes says England welcome the pressure of Saturday's "final" against India as they seek to become battle-hardened for this year's Twenty20 World Cup. India levelled the five-match T20 series 2-2 when their bowlers stifled England's run chase for 186 despite Stokes's defiant 46 in Ahmedabad on Thursday. "In an ideal world we would have loved to have gone into the next game having won the series and it sounds weird saying it, but we got a positive out of losing," said Stokes, after England fell eight runs short. "We go into the next game with a huge

amount of pressure on our shoulders as a team because whoever wins that game wins the series. It's a final." Saturday's match will again be in an empty stadium in Ahmedabad because of rising coronavirus numbers in India. But despite the lack of atmosphere, Stokes said it was still a good test for England. "That's great for us as a team, especially with a T20 World Cup coming up," said Stokes. "The more pressure situations we are put into as team, the better we'll be for it. We want to win and we want to make a habit of winning." India will host the showpiece event for cricket's shortest format in October-November.



A total of 115 mountain bikers, including 10 females, participated in the Supercrete MTB Challenge 2021 in Sylhet on Friday. The bikers had to pedal through the marked trail at the hilly terrain of the Malnicherra Tea Estate in Sylhet. The distance for male cyclists was 25 kilometres and 17 kilometres for female cyclists.

PHOTO: DWOHA CHOWDHURY

## Bangladesh Test dates for SL released

SPORTS REPORTER

Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) yesterday announced the schedule for the upcoming two-match Test series against Bangladesh. The visitors will play both the Tests, part of the ICC Test Championship, at the same venue in Pallekele Cricket Stadium, Kandy. The first Test between the two South Asian nations will start on April 21 while the second Test will start on April 29. The Tigers are scheduled to travel to Sri Lanka on April 12 and they will play an inter-squad two-day warm-up game on April 17 and 18 at the Chilaw Marians Cricket Club Ground in Katunayake. The SLC backtracked on their decision of imposing strict quarantine protocol which had forced the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to cancel a planned tour to the island nation in September last year. Quarantine protocols were later relaxed for a touring England side in January this year. They were asked to isolate for three days after landing in Sri Lanka before being allowed to practise. The Bangladesh team is currently on a tour to New Zealand for three ODIs and as many T20Is. The Tigers will play their last game of the tour on April 1.

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## JUSTICE FOR TONU

# 5 yrs on, no ray of hope for her family

KHALID BIN NAZRUL and SHARIFUL ISLAM

Her parents left no stone unturned to help her become what she wanted to be: an artist. Sohagi Jahan Tonu had a natural knack for acting, and she would often sing and dance in theater plays.

A good reciter of poems, Tonu used to participate in different cultural competitions and she won many prizes. To realise her dreams, her parents had to sacrifice a lot.

"For many years, I even did not buy a good saree for myself. Because I had to bear all the expenses of my daughter," Tonu's mother Anwara Begum told The Daily Star over the phone yesterday.

But all her dreams are shattered now for good. Tonu's body was found in a bush inside Mainamati Cantonment of Cumilla. The life of the 19-year-old college girl was cut short after she was raped and murdered on March 20 in 2016.

Then a student of Cumilla Victoria College, Tonu took



Hundreds of people in Chattogram's Patenga gathering at the beach during the weekly holiday yesterday. Although Covid-19 transmission has been increasing steeply recently, a large number of people are seen without masks -- the first line of defence against the spread of the virus. Experts have said that such disregard for health safety guidelines is behind the recent spike.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAHMAN

## 22 held over attacks on Hindu homes

Two cases filed against 1,500 in Sunamganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Police have arrested 22 people in connection with attacking, vandalising and looting Hindu houses in Noagaon village of Sunamganj's Shalla upazila on Wednesday.

The attack was carried out over an alleged Facebook post criticising a Hefajat-e Islam leader's statement.

The arrests were made after conducting drives in different places of the upazila from Thursday night to Friday morning, said Nazmul Haque, officer-in-charge of Shalla Police Station.

On Thursday, two cases were filed with the police station -- one by Habibpur Union chairman and also a victim in the village Bibekananda Majumdar Bakul and another by Sub-inspector Abdul Karim of the station.

Of the 1,500 accused in the cases, Shahidul Islam Swadhin, a member of Sarmangal union of Deraul upazila and a resident of nearby Nachni village, was made

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

## ANTI-COUP PROTESTS

# 9 more killed in Myanmar

Indonesia, Malaysia call for end to violence; two more reporters detained

REUTERS

Security forces killed at least nine opponents of Myanmar's February 1 coup yesterday, a funeral service and media said, as Indonesia urged an end to violence and Western ambassadors condemned what they called the military's immoral, indefensible actions.

Police and soldiers have used increasingly violent tactics to suppress demonstrations by supporters of detained elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi, but that has not deterred the protesters and crowds turned out again yesterday.

Security forces opened fire in a confrontation in the central town of Aungban as they tried to clear a protesters' barricade, media and a witness reported.

An official with Aungban's funerary service, who declined to be identified, told Reuters eight people were killed, seven on the spot and one wounded person who died after being taken to hospital in the nearby town of Kalaw.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## ROAD TO FREEDOM

THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

# Bangabandhu sees progress in Dhaka talks



Bangabandhu addressing a gathering of fourth-class employees in front of his Dhanmohi house on March 20, 1971.

MARCH 20, 1971

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

### PROGRESS IN TALKS

The fourth round of talks between Yahya Khan and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was held today. Bangabandhu was joined by his

colleagues -- Syed Nazrul Islam, Tajuddin Ahmed, Khondokar Moshtaque Ahmed, M Mansur Ali and Kamal Hossain.

The meeting began with a heated debate where Bangabandhu brought up the military attack on civilians in Joydebpur. Yahya claimed that

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## RMG worker gang-raped in Gazipur

Two arrested

STAR REPORT

A teenage girl was gang-raped allegedly by a group of four youths in Gazipur's Sreepur upazila early yesterday.

The victim, a 16-year-old readymade garment worker, filed a case with Sreepur Police Station yesterday morning.

According to the case statement, the victim came to Sreepur to meet a friend at her rented house in Mauna Uttar Para on Thursday evening.

Around 2:00am yesterday, two caretakers of the building -- Dulu and Babul -- stormed into their house with two other men named Suzan and Munna.

The four youths then threatened the victim with dire consequences and took her to another room where they raped her, said Khandakar Imam Hossain,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

## Hong Kong's fragile coral reefs boosted by 3D printing



AFP, Hong Kong

In jade waters off Hong Kong's eastern shoreline, scientists are thrilled to spot a cuttlefish protecting her eggs inside an artificial, 3D-printed clay seabed helping to restore the city's fragile coral reefs.

On postcards and in the popular imagination Hong Kong is a byword for urban density, a thicket of towering skyscrapers crammed along the harbour or clinging to the vertiginous hillsides above.

Yet it is circled by a surprising array of nature

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## Man throws acid on wife, mother-in-law

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

A woman and her mother suffered burns in an acid attack in Bhatamatha village of Brahmanbaria's Akhaura upazila yesterday.

The victims are Chandana Paul, 29, and her mother Putul Rani Paul, 50, of the village.

Family members and police said Chandana's husband, Ananda Paul, 40, carried out the attack over family feud.

Talking to The Daily Star, Ajit Paul, husband of

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



### PRAYER TIMING MARCH 20

Fazr 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



Uprooted trees in the coastal areas of Kotka beach in the Sundarbans. Cyclone Amphan wreaked havoc on the coastal areas of Bagerhat around 10 months ago, but the damage of the devastating cyclone is still visible. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Europe restarts AstraZeneca jabs

Paris goes into lockdown; India's richest state hit by record virus surge

AGENCIES

Several European countries resumed AstraZeneca vaccinations yesterday after an all-clear from EU regulators, as US President Joe Biden was set to meet his goal of having 100 million Americans inoculated weeks ahead of schedule.

Worries that AstraZeneca's Covid-19 vaccine may cause blood clots have seen countries from Venezuela to Indonesia pause its use in recent days, a setback for the drive to vaccinate populations against a virus that has killed nearly 2.7 million people.

Germany and Italy, both of which are attempting to fight off a third wave

of the coronavirus, announced they were using the jab again as of yesterday after the European Medicines Agency said it was "safe and effective".

Other European countries including the Netherlands, Spain and Portugal are also ending their suspension, while in Asia, Indonesia said it would follow suit.

Denmark, Norway and Sweden are yet to bring the jab back into use, pending further review.

The World Health Organization was due to publish the conclusions of its own safety assessment yesterday, after repeatedly encouraging countries to continue using it.

AstraZeneca's shot had been billed as a game-changer as it is cheaper and

easier to store than some of its rivals, making it more accessible to poorer nations.

It is a vital part of Covax, the global drive to ensure an equitable distribution of vaccines.

The vaccine was also brought back into use in France yesterday -- but just hours later, the national health regulator recommended it should only be given to people aged 55 and over, given the reported blood clots were only seen in younger people.

Prime Minister Jean Castex -- who is himself 55 -- received an AstraZeneca dose in a bid to reassure citizens that it is safe.

Around a third of France's

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

**মুজিব চিরন্তন**

জাতির পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমানের  
জন্মশতবার্ষিকী ও স্বাধীনতার সুবর্ণজয়ন্তী  
উদযাপন উপলক্ষ্যে অনুষ্ঠানমালা  
স্থান: জাতীয় প্যারেড স্কয়ার  
২০শে মার্চ ২০২১, শনিবার

**থিম (Theme):** তারুণ্যের আলোক শিক্ষা

সময়	কর্মসূচি
বিকাল ৫:১৫	জাতীয় সংগীত পরিবেশনা মুজিব চিরন্তন থিমের ওপর টাইটেল এ্যানিমেশন ভিডিও আবহ সংগীত (থিম সং ভিডিও প্রদর্শন) স্বাগত সম্বোধন ও সম্বাধনা: জনাব জুনায়েদ আহমেদ পলক এম.পি, মাননীয় প্রতিমন্ত্রী, তথ্য ও যোগাযোগ প্রযুক্তি বিভাগ- ডাক, টেলিযোগাযোগ ও তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি মন্ত্রণালয় তারুণ্যের আলোক শিক্ষা থিমভিত্তিক ভিডিও প্রদর্শনী থিমভিত্তিক আলোচনা: অধ্যাপক ড. মুহম্মদ জাফর ইকবাল ভিডিও বার্তায় সম্মানিত অতিথির বক্তব্য: ড. ইউসুফ আল ওখাইমিন, ওআইসির সেক্রেটারি জেনারেল ভিডিও বার্তায় সম্মানিত অতিথির বক্তব্য: মাদাম জেকোলিন ডেরোমেডি, মাননীয় সিনেটর এবং প্রেসিডেন্ট, ইন্টার পার্লামেন্টারি ফ্রেন্ডশিপ গ্রুপ ফর সাউথ ইস্ট এশিয়া
সন্ধ্যা ৬:০০	আলোচনা পর্ব সমাপ্তি

**সাংস্কৃতিক অনুষ্ঠান**

সময়	কর্মসূচি
সন্ধ্যা ৬:৩০	বঙ্গবন্ধুকে উৎসর্গ করে বন্ধু রাষ্ট্রের সাংস্কৃতিক অনুষ্ঠান (সরাসরি পরিবেশনা- জাপান) মুজিব চিরন্তন থিমের ওপর টাইটেল এ্যানিমেশন ভিডিও থিমের ওপর একটি সিজি এ্যানিমেশন ভিডিও সমসাময়িক শিল্পীদের পরিবেশনায় বঙ্গবন্ধুর পছন্দের গান থিম্যাটিক কোরিওগ্রাফি দুই প্রজন্মের শিল্পীদের মেলবন্ধনে মিশ্র মিউজিক পরিবেশনা সমাপ্তি

জাতির পিতা বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমানের জন্মশতবার্ষিকী উদযাপন জাতীয় বাস্তবায়ন কমিটি