

ASTRAZENECA JOB PRODUCTION
INDIA TO FUND CAPACITY
BOOST AT SERUM
INSTITUTE AS VACCINES
RUN SHORT
SEE PAGE 6

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Your Right to Know

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"... The government launched a crackdown taking advantage of the lockdown over the last few days. It's arresting BNP leaders and activists, religious leaders and alem-ulema indiscriminately."
BNP SECRETARY GENERAL MIRZA FAKHRUL ISLAM ALAMGIR



"I think by the time we get to the first quarter of 2022, we will be able to vaccinate children of virtually any age - hopefully before then."
TOP US INFECTIOUS DISEASE EXPERT DR ANTHONY FAUCI



"The terrorism threat has moved to other places. And we have other very important items on our agenda, including the relationship with China..."
TOP US DIPLOMAT ANTONY BLINKEN



Lockdown extends as deaths climb

Fresh curbs to stay in force from April 22 to 28; gazette today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The current travel and other restrictions will be extended for a week from April 22 as hospitals continue to struggle to cope with the number of Covid-19 patients.

The number of deaths reported in a day was the highest in the country yesterday while the major health facilities have recently been operating at capacity.

The cabinet division yesterday sent a proposal to extend the restrictions to the Prime Minister's Office for approval following a meeting held virtually between secretaries of different ministries and business association leaders.

A gazette notification might be issued by today, said Surath Kumar Sarker, principal information officer at the Press Information Department.

"The lockdown will remain in force from April 22 to 28 with the same restrictions imposed the week before. It'll be a stricter one," State Minister for Public Administration Farhad Hossain said after the cabinet division meeting chaired by Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam, reports UNB.

Sources present in the meeting said the initial decision was to extend the restrictions until April 29, but the businessmen convinced others to limit the

restrictions to an additional seven days.

The proposal sent to the PMO sought a ban on public transport on roads, waterways, railways, and air. There will be no restrictions on freight, emergency, and other services linked to production units.

Health officials yesterday reported 112 deaths from Covid-19, the highest in a day in Bangladesh.

The number of deaths has been over 100 for three days in a row.

Yesterday's proposal for extending the restrictions followed the recommendations made by the National Technical Advisory Committee (NTAC) on Covid-19.

In its 31st meeting held virtually on Sunday night, the committee members suggested another week-long strict lockdown to contain the rapid spread of coronavirus, according to a press release from the committee.

An outcome cannot be expected in less than two weeks of lockdown, the committee said, adding, "Considering the infection rate, further decisions can be made."

The press release said the experts expressed satisfaction over the current lockdown and recommended formulation of a plan to lift the restrictions in phases.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Frontliner Reshma Munier in tears of joy as she hugs Maksuda Begum, in wheelchair, at Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday. Maksuda, 65, got admitted to DMCH on April 7 with Covid and she left the hospital yesterday. Reshma had been taking care of Maksuda during her hospital stay.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Testing tumbles despite spread

Experts urge making Covid tests free

MOUDDUD AHMED SUJAN

While the transmission of the novel coronavirus has turned almost the entire country into a high-risk zone, the number of daily tests has been decreasing resulting in many people carrying the virus undetected - ultimately infecting others around them.

In this context, the National Technical Advisory Committee (NTAC) on Covid-19 yesterday recommended making Covid-19 tests at government facilities free of costs and also the reducing of the price of tests in private laboratories.

"Detecting Covid-19 patients fast [as possible] is important to prevent transmission. [But] the number of daily tests has decreased recently. Setting up sample collection booths in each ward of each town is urgent," the committee recommended in its 31st meeting held on Sunday night, said a press release published yesterday.

According to data of the Directorate General of Health Services, the total number of tests conducted last week (April 13-19) was 156,386 while it was 346,135 in the previous week (April 6-12), which means the number of tests last week decreased by 55 percent compared to the previous one.

Since the government started testing suspected novel coronavirus cases from January 21 last year, the number of

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

Govt forms body to find alternative vaccines

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

With the disruption in the supply of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine from the Serum Institute of India (SII), the government has formed a five-member committee to find alternative sources of Covid vaccines.

The committee, led by the director general of the Drug Administration, will find the alternative sources and submit a report to the Prime Minister's Office within seven days.

A meeting was held in the PMO, chaired by the principal secretary, where this decision was made.

"There is an uncertainty over vaccine availability. We have formed a five-member committee to find alternative sources of vaccines," Prof Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Railway projects falling behind

Deadlines of 24 out of 39 projects to pass in June; only 4 may make it; 19 already revised at least once



TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Around half of the ongoing projects of Bangladesh Railway will have to be revised after the end of the current fiscal year, thanks to poor implementation.

As a result, cost of most of the projects - aimed at improving railways services - is likely to escalate, prolonging people's wait for better services from the struggling railway.

BEHIND SLOW PROGRESS

- » Poor planning
- » Weak feasibility studies
- » Lack of accountability
- » Lack of skilled manpower
- » Vested interests
- » Covid-19 outbreak

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

HEFAJAT MAYHEM 2013 CID asked to probe 23 cases Mamunul on 7-day remand

RASHIDUL HASAN, MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN and ASIFUR RAHMAN

Irrked by Hefajat's violent activities starting with the protest against Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit last month, the government has decided to bring to book everyone involved in the mayhem in different parts of the country, especially Brahmanbaria.

To ensure punishment of the perpetrators and to properly collect evidence of the Hefajat-e-Islam's mayhem at different times including at the capital's Shapla Chattar in May 2013, law enforcers on Sunday handed over the charge of investigation of over 23 cases to the Criminal Investigation Department (CID).

Meanwhile, in an apparent bid to come to an understanding about the recent arrest of several of its top leaders, a delegation of Hefajat held a meeting with Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal at the latter's residence in the capital last night.

The move to hand over charge of the investigations to CID was made to gather digital and forensic evidence of vandalism and mayhem, following directives from the government, sources said.

Government high-ups have also directed law enforcement agencies to take stern action against Hefajat men involved in the violent activities since 2013.

MAMUNUL PLACED ON REMAND

A Dhaka Court yesterday placed Hefajat Joint Secretary

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

BUSINESS

Sustaining policy response key to tackling 2nd wave

IMF says about Bangladesh

Bangladesh faces challenges in sustaining the effective response it unveiled in the initial phase of the pandemic last year as it grapples with a devastating second wave of the deadly pathogen, the International Monetary Fund has said.

The government will have to continue its support to the vulnerable groups through social safety nets and its support for the agriculture sector, the multilateral lender said in a virtual media briefing recently.

STORY ON B1



With no masks, let alone physical distancing, a number of teens hangout on a footbridge in Azimpur in the capital yesterday. The country recorded a record 112 Covid deaths in 24 hours yesterday but many seem to care little about health guidelines.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

BANSHKHALI POWER PLANT Questions over rationality of police firing

332 shots fired to quell demo of unarmed workers

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Cig

Police had fired 332 shots and four teargas shells during demonstrations by agitating workers of SS Power I Plant in Gandamara area of Chattogram's Banshkhali upazila on Saturday, which left five workers dead and at least 21 people injured.

Human rights bodies have raised questions about the rationale for police firing. However, police officers claimed that they opened fire to "save lives and properties".

Speaking to The Daily Star on condition of anonymity, a Chattogram district police official said, "Police personnel had fired 270 shotgun bullets, 62 china bullets and four teargas shells to disperse the crowd."

At least six senior police officials told this correspondent that police usually first use rubber bullets to disperse any gathering if it poses a threat to lives and properties in an area. If the situation becomes critical, then police open fire as per rules of Police Regulations, Bengal (PRB).

There was a gap in sharing intelligence between the Chattogram police high command and field-level police personnel which led to the untoward incident, they said.

"According to media reports, the workers' unrest started on Friday morning. But no additional police force was deployed at the project site on Saturday which clearly

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



They say beauty is in the eye of the beholder. This rather philosophical statement bears much truth during the passing of summer in the days of this hard lockdown. For even though there are not many people to look at them, the beauty of these Krishnachura in bloom does not fade just because of that. This photo was taken earlier this week from the capital's Tejgaon area.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Mugging, extortion increased last year

Overall crime rate fell; police, social scientists blame economic fallout of Covid-19

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Mugging and extortion marked a sharp rise last year from 2019, although the country saw a fall in overall crime incidents during the same period.

An analysis into crime statistics prepared by the Police Headquarters (PHQ) showed that incidents of mugging registered a jump of 67 percent, the highest among all types of crimes, followed by extortion which saw a 36 percent spike last year from the year before.

Social scientists and police pointed at Covid-19 pandemic as the main reason behind the increase in snatching and extortion as it pushed a large number of people into financial hardship last year.

Similarly, the pandemic-induced 66-day shutdown that started from March 26 last year, also contributed to the drop in the crime incidents, they said.

According to PHQ statistics, the total number of crimes fell by around 17 percent last year than the previous year.

The PHQ prepared the report on the basis of the number of cases filed with police stations across the country in the last two years.

According to the statistics, 541 cases were registered for mugging or snatching last year, compared to 323 in 2019.

Some 129 cases were filed for extortion last year. It was 95 the year before.

In 2019, as many as 2,25,684 crime-

related cases were in the police stations across the country. The number dropped to 1,87,926 last year, with narcotics-related cases seeing a major dip, show the statistics.

Dr M Khurshid Alam, chairman of Bangladesh Institute of Social Research (BISR) Trust, said incidents of mugging increased as income of marginal groups dropped due to pandemic.

"In such circumstances, it could be assumed that such cases [of mugging] would increase," he told The Daily Star.

He, however, said incidents of extortion go up when social and political disorder is on the rise.

"Extortion is a manifestation of political disorder," he said.

Mashiur Rahman, deputy commissioner of detective branch (Gulshan Division), gave the example of a trader who turned to crime after his business collapsed in the wake of the pandemic.

Apel Mahmud (26) used to sell clothes and seasonal fruits in the capital's Badda. But as his business went down after the outbreak, he and some of his friends started cheating people, he said. They engaged their wives to trap people in various ways and would then torture the victims to extort money. A man named Sayeed Nagar fell into their trap and was killed later by the gang.

Apel and his wife were arrested on July 12 last year.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

'LOCKDOWN' IN RANGPUR, DINAJPUR Incomes vanish for the vulnerable

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

Rafiqul Islam sells kebab from evening to late night every day at Rangpur city's Company area. He used to make around Tk 400-500 per day, but since the April 14 "lockdown", his income has come down to zero.

"I haven't sold anything for the last four days," he said. Talking with this newspaper, Rafiqul said the situation was similar last year, when the government enforced a "shutdown" to curb coronavirus infections.

"I took care of my family with my savings," he said. Besides, there had been support from the affluent," he said. "This year, I have no money. I could've fed my family, if I had any savings left."

Roadside vendors like Rafiqul, and those from non-formal and low income groups in Rangpur and Dinajpur are struggling, as their daily income dropped to nothing or almost zero during the ongoing "strict lockdown".

The situation is worse than last year, as there has been little to no support from the affluent this time.

As there is no record for roadside vendors in Dinajpur and Rangpur, it is impossible to tally them. But there are many low-income people involved with such non-formal businesses, who take care of their families with the daily earnings.

Tea stalls, betel leaf, cigarette and street food shops, and clothes traders are usually involved in roadside business. Besides, there are several hundred people who earn through various jobs like repairing electronic items.

Jorina Begum used to sell "chittoi pitha" at Rangpur city's City Market area. The pitha was a popular item among the low-income group, but her shop also remains closed since April 14.

"I had to take loan to feed my family," she said. Liakat Ali, a betel leaf and cigarette seller at Dinajpur town's Kalitola area, said his daily earnings dropped to around Tk 50-100, which is not enough to feed his four-member family. "I couldn't even arrange for my iftar."

The 67-year-old man urged the government, non-government organisations and the affluent to help people like him, as they did last year.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

'Allow us to open shops in limited scale'

Ctg traders urge govt
STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Traders in Chattogram should be allowed to open their shops in a limited scale amid the coronavirus pandemic so that they can survive, said their leaders yesterday.

The demand was raised during a press conference at Chattogram Press Club.

Addressing the event, Mohammad Abu Taleb, president of Tamakumundi Lane Bonik Samity, said, "More than three lakh small and big traders of several markets -- including Teri Bazar, New Market, Tamakumundi, Chawk Bazar and Riazuddin Bazar -- have lost their business capital."

He said traders have been incurring irreparable loss due to the "lockdown" caused by Covid-19. Most of them restarted their business with loans to recover last year's loss, he added.

Mimi Super Traders Association president Jagir Hossain said, "A large number of traders have stockpiled goods in their stores ahead of Eid-ul-Fitr. Thousands will incur huge losses if the 'lockdown' will continue."

BARISHAL RIVER PORT Workers hope for a miracle



Amid the lockdown, some workers at Barishal River Port still come to the port, hoping to find work. But their luck hasn't been the brightest.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

"This is the only work we know. When our incomes are cut off from this, we don't have anywhere else to go," said Shamsuddin, a loading worker at Barishal River Port.

Around 400-500 workers like him earn their living working various menial jobs at the port. While the rest of the country is enduring through the second week of the "lockdown", the situation is worse for them, as the river port shut down a week before.

Three weeks into no incomes, the workers are now at the brink of their fears. "Nobody has come to see us, even though we're passing the worst time with our families," one of them told this correspondent on Sunday morning.

Kasem Bhai has been working at the

port for many decades. At 74, he's one of the oldest labourers at Barishal River Port. "I have been carrying load for 50 years. Before me, my father also worked as a loading worker. In all my years, I have never seen such a dire situation. Only Allah knows how all these families are staying alive," the veteran lamented.

Even if there's almost no work at the port, some still come here, perhaps in desperation, perhaps out of habit. "I come here once a day, praying to God there's something for me," worker Abdul Sattar said.

When the port is running in full-swing, a worker usually earns up to Tk 400 to Tk 500. From there to zero earning for three weeks running has left the workers in dire straits.

The workers held launch owners partly

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Take special care of RMG workers amid Covid-19 pandemic

Garment Sramik Sanghati urges owners, govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Garment Sramik Sanghati central committee has called upon the owners and the government to take special care of the RMG workers, who have been playing an important role in the country's export earnings and the economy.

They raised a six-point demand to protect the workers and the industry, adding that if the spreading of coronavirus is not controlled quickly, infection and death among garment workers could increase, which will break the entire health system and the industry will also be threatened.

The workers should be given special recognition, additional incentives, and risk allowance, as they have been working to save the industry at the risk of their own lives, they added.

The organisation mentioned this in a joint statement issued yesterday by its central president Taslima Akhter and general secretary Julhasnayeen Babu.

It also demanded eliminating the sufferings of the workers related to transportation during the "lockdown" and urged the owners and the government to provide clean transportation for long-distance workers.

In addition, it urged the government to do testing and vaccination of all the workers as early as possible and to form a separate committee of labour representatives, doctors, and expert teams to supervise the hygiene in the factory, the statement read.

There must be an assurance that no one can be made to work with symptoms and are allowed paid leaves, it added.

Apart from that, the organisation demanded field hospitals, isolation centres, and health cards for workers and prioritisation in providing special treatment for free in government hospitals and compensation for the death of workers.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Special train for vegetables begins journey tomorrow

To ply Dhaka-Panchagarh route with three tonnes of produce

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

A special parcel train is operating on the Panchagarh-Dhaka route to facilitate transportation of goods produced by farmers during the ongoing lockdown.

Deputy Commissioner of Panchagarh Sabina Yasmin formally inaugurated the operation on Monday at Bir Muktijoddha Sirajul Islam Railway Station.

The train will officially begin its journey tomorrow (Wednesday).

On the day, a total of three tonnes of vegetables including cucumber, tomato, eggplant, bottle gourd, bean and pumpkin produced in Panchagarh will be carried to different districts including Dhaka.

Station master Masud Parvez said the train will start from Panchagarh at 1pm three days a week -- Saturday, Monday and Wednesday. It should reach Dhaka around 3am.

Four wagons each can contain 40 tonnes of goods.

The state-run transport service is giving 25 percent concession on hire, and revokes all other charges for transporting vegetables, local fruits and other farm products. Transportation of each kilogram costs Tk 1.56 now, while the regular rent is Tk 2.02.

Bangladesh Railway began the operation of this special parcel train to ensure smooth supply of vegetables throughout the country, said Shah Sufi Nur Mohammad, Lalmonirhat divisional manager of BR.



To improve the water supply in Old Dhaka, Dhaka Wasa authorities are installing a 250-inch pipeline in the area. Though this kind of operations are usually a nuisance for commuters, this one is causing less of a disturbance during the lockdown. This photo was taken from North South Road yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Seven killed, six injured in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Seven people were killed and six others injured in road accidents in three districts during the last two days, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Pabna, three people were killed and six others injured as a truck overturned when the driver lost his control over the steering at Chorgorigi Alhaj intersection in Ishwardi upazila on Sunday night.

The deceased -- Jobbar Pramanik, Motiar Shah and Shukur Ali -- were banana traders, said police.

Ishwardi Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Asaduzzaman said the accident took place around 11:40pm while they were going to Dhaka on a truck loaded with banana from Pabna.

The injured were admitted to Pabna General Hospital in critical condition, said the OC.

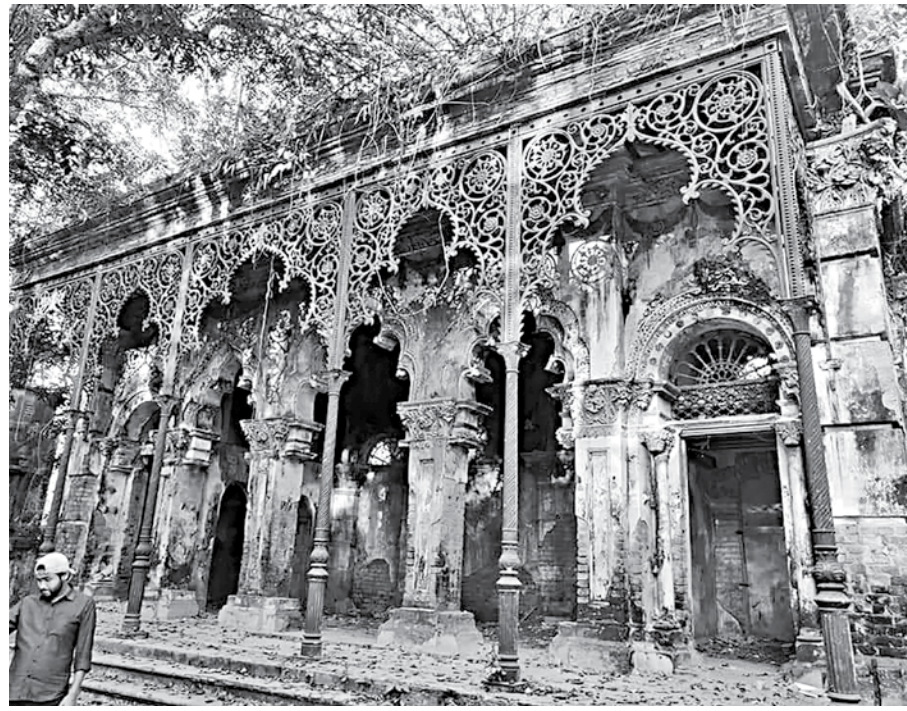
In Mymensingh, two people were killed as a truck hit a motorcycle they were riding in the city's Mashkanda area on Sunday night.

The deceased were identified as Sujon Mia (28) and Sumon Mia (13). Both were scrap vendors from the city's Muktijoddha Pally, according to police.

Sujon died on the spot while Sumon was declared dead at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital, said Kotwali Police Station Officer-in-Charge (investigation) Md Faruq Hossain.

Police seized the truck but its driver managed to flee the scene, he further said.

Meanwhile, two motorbikes collided head-on in the city's Khagdohor area on



WHAT'S LEFT OF THE LUSTROUS PAST... left unprotected and unmaintained during years of legal battle over its ownership rights, the remnants of the Baishroshi zamindar mansion, in Faridpur's Sadarpur upazila, still fascinate visitors from far and away.

PHOTO: SUZIT KUMAR DAS

BAISHROSHI ZAMINDAR MANSION

'Heritage site' losing lustre while govt clings to legal battle

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Caught in the middle of a long tug of war between its heirs and the government, an age-old building located in Baishroshi area of Sadarpur upazila, with magnificent aesthetic features from the past, is in ruins.

Unfortunately, the authorities concerned in the government did nothing till date to protect and preserve the 50-acre property -- consisting of 14 intricately crafted buildings, two temples, five ponds with brick staircases and a large garden -- that could be preserved and showcased as a heritage site for future generations.

The mansion was built in 1864 by Raghuram Saha -- the founder of Baishroshi zamindar dynasty, according to locals.

The family once ruled 22 parganas or mahals in Faridpur and Barishal regions. The then British rulers of India later bestowed the family with the title 'Roy Bahadur Chowdhury'.

All of the family members except Sukumar Roy Bahadur moved to Kolkata in India after the zamindari system was abolished in 1950, when the family lost all their estates, including the Baishroshi mansion, to the state.

Sukumar Roy Bahadur took his own life after the independence of Bangladesh. Amaresh Roy Chowdhury, a successor of

the family, resides in Rajshahi.

Currently, only 30 acres of the property including the ponds and the structures remain in dilapidated state under the possession of the government. Influential locals over the years encroached on the remainder of the land that belonged to the

The mansion was built in 1864 by Raghuram Saha, the founder of Baishroshi zamindar dynasty. The family once ruled 22 parganas or mahals in Faridpur and Barishal regions. The then British rulers of India later bestowed the family with the title 'Roy Bahadur Chowdhury'.

compound of the mansion.

Buildings for land offices of the local union as well as the upazila have been built on the premises of the zamindar mansion and its five ponds have been leased by the government for fish farming.

All the valuable components, such as doors and windows, had already been stolen from the buildings and the few remaining components, especially metal works, are being stolen almost every day, said a number of visitors.

Zahir Hossain, a student at Government Rajendra College in Faridpur town, said, "I

visited the zamindar house three times. The first time I visited the house, I saw many things like doors and windows. During my second and third visits, some of the doors and windows were missing."

"If we don't save structures and houses of bygone ages, our next generations will not

be able to comprehend the lifestyles of the zamindars and their families," he also said.

In 2012, Amaresh Roy Chowdhury in a case filed with the 'Vested Property Return Tribunal' claimed inheritance rights on 22.01 acres of the Baishroshi mansion. After the court delivered verdict in favour of Amaresh Roy Chowdhury, the deputy commissioner of Faridpur filed an appeal against the verdict in 2015. Amaresh Roy Chowdhury finally won the legal ownership of the property after the court turned down the appeal.

But in 2016, the district administration

resorted to the 'Special Establishment and Protection of Government Property Act' to file a writ petition with the High Court Division of the Supreme Court, claiming ownership rights on 16.45 acres out of the 22.01 acres of the property. The verdict on the petition is still pending.

Locals said a good number of visitors come to see the Baishroshi zamindar mansion and the government has a responsibility in protecting the heritage site and its antiquities.

Contacted, Sadarpur Upazila Nirbahi Officer Purabi Goldar said, "It was listed under 'A' category of vested properties... People come from faraway places to see this house. In order to preserve local heritage and history, it is imperative that this house is preserved."

Amit Roy Chowdhury, son of Amaresh Roy Chowdhury, regretted that the property under the long possession of the government had never been maintained and was left to be plundered by thieves and land grabbers.

Although they won inheritance rights to the property at the court, the government is withholding its handover by filing a counter case, he said, adding that once all the legality is settled, his family would hold discussions with locals as to how the property should be preserved.

Diarrhoea claims 4 lives in Patuakhali

313 more hospitalised in 24hrs

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

The number of people suffering from diarrhoea in different upazilas of the district has increased in the last few days.

The disease has already claimed at least four lives in the last two days.

The deceased are Shihara Sanful, 15, an SSC examinee from Kanthaltali Secondary School and daughter of Rakib Khandaker of Samaddarkathi village in Mirzaganj upazila, Taiyab Ali Sikder, 75, of Madhabkhali area of the upazila, Abdul Haque Munshi, 82, of Jalisha village in Dumki upazila, and Khadija Begum, 35, of Keshabpur area in Baulfal upazila.

Moreover, at least 313 diarrhoea patients have been admitted at different hospitals of the district in the last 24 hours.

The patients are, however, facing shortage of saline bags and adequate bed facilities at different hospital.

Attendants of a number of patients alleged that a saline bag, which is usually cost Tk 92, is being sold at Tk 200 to Tk 250 now.

Meanwhile, Patuakhali Civil Surgeon Jahangir Alam said 84 separate medical teams have been formed to ensure proper treatment to the diarrhoea infected patients.

Local union parishad (UP) Chairman Monir Hossain Talukder said Shihara was infected with diarrhoea on Sunday morning and died at home the same afternoon, while Taiyab died at home the same morning.

He said over two hundred people in his area have been suffering from diarrhoea.

Dumki Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Dr Mir Shahidul Hasan said Abdul Haque, who died at Dumki Upazila Health Complex on Sunday, had been suffering from diarrhoea but he had symptoms of pneumonia.

Mirzaganj Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Dilruba Yasmin Liza said the number of diarrhoea patients in the upazila has been increasing in an alarming rate as at least 93 diarrhoea patients have been hospitalised in the last 24 hours.

Besides, at least 349 people have taken treatment at the upazila health complex in the last seven days, she added.

Meanwhile, housewife Khadija died of diarrhoea while being taken to Baulfal Upazila Health Complex on Sunday noon.

Meanwhile, at least 157 diarrhoea patients have been admitted at the 10-bed Diarrhoea Ward of 250-bed Patuakhali General Hospital in the last few days.

Jabbar Khalifa of Nandipara area in Sadar upazila said his eight-year-old daughter Afroza and two-year-old grandson Junaid were admitted at the hospital on Saturday and Sunday respectively, but no saline bags have been provided from the hospital and they have to buy saline bags from outside at a higher price.

Assistant Director of Patuakhali General Hospital Dr Lokman Hakim said saline crisis has occurred due to an increase in number of patients in the last few days.

According to sources at Patuakhali Civil Surgeon Office at least 313 diarrhoea patients have been admitted to eight upazila hospitals, including Patuakhali General Hospital, of the district in the last 24 hours.

Of them, 76 were admitted at Patuakhali General Hospital, 93 at Mirzaganj Upazila Health Complex, 40 each at Galachipa and Baulfal Upazila Health Complexes, 25 in Dashmina Upazila Health Complex, 17 at Dumki Upazila Health Complex, 12 at Kalapara Upazila Health Complex, and 10 at Patuakhali Sadar Hospital.



A number of Covid patients are increasing but an ICU is yet to be set up at Tangail 250-bed Tangail General Hospital.

PHOTO: STAR

One year into pandemic: ICU at Tangail General Hospital still elusive

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Although the Covid-19 situation is deteriorating and the number of patients is increasing, an Intensive Care Unit (ICU) could not be set up so far at the hospital in Tangail.

The works to set up a central oxygen plant at the hospital also remain incomplete.

The 250-bed Tangail General Hospital is the main centre of the treatment for around 40 lakh people of the district. However, the hospital has not yet been equipped with necessary treatment facilities to manage Covid-19 patients despite a year has been passed since the onset of the pandemic.

As a result, conscious citizens have expressed their grave concern over the increasing number of the Covid-19 patients in the district and the lack of necessary treatment facilities at the local hospitals.

Meanwhile, after the outbreak of coronavirus, the prime minister on April 18, 2020 in parliament said her

government would take step to set up ICUs at every district hospital.

Asked about the matter, Dr Khandakar Sadiqur Rahman, deputy director (DD) of the Tangail General Hospital, said works to set up the ICU at the first floor of the main building of the hospital are going on. He also said the ICU at the hospital will be functional soon.

He, however, could not say exactly how many days will require before the unit commences operation.

Responding to another query, the DD said the works of setting up the central oxygen plant at the hospital are at the final stage.

According to the Civil Surgeon's Office in Tangail, the first corona patient was detected in the district on April 8 last year. Now the number of the patients stands at 4453 (till April 16). Of them, 70 patients have died so far.

Setting up an ICU at Tangail General Hospital is a long demand of people in the district. However, it is a regrettable matter that the

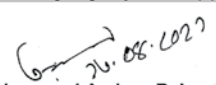
ICU facilities could not be started at the hospital one year into the PM's pledge, said Nizam Uddin, a rights worker in Tangail.

"It is very true that the preparations of the local health department as well as the local hospitals are as poor that they won't be able to tackle the situation if the Covid-19 situation deteriorates further," he added.

Contacted, Civil Surgeon in Tangail Dr Abul Fazal Mohammad Shahabuddin, also member secretary of District Covid-19 Prevention Committee, said that they have plan to upgrade the corona isolation unit at the General Hospital to 70 beds from 50 beds.

On the other hand, arrangements are going on to set up a 20-bed corona isolation unit at Kumudini Hospital in Mizapur, he said.

"However, we will have to put more emphasis to curb the further spread of the coronavirus. Otherwise, it will not possible to tackle the situation by the limited resources," he added.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh				
National Board of Revenue (NBR)				
Internal Resources Division (IRD)				
Ministry of Finance				
Invitation for Tender (National)				
01. Ministry/Division	Ministry of Finance, IRD.			
02. Agency	National Board of Revenue.			
03. Procuring entity name	Member (Customs Audit, Modernization and International Trade), National Board of Revenue, Segunbagicha, Dhaka.			
04. Procuring entity code	Not applicable.			
05. Procuring entity district	Dhaka.			
06. Invitation for	Goods and related works and services.			
07. Invitation Ref. No. & Date	08.01.0000.067.42.012.20 Date: 19/04/2021.			
08. Procurement method	Open Tendering Method (OTM), National.			
09. Budget and source of funds	Government Revenue Budget (GOB).			
10. Development partners (if applicable)	N/A.			
11. Project/program code (if applicable)	N/A.			
12. Project/program name (if applicable)	N/A.			
13. Tender package No.	NBR-GD-2.			
14. Tender package name	Supply, Installation, Commissioning and Testing of 10 units Dual View X-ray Baggage Scanners and 01 Unit of Millimeter Wave Human Body Scanner.			
15. Tender publication date	20/04/2021.			
16. Tender last selling date	30/05/2021	Date		Time
17. Tender closing date & time	31/05/2021			3.00pm
18. Tender opening date & time	31/05/2021			3.40pm
19. Name & address of the office(s):	Address			
-Selling tender document (principal)	Member (Customs Audit, Modernization and International Trade), Room No. 512, National Board of Revenue, Segunbagicha, Dhaka. Tender schedule will be collected through Treasury Challan on Misc. Code is 1-1103-0000-2681 at Sonali Bank/Bangladesh Bank in favour of Member (Customs Audit, Modernization and International Trade), National Board of Revenue, Dhaka.			
-Receiving tender document	Member (Customs Audit, Modernization and International Trade), Room No. 512, Tender Opening Committee, National Board of Revenue, Dhaka.			
-Opening tender document	Member (Customs Audit, Modernization and International Trade), Tender Opening Committee, Room No. 512, National Board of Revenue, Dhaka.			
20. Place/date/time of pre-tender meeting	Conference Room, VAT Online Project, 7th Floor, 160/A, IDEB Bhaban, Kakrail, Dhaka-1000. Date: 06/05/2021, Time: 11.00am, Queries will be taken in written within 02/05/2021 till 13.30pm.			
21. Eligibility of tenderer	As per tender documents.			
22. Brief description of goods	Supply, Installation, Commissioning and Testing of 10 units Dual View X-ray Baggage Scanners and 01 Unit of Millimeter Wave Human Body Scanner at different Airports and Land Ports of Bangladesh (e.g., Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport, Akhaura LCS, Sylhet Osmani International Airport, Tamabil LCS, Sonamasjid LCS, Darshana LCS, Bhomra LCS, Burimari LCS, Banglabandha LCS, Hili LCS and some location might be changed).			
23. Brief description of related services	03 (Three) years Operation and Maintenance for X-ray Baggage Scanner and Human Body Scanner and 05 (Five) years Operation and Maintenance for X-ray Generator.			
24. Price of tender document	BDT 5000 (five thousand Taka) (non-refundable).			
25. Lot No.	Identification of lot	Location	Tender security amount	Completion time in weeks
Lot-1	Supply, Installation, Commissioning and Testing of 10 units Dual View X-ray Baggage Scanners and 01 Unit of Millimeter Wave Human Body Scanner.	National Board of Revenue	80,00,000 (eighty lac) BDT in the format of either BG/Pay Order from any scheduled bank of Bangladesh	As per Section-6 of Tender Schedule
26. Designation of official inviting tender	Member (Customs Audit, Modernization and International Trade), Room No. 512, National Board of Revenue, Dhaka.			
27. Address of official inviting tender	National Board of Revenue, Rajshasha Bhaban, Segunbagicha, Dhaka.			
28. Contact details of official inviting tender	Telephone: +88-02-8392360 Fax: +88-02-8391233 E-mail: rahman_toffee@yahoo.com			
29. Special instructions:	(a) The tender shall be guided by PPA-2006 & PPR-2008 of Bangladesh. (b) In the event of unavoidable circumstance, if the receiving, closing and opening of the tender cannot be done on the abovementioned dates, the next normal working day will be treated as the valid date of receiving, closing and opening of the tender respectively. Time & place shall remain unchanged. (c) The procuring entity reserves the right to accept/reject any or all of the tenders without assigning any reason(s) thereof.			
 Khondaker Muhammad Aminur Rahman Member (Customs Audit, Modernization and International Trade) National Board of Revenue, Rajshasha Bhaban, Segunbagicha, Dhaka Tel: +88-02-8392360 Fax: +88-02-8391233 Mail: Rahman_toffee@yahoo.com				
GD-788				

NEWS IN BRIEF

Malawi president fires minister over Covid-19 funds

Malawi President Lazarus Chakwera on Sunday fired Labour Minister Ken Kando for diverting \$800 worth of Covid-19 funds to pay for a government trip, part of a wider embezzlement scandal. In a televised address to the nation, Chakwera said the minister was named in an audit report as having listed the funds in his allowances for the travel to South Africa. "I have dropped him from my cabinet accordingly. Even though the minister has since returned the money, his usage of the funds means that the money was unavailable for its intended purpose when it was needed most," Chakwera said. "I cannot have in my cabinet any individuals who either spend money budgeted for one thing on something else or do not ask tough questions to ensure that the money they are spending on something was budgeted for that purpose."

Nasa successfully flies small helicopter on Mars

Nasa successfully flew the Ingenuity helicopter on Mars yesterday, according to data and images sent back to Earth. "Altitude data confirms that Ingenuity has performed its first flight -- the first flight of a powered aircraft on another planet," announced an engineer in the Jet Propulsion Laboratory as the control room cheered. A short clip sent back by the Perseverance rover showed the four-pound chopper grounded at first, hovering three meters above the Martian surface, then touching back down. Ingenuity itself sent back a still black-and-white image from its downward-pointing camera, showing its own shadow cast on the surface. "We can now say that human beings have flown a rotorcraft on another planet!" said lead engineer MiMi Aung to her team. "We've been talking so long about our Wright brothers moment on Mars, and here it is," she added. Nasa had originally planned the flight for April 11 but postponed it over a software issue that was identified during a planned high-speed test of the aircraft's rotors. The issue was later resolved through the help of a software update and tweak in coding.

Radical Pak party releases 11 police hostages after protests

Eleven Pakistani police officers seized by supporters of a radical Islamist group as part of their campaign to get the French ambassador expelled have been released, officials said yesterday. The officers were grabbed as hostages Sunday by supporters of the Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) during violent protests in Lahore. Video circulating on social media -- and confirmed unofficially by police as genuine -- showed some of them bloodied and bruised, with bandages around their heads. Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed said the police had been released early yesterday after "negotiations" with the TLP, which the government banned last week after effectively labelling it a terrorist organisation. The officers had been held at a TLP mosque stronghold in Lahore, which is now packed with supporters and surrounded by police.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



Families are reunited as travellers arrive on the first flight from Sydney, in Wellington yesterday, as Australia and New Zealand opened a trans-Tasman quarantine-free travel bubble.

PHOTO: AFP

Threat 'moved' from Afghanistan

Blinken defends US decision of troop withdrawal, says Washington needs to refocus resources on challenges such as China, Covid

AFP, Washington

Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Sunday defended the US decision to withdraw from Afghanistan, saying the terror threat had moved elsewhere and that Washington needed to refocus resources on challenges such as China and the pandemic.

President Joe Biden announced last week that the United States would withdraw all forces from the country before this year's 20th anniversary of the September 11 attacks.

The unconditional withdrawal -- four months later than a deadline agreed with the Taliban last year -- comes despite a deadlock in peace talks between the insurgents and the Afghan government.

CIA head William Burns and US generals including the former armed forces chief David Petraeus have argued that the move could plunge the country deeper into violence and leave America more vulnerable to terror threats.



"The terrorism threat has moved to other places. And we have other very important items on our agenda, including the relationship with China, including dealing with everything from climate change to Covid," Blinken told ABC's "This Week."

"And that's where we have to focus our energy and resources." Blinken met Afghan President Ashraf Ghani as well as senior US officials in Kabul last week and briefed them on Biden's announcement Wednesday that he was ending "the forever war," which began in response to the September 11, 2001 attacks.

Blinken told ABC the United States had "achieved the objectives that we set out to achieve."

"Al-Qaeda has been significantly degraded. Its capacity to conduct an attack against the United States now from Afghanistan is not there," he said.

The Pentagon has around 2,500 troops in Afghanistan from a high of more than 100,000. Thousands more serve as part of a 9,600-strong Nato force, which will withdraw at the same time.

The delay in withdrawal -- even by just over four months -- has angered the Taliban, who have threatened to resume hostilities against US forces.

Blinken said, however, that Washington would be able to see any move by the Taliban "in real time" and take action.

"So if they start something up again, they're going to be in a long war that's not in their interest either," Blinken said.

ASTRAZENECA JAB PRODUCTION**India to fund capacity boost at Serum Institute**

REUTERS, New Delhi

India is set to accept the Serum Institute of India's (SII) request for a 30 billion rupee (\$400 million) grant to boost its capacity to make the AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine, a government source with knowledge of the matter told Reuters.

SII, the world's biggest vaccine maker, sought the funds to increase its monthly capacity to more than 100 million doses by the end of May, from up to 70 million currently.

The country has administered more than 112 million doses of the shot so far, the highest in the world, despite concerns about some people overseas developing blood clots after receiving the vaccine.

The Indian government is in fact struggling to meet demand for the drug from many states as

infections spread rapidly.

"We are clear that we will give whatever support is necessary to develop and boost the availability of vaccines in the country," the source said on Sunday, declining to be identified as he was not authorised to speak publicly on the matter.

A finance ministry spokesman declined to comment. SII, which will soon also start making the Novavax Covid-19 vaccine, did not respond to a request for comment.

India has so far injected 123 million vaccine doses, including nearly 11 million of a domestically developed shot known as Covaxin.

The government is also trying to boost output of Covaxin and has also changed rules to fast-track imports of vaccines developed by Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson and Johnson.

HC decline to hear petition

FROM PAGE 12

The SC lawyer told The Daily Star that he would move a petition before the HC for an order on the government to conduct an enquiry into the incident and to take necessary action against the magistrate and police.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Medical Association (BMA), Swadhinata Chikitsak Parishad's Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) and Bangladesh Police Service Association (BPSA) yesterday issued separate statements over the incident.

BMA's President Mostafa Jalal Mohiuddin and its Secretary General Md Ehteshamul Hoque Chowdhury in their statement said the doctors and health workers, as frontliners, are being harassed and disturbed by law enforcers, which is both frightening and disappointing.

BSMMU's Associate Prof Sayeda Shawkat Janny was humiliated when she was at the capital's Elephant Road area on April 18 by being confined to her car after being pressured to prove her identity, despite having a car sticker

and hospital gown to validate her profession as a health worker, the BMA leaders said, adding that such conduct from law enforcers was disappointing.

They requested the authorities concerned to find out the people responsible for the incident by conducting an enquiry and punish them accordingly.

Swadhinata Chikitsak Parishad's BSMMU unit in their statement, signed by its Convener Prof Abu Nasar Rizvi and its Member Secretary Ariful Islam Joardar Tito, demanded the BSMMU authorities lodge a complainant against the police personnel responsible.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Police Service Association (BPSA) President Md Shafiqul Islami and its General Secretary Mohammad Zayedul Alam in their statement said every member of the Bangladesh police was shocked at the "unprofessional conduct and misbehaviour" of a doctor, who was not on duty.

They strongly demanded that the department concerned takes appropriate action against the doctor.

MEDIATION OVER KASHMIR**Pak, Indian FMs in crossover visits to UAE**

AFP, Dubai

The foreign ministers of India and Pakistan made crossover visits to the United Arab Emirates this weekend, after it was revealed the Gulf nation has been mediating between the hostile neighbours.

"Good to be in the #UAE," Pakistan's Shah Mahmood Qureshi tweeted late Saturday, after announcing a three-day trip which ended yesterday.

His Indian counterpart Subrahmanyam Jaishankar visited the emirate of Abu Dhabi on Sunday, a spokesman for New Delhi's ministry of external affairs tweeted.

Pakistan's foreign ministry said there was no scheduled meeting between the two ministers.

Islamabad suspended trade and diplomatic ties with India in 2019 after New Delhi revoked the special status of the part of divided Kashmir that it rules.

But in February, Islamabad and New Delhi pledged to end all firing along the disputed frontier, after months of violence between the nuclear-armed rivals.



Drummers perform during the "Black & Yellow" Asian solidarity rally dedicated to Daunte Wright and George Floyd, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, US on Sunday. The rally promoted unity and solidarity among Asian and Black communities.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Testing tumbles despite spread

FROM PAGE 1

daily tests crossed 30,000 this month for the first time. Last week, however, it was stagnant around the 20,000 mark daily.

Otherwise, the number of daily tests was around 15,000 on an average, which too decreased to its lowest in January and February this year.

The high level of positive results means that there are many more undetected individuals, who are unknowingly spreading the infection, experts said.

Bangladesh has so far done 31 tests per 1,000 people -- the lowest even among South Asian countries. Meanwhile, the Maldives has done 1,272 tests per 1,000, according to the ourworldindia.org.

Among other South Asian countries, Bhutan is in second position with 853 tests per 1,000 people, India third with 191, Sri Lanka fourth with 115, Nepal fifth with 80, and Pakistan sixth with 50 tests.

Globally, Denmark is on top of the list with 4,166 tests followed by United Arab Emirates with 4,160 per 1,000 people. The USA has done 1,193 tests and the UK 2,008, according to the ourworldindia.org. Bangladesh started witnessing the second

spike in Covid-19 cases from the second week of March. The positivity rate, since then, had risen to 23 percent last week.

As of yesterday, the reported death toll was at 10,497, which is 1.45 percent of all confirmed cases in the country.

"The number of daily tests should be raised until the positivity rate falls below seven or six percent and it [tests] should be multiplied to more than double, compared to the positivity rate, to detect and isolate the hidden cases," Mushtaq Hussain, consultant of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research, told The Daily Star recently.

The NIAC, meanwhile, has recommended that testing fees in private facilities be revised as the price of Covid-19 testing kits in the market has decreased notably.

"It will contribute to increasing the number of tests and to the affordability for more people. Besides, this will also contribute to reduce the pressure on the government-run testing laboratories," the committee said, adding, "This way, isolation of infected patients can be ensured faster, which is important to control the transmission."

Questions over rationality of police firing

FROM PAGE 1

indicates that there was a gap in sharing intelligence between district police high officials and the local police," said a police officer.

He said law enforcers could have dispersed the crowd by using batons or teargas if additional policemen were deployed. In that case, the casualties would have been much lower.

District police officials said around 50 police personnel used to perform duties at the power plant project in Gandamara.

Asked about the rationale for firing, Nessar Uddin Ahmed, SP (planning and project) at Chattogram Deputy Inspector General's (DIG) Office, said they were yet to record statements of all police personnel who were at the spot.

"You don't judge the situation by PRB rules as police take action based on the prevailing situation at a particular place. Before saying anything clearly, we have to talk with all the sides concerned which would take time," said the SP, also a member of the probe committee formed by the police.

Some workers told the probe body that they heard gunshots, but they did not see directly

what happened at that time, Nessar said.

He said they were collecting CCTV footage, still photos, video clips, and related information. "After analysing those and witnesses' statements, we will say what actually happened."

However, workers alleged that police opened fire on them without any warning. None of the protesters were employees of S Alam Group or its Chinese partner Shandong Electric Power Construction Corporation III.

Instead, the joint venture company outsourced labourers from 27 subcontracting firms, workers told The Daily Star.

Chattogram Superintendent of Police SM Rashidul Haque said around 2,500 to 3,000 workers had gathered at the project site and tried to attack the Chinese workers. They even assaulted some fellow workers and police personnel and set some project properties on fire, he added.

"Considering the circumstances, police opened fire to protect Chinese workers and properties, and that led to the casualties," said the SP, who had visited the project site after the incident.

Rashidul said actions will be taken if the investigators find any negligence on the part of police. "We have formed a probe committee and the investigation report will make it clear."

However, police are yet to interrogate Chinese workers in connection with the incident.

The SP said they would talk to the Chinese workers and officials of the project.

Banshkhali UNO Saiduzzaman Chowdhury said around 1,000 Chinese workers are employed in the project.

S Alam Group is installing the 1,224 megawatt coal-fired power plant at Pchsim Gandamara of Banshkhali.

SS Power I Plant is a joint venture of six companies of S Alam Group (holding 70 percent of the equity), SEPCOIII Electric Power Construction Corporation, China and HTG Development Group Co Ltd, China, according to the official website of S Alam group.

Police filed a case with Banshkhali Police Station accusing 2,500 unidentified people on charges of attacking law enforcers, while the power plant authorities lodged another case accusing 22 named and 1,040 unnamed people over setting vehicles on fire during the incident.

RIGHTS WATCH

Bangladesh needs to address domestic violence against women to achieve SDGs

DR. NASRIN RAHMAN

In 2015, UN member of States adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for transforming the world into a place that is free from poverty, inequality, violence, and manmade natural disasters for the current and future generations and set out a 15-year long plan to achieve the goals. To realise these goals, the UN Secretary-General called for action in three levels – 1) Global Action (securing excellent leadership, innovative solutions) 2) Local Action (bringing about the needed transition in policies, budgets, institutions, and regulatory frameworks of governments, cities, and local authorities); and 3) People Action (generating a strong popular movement for the bringing in the required transformations among all levels of people in the society, including youth, civil society, the

A comprehensive awareness program with focus on the intricacies of intimate partner violence, violence within family, and protection of DV victims, may lead to sustainable change in the community's traditional attitude.

media, the private sector, academia, and other stakeholders). Since the adoption of the goals in September 2015, the 193 individual UN Member States have begun developing and implementing SDG plans at the national levels. Bangladesh, as a member state of the UN, also has pledged to achieve the SDGs.

Among the 17 goals, eliminating all

forms of violence against women and girls in public and private spheres was adopted under the overarching Goal 5.2 on gender equality and women's empowerment. Here, violence in private spheres refers to intimate partner violence/domestic violence. According to WHO (2021), in the private sphere worldwide, one in three women experiences Domestic Violence (DV) in an intimate relationship in lifetime. A report from UN Women states that 35 percent of women worldwide have experienced DV by an intimate partner, and some national studies show that up to 70 percent of women are the victims of DV. According to Prothom Alo, as of March 10, 2021, the ratio of violence against women, including DV, is the highest in six countries, including Bangladesh. According to Bangla Tribune report (April 1, 2021), 107 women were the victims of DV in the last three months. Among them, 76 women were murdered and 13 committed suicide on account of DV.

In 2020, Action Aid Bangladesh reported that gender-based violence, including domestic violence, has alarmingly increased. Furthermore, as highlighted by Sustainable Development Goals Bangladesh Progress Report 2020, one of the immediate causes of women's suicide in the country is DV.

Three of the critical parts of the SDG development agenda are: (i) SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages; (ii) SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls; and (iii) SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels which are linked to domestic violence. SDG 3 concerns the health of DV victims. Because of DV, a woman's health may be impacted in various ways:



physically, mentally, and sexually. Even death may occur either through homicide or suicide. A child also undergoes mental health problems, by experiencing or observing violence during the childhood. Furthermore, DV impacts the state apparatus through tremendous health costs, impacting national budgets and the country's overall development. A medical review study found that a woman is more likely to suffer from DV than from medical conditions such as diabetes, depression, or breast cancer and is a contributing factor for causing various medical conditions, including chronic conditions, such as asthma, stroke, and chronic pain. But interestingly, in spite of all these concerns, SDG goal 3 has not specifically highlighted a DV victim's health.

SDG 5 and SDG 16 are linked to the causes of DV. There are many causes

and factors of DV which researchers have already underscored. Gender inequality is one of the leading reasons for DV. Also, lack of access to justice, lack of alternative options, and lack of access to resources and support services are the factors that contribute to causing or increasing the incidents of DV. Two levels of action are needed (as mentioned above): Local Action (state-level action) and People Action.

State-level Action refers to protecting a DV victim by developing policy, legislation, plan, and institution. Bangladesh has already taken some steps to combat DV at the state level, which includes enacting a law named Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act in 2010 and establishing support services such as One-Stop Crisis Centre (OCC), Victim Support Centre (VSC), and Shelter Homes for DV victims in

all six divisions. In these centres, a woman can get both short and long-term shelter along with other services. There is a National Helpline 10921, which works 24 hours and provides information and advice about the existing support services. However, although the National Women's Advancement Policy (NWAP), 2011 partly addressed violence against women including DV, there is no specific DV policy. Also, support services desperately need coordination, a robust structure, as well as a systematic data collection process.

People Action refers to the prevention process of DV. It is an essential step to prevent DV from occurring in the first place. For this, the state action needs to include community accountability, encompassing all the people in the community standing together against DV. That is why awareness about DV must be generated in the whole community and among individuals in different community settings such as educational institutions, local communities, sports, and the media. Furthermore, a comprehensive awareness program with focus on the intricacies of intimate partner violence, violence within family, and protection of DV victims, may lead to sustainable change in the community's traditional attitude.

Most importantly, we have to think of innovative ideas to solve our problems according to our culture and social environment. We need to conduct more research about the factors of DV, and set a policy according to that in order to combat the same. Such a course of action can put Bangladesh on the path towards achieving DV prevention while meeting the requirements of SDGs 3, 5, and 16.

THE WRITER IS AN ADVOCATE AND GENDER SPECIALIST.

LAW OPINION

ROAD ACCIDENTS IN CONTEXT Urgency of compulsory motor vehicles insurance in Bangladesh

DR. SAYEEDA ANJU

In Bangladesh, owners of motor vehicles need to take insurance policy that expires in one year as a non-life policy that costs different amount for different types of vehicles. As per the provisions enunciated in the Motor Vehicles Ordinance, 1983 (hereinafter referred to as the MVO, 1983) taking a motor vehicle insurance was mandatory for the owners of motor vehicles except for the ones owned by the government. The newly enacted Road Transport Act, 2018 has made it optional for the owners to take insurance policy. Therefore, at present, there is no statutory obligation for the owners to take insurance policy and as a result, they can run their vehicles without any insurance policy as such. Circulars issued by the Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA) and Insurance Development and Regulatory Authority (IDRA) in reference to the new Act of 2018 instructed the concerned authorities to curb the practice of issuing and verifying obligatory insurance certificates.

As per the provision of section 60 of the new Act, transport owners can ensure the passengers if they "wish" to do so. Also, the Act is silent about the insurance of the drivers and other staff members. Even in various sections on insurance incorporated in the new Act, the issues regarding conditions, limitations of liability, mitigation of claims, validity and transferability of insurance certificate etc. of motor vehicle insurance are not made clear. These issues have rather been kept to be enunciated in details by Rules yet to be made.

Now a vital question is - who will bear the compensation? Innocent passengers and sometimes strangers e.g. passers-by may be found as third-party victims as consequence of a road accident. In Bangladesh, motor vehicle owners' liability has been recognised by the higher judiciary as a form of tortious liability arising out of actions or inactions of persons working under them e.g. drivers. The Act of 2018 directly holds the drivers responsible in this connection, while exempting transport owners from shouldering liabilities. In addition, compensation for emotional injury is granted by the higher judiciary of the country and that may sometimes rise up to a huge amount, on different heads, which may or may not be possible for the drivers to pay.

In the past, two policies were in place - act liability (basic) and comprehensive. Most of the owners used to take act liability obligatory insurance certificates from government or non-government insurance companies only for complying with the law. Since 1983, the owners have been paying the amount for vehicle



insurance, but hardly had they received any amount as claimed compensation from the insurance companies; hence so far, it almost looked like a one-party contribution. Some of the owners however took comprehensive insurance policy which has limited liability as per contract. In *Catherine Masud v Kashed Mia and others* [reported in 67 DLR 527], the owner of the vehicle had a comprehensive insurance policy with Reliance Insurance Company. In that case, an issue was raised as to whether the insurer had any liability to pay compensation beyond the limit, which was a demand of the party to the case under indemnity clause of the policy as admitted by the insurer, and if so to what extent? The Court however could not impose more liability because the parties to the insurance policy had a contract with fixed liability that was limited in amount and already paid by the insurance company.

In the MVO, 1983 Chapter IX under the heading of insurance of motor vehicles against third party risks contained a provision of application to be made within 6 months from the date of an accident. It had to be made to the assigned Tribunal under section 128 of MVO, 1983 having jurisdiction over the area in which the accident occurred.

After the repeal of the MVO, 1983 it appears at present that the victims of road accidents do not have access to any special judicial fora to make demand for compensation as the newly enacted Act provides for no such remedy rather prescribes to take resort to the general criminal justice mechanism.

It is pertinent to note that the draft Road Transport Act, 2018 had provided that the transport owners, companies, operators or their

representatives must bear the treatment costs of the injured victims. But the finally passed Act does not make anyone of them liable as such. It transpires that the new law is soft on the transport owners and leaves the matter of taking insurance policy to the sweet will of them.

The new Act proposes that the government will raise a fund for the injured and family members of the dead, to be overseen by a trustee board with representatives from different government agencies and other stakeholders such as highway police, transport owners and workers' associations etc. The funds will be raised with taxpayers' money and contribution from transport owners and workers as well as from a portion of fines to be realised from traffic offenders. However, it is, at best, an alternative way but can never be as apt as compulsory insurance.

As the mandatory insurance policy provision is omitted in the new Act, now the ultimate question to answer is - to what extent owners will be interested to take insurance policies to cover probable risks. Therefore, it is necessary to make a provision regarding mandatory insurance policy which has to be designed in such a way that covers the maximum risk of financial liability. Formulation of a comprehensive policy with provisions for compulsory motor vehicle insurance with a fixed mandated standard premium covering both property and physical damage is a crying need. Only then, can the highest standard road safety be ensured in Bangladesh.

THE WRITER IS PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF LAW, RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY.

LAW VISION

The right to repair: A solution to the problem of E-waste generation

ALFRED CHRISTOPHER D'SILVA

"Consumerism" refers to a set of practices or ideas that encourage the sustained purchasing of goods and services in ever increasing amounts. It creates a "culture of consumption" that benefits manufacturers and producers through increasing flows in revenue often at the expense of public welfare. Unfettered consumerism has significantly contributed towards humanity's problem of waste generation. The traffic flows both ways, however: the frenetic rise in demand for goods and services has led to manufacturers and producers to produce and provide at a feverish pace leading to over-exploitation of resources. From the other end, manufacturers and producers design products that come with expiry dates. To compound the problem, manufacturers and producers make it difficult for end consumers to obtain repairs for the products which they own. This may be done (among other means) through agreements with retailers and after-service providers to not sell extra parts to end consumers; through making parts available only to specific or authorised providers of after-sales services; by providing repairs at prices that are so high that consumers more often than not will consider purchasing a brand-new product instead. This phenomenon is known as "Planned Obsolescence."

Planned Obsolescence is a leading cause of Electronic Waste (e-waste) generation. Estimates hold that around 50 million metric tonnes (approximately 7 kilograms per capita) of e-waste is generated every year. It is speculated that by the year 2030, e-waste generation will be a staggering 75 million metric tonnes (approximately 9 kilograms per capita)! Asia alone generates around 25 million metric tonnes of e-waste. Of this figure, only around 11 percent is documented e-waste. Imagine tall mountains of electronic waste leaking noxious fluids into the soil and water, all because you had to throw away an electronic product that was purposefully designed to be virtually irreparable once it gets damaged. A viable means to combat planned obsolescence is to ensure that the end consumer has access to products meant to last longer, and if broken, they should be able to repair their products. This entails that products should be designed for repair and that support for repairers of all kinds should be readily available. This is known as "right to repair."

Legislation is currently in the process of being passed in the United Kingdom that will allow consumers to have the right to repair the goods they buy and own. Under

the legislation, manufacturers will be legally obliged to make spare parts for products available to consumers for the first time. The European Parliament is considering granting EU consumers a right to repair. Community legislation is in the works to encourage sustainable consumer choices and re-use culture. If passed, the legislation aims further to make information regarding repair readily available. In the United States of America, the pursuit of the right to repair has taken on the form of a movement that is convincing federal and national lawmakers to consider making new laws and updating existing laws that extend the right to repair with regard to a wide variety of electronic products ranging from farming equipment, refrigerators, cell-phones, and even life-saving machinery like hospital ventilators. Tech giant, Apple Inc. is currently in the process of settling a class action law-suit against it that alleged that it is quietly slowing down older phones to promote the sale of new products. The settlement amount is up to 500 million USD.



Having legislation and policies in place that support the right to repair may arguably strengthen existing consumer protection laws and practices. It is a tenet of such legislation to ensure that consumers have access to products that are durable. Tactful circumvention of this rule by making products designed for obsolescence at the introduction of a new product should under no circumstances be allowed. At the same time, the "throwaway economy" begins to be steadily replaced by a "circular economy" that makes good and sustained use of its e-waste by allowing for easily available repairs that may extend the life-cycle of a product owned by an individual. Legislation and policy respecting the right to repair and banning planned obsolescence could prove to be an invaluable weapon in humanity's fight against the effects of its own destructive endeavours and greed, in order to make earth a more livable planet for future generations.

THE WRITER WORKS AT SOUTH BREEZE SCHOOL.

Low ADP spending by health authorities

Govt must reverse this trend and improve Covid-19 services

IT'S hard to justify, especially in a pandemic year, the consistently abysmal performance of the health sector. The latest indicator of this is a revelation about the low Annual Development Programme (ADP) spending by the Health Services Division (HSD). In a report released by the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division of the Planning Ministry—which tracked the status of ADP spending by different ministries and divisions—the health division cut a frustrating figure, unsurprisingly, one may add, as it utilised only 21 percent of its ADP allocations in the nine months of FY 2020-2021. This is some 20 percent less than the average ADP spending (of 41 percent) by other divisions and ministries over the same time period.

According to *The Daily Star*, in these nine months, the Health Services Division managed to spend only Tk 2,515.54 crore of its total ADP allocation of Tk 11,979.34 crore, making it one of the poorest performing divisions in terms of ADP implementation. The lack of spending suggests a lack of initiative which is totally unacceptable during a pandemic, which has led to increased spending on health services around the world. Bangladesh seems to be walking in the opposite direction. Evidently, it's not spending as much as it should, or as efficiently, as the lacklustre performance of its many health infrastructure projects would show.

The disclosure of the extremely low ADP spending on health, that too in the middle of a health emergency, is a painful reminder of the lack of vision, efficiency, accountability and transparency that has generally characterised the government's Covid-19 response since its outbreak earlier last year. Even now, when the country is suffering from an unprecedented surge in Covid-19 infections and deaths, the government is failing to shake off its laissez-faire attitude to crisis management. Covid-19 patients across the country are struggling to access treatment. People are running around in search of basic health services and facilities. The ill-planned and ill-executed nationwide lockdown has added a new dimension to their sufferings, not to mention the poor and marginalised groups who suddenly found their source of livelihood cut off, leading to immeasurable hardships.

This cannot go on any longer. The government must shed its business-as-usual approach to Covid-19 containment by allowing expert opinion—rather than politico-bureaucratic interest—to guide its policies and initiatives. And it must increase spending on building or procuring necessary health infrastructure and equipment to lessen people's sufferings in accessing proper healthcare. The Health Services Division has a big responsibility here, and it must deliver or be held accountable for its failures. We hope that the importance of increasing health spending will also be reflected in the upcoming national budget.

DNCC Covid-19 hospital a timely move

Govt has to ensure its proper functioning

WE are relieved to know about the government's latest initiative to turn Dhaka North City Corporation's (DNCC) kitchen market in Mohakhali into a makeshift hospital dedicated to Covid-19 treatment. With both death and the infection rates due to Covid-19 breaking all the previous records and creating new ones (a record 112 people died yesterday), this is a commendable step. As many families are struggling to find treatment facilities for their Covid-19 infected members, this hospital will help in mitigating the ongoing healthcare crisis to a great extent.

According to a report published by *The Daily Star* yesterday, the DNCC Covid-19 hospital is at present the largest of its kind. There are 50 ICU beds, 50 emergency beds and 150 general beds available here right now, which will be increased to 112, 100 and 250, respectively, in the coming days. Adequate oxygen supply has also been ensured, and the hospital will also host 540 isolated high-care rooms for Covid-19 patients. A large number of healthcare professionals and administrative staff have been assigned for uninterrupted service at this hospital, including 130 doctors, 200 nurses, 300 other staff and 100 army personnel.

The announcement to set up this hospital was made by the health minister on March 31 of this year. The swift implementation of such an ambitious project within just two and a half weeks proves that given the situation, the government can be quite efficient and capable in meeting the challenges faced by it, which in the present circumstances is the continuous surge in Covid-19 casualties. It is unfortunate that another healthcare facility with a much bigger capacity, set up by the health ministry on the open space of the International Convention City Bashundhara (ICCB) on May 17, 2020, equipped with 2,031 general beds and 71 ICU beds, was shut down within just four months of its inauguration. The government cited "lack of patients" as the reason. Needless to say that had the ICCB hospital been in operation during the present second wave, many critical Covid-19 patients would have received the urgent treatment they needed there.

The respective authorities have to ensure that the same fate does not befall the DNCC hospital and that it functions properly, with enough supplies of both manpower and healthcare equipment. Also, as the current Covid-19 situation is not showing any sign of subsiding with more virulent variants leading to severe health complications and deaths, the government has to take further steps to establish a few specialised healthcare facilities dedicated solely for Covid-related treatment in other districts too, where healthcare facilities in general are grossly inadequate, to prevent further loss of lives.

Can we prevent a potential collapse of the current education system?

Immediate policy action and financial support is the requirement of the day



MANZOOR AHMED

THE second wave of the pandemic has crashed onto Bangladesh and other countries, including India, after a downturn earlier in the year, dashing the hope for a waning of the pandemic. The

shock has revived deep anxieties about protecting life and livelihood. The budget discussion so far focuses on expanding economic activities and funding the health sector. Mostly left out from the discussion is the plight of 40 million students, a quarter of the population, who have by now lost 13 months of their educational life. They need help to recover their loss in learning and overcoming social and emotional trauma.

In a consultation with Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal on April 11, the Bangladesh Economic Association President Abul Barakat proposed a Taka 14,000 trillion (14 lakh crore) "alternative" budget, about two and a half times of the current year budget, to free the country from the pandemic impact and recast the economy to build an equitable society in the spirit of our liberation. The proposal urges large investments in health, education, technology and other employment producing plans. The resources for these investments are to be found by targeting those who have amassed phenomenal wealth from illegal and corrupt exploitation of the economy.

As reported in the press, the Finance

not an item of discourse.

A public webinar was hosted by the Center for Policy Dialogue (CPD) on April 12 on tackling the second wave of the pandemic. The invited speakers appropriately spoke about necessary moves regarding protection from the galloping spread of infection, the hospital bed and ICU shortages, the efficacy of lockdown and ensuring a square meal for the families of workers surviving on

under government management or financially supported by the government. The proportions vary by stages, but more than half of the students in early childhood education, technical and vocational education and training (TVET), madrasas and tertiary level are enrolled in institutions not financed by the government.

Private institutions, now mostly cut off from their income source, are in

which will remain unspent due to the pandemic. A substantial amount needs to be allocated to support primary and secondary schools to carry out their recovery plan. Schools not covered by monthly pay order (MPO) support should also be assisted, since as many as half of the school-going students are in non-government institutions of various kinds.

The approach for funding support to institutions should be based on the



PHOTO: STAR FILE

What will be the consequences for overall education services in the country and what can be done by way of government policy and financial support to prevent a large part of the education services disappearing? This must be a concern for the policymakers.

Minister refrained from commenting on the proposed structural reform in the economy. Expressing his views, he said that the health sector would receive priority in the new budget. Continuation of the stimulus for economic activities and safety net relief offered in the current year will be major items in the next budget. He said expansion of incentives for new areas of economic activities was supported by the economists. The economists' suggestions would be looked at by his team and the Prime Minister would provide guidance in making the ultimate decisions. Apparently, the collapse of the education system and its budgetary and other implications were

their day's earnings. A large proportion of the 40 million students, who belong to the families at risk of losing their daily sustenance, did not figure in the discussion.

Experts on the viral pandemic predict a flattening of the infection curve when herd immunity is achieved through vaccination or infection or a combination of both. This may take a year or longer, depending on the pace of vaccination coverage, government measures to prevent spread of infection and the people's response to these steps. The World Bank has projected that vaccination coverage in Bangladesh will not reach 70 percent before the end of 2022, which is likely to generate herd immunity.

The current 2020-21 budget for the education sector, prepared after the onset of the pandemic in the second quarter of 2020, was a pedestrian expenditure plan showing no recognition of the looming education threats of the pandemic. There has been no significant pandemic adjustment in later revisions of the education budget.

The response of the two ministries of education so far can be described as the minimum essential required from the education authorities. These included issuing periodic orders to extend school closure; offering distance education lessons through TV, radio and internet which did not effectively reach the large majority of students or cover much of the learning content; and cancelling public examinations and grading students based on their past records.

It must be noted that the majority of the 40 million students are served by educational services not directly

financial distress and many are likely to be shut down permanently. What will be the consequences for overall education services in the country and what can be done by way of government policy and financial support to prevent a large part of the education services disappearing? This must be a concern for the policymakers. The government must consider what to do in the budget for FY 2021-22 to prevent a potential collapse of the education system.

Education Watch, in an interim report of its study titled "Bringing schools and learning back on track", which was presented to the government on January 17, identified key action points including financing measures. The action points include safe reopening of schools in a phased manner, a learning recovery programme that extends to at least two years, its flexible and decentralised implementation that involves civil society and NGOs, and taking medium and longer term views of the actions planned. An expanded Education Watch report detailing these steps is under preparation and is expected to be released shortly.

It is clear that additional public financial support will be required for implementing the school reopening and education recovery programme. Most institutions at primary and secondary level are financially strapped and do not have the resources necessary for offering quality instruction. They will be hard-pressed to comply with the health and safety regulations and carry out the extra efforts and activities anticipated for the learning recovery programme.

About Tk 66,000 crore is in the FY2020-21 education budget, a part of

following principles. At least 10 percent of the revised Ministry of Primary and Mass Education and Ministry of Education budget for this year and the budget next year should be devoted to reopening and recovery support. At least Tk 10 crore for each of the 500 upazilas and thanas should be distributed proportionate to student numbers to support primary and secondary schools (an average of about Taka three lakh per institution each year) to carry out their recovery plan. Schools not covered by MPO support should be assisted in appropriate ways, including interest free and subsidised loans through the banking system. A major investment should be made to expand ICT-based hybrid/blended learning in every school.

At the primary level, schools receiving the modest school level improvement plan (SLIP) grants may begin their reopening and recovery with these funds, but will need further support beyond SLIP, which, in any case, does not cover all schools. An upazila working group should be involved in facilitating, approving and overseeing funding support to local institutions and monitoring its use within the overall central guidelines; the Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE), as a national education network with member organisations in all parts of the country, can support the government in this process.

The initiatives for the budget measures for education must originate from the two ministries of education. They have to make the case, defend it and convince the decision-makers that they have the capacity and will to make good use of the funds.

Manzoor Ahmed is professor emeritus at Brac University.

Why you should take the Covid-19 vaccine



REZAUL KARIM

THERE is a lot of discussion right now about the side effects of the Covid-19 vaccine and confusion surrounding the taking of the vaccine. However, if we dissect these discussions, we

will find that the logical conclusion is to take the vaccine in order to protect yourself and others during the pandemic.

Risk of blood clots

This is one of the most widely debated side effects of Covid-19 vaccines. Let us use an example to understand the risks. The Johnson and Johnson Covid-19 vaccines have been given to about seven million people in the United States, but the vaccine has been temporarily paused due to possible blood clots in six vaccine recipients. It is normal to have such a temporary pause. In the meantime, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will examine if blood clotting has anything to do with the vaccination. Doctors will also be informed during this time on how to treat such side effects if they potentially occur in other persons. It is expected that the FDA will soon lift the pause and reintroduce the vaccine to the public.

But most importantly, if someone becomes seriously ill after being infected with the coronavirus, their chances of blood clots are many, many times higher. It is safe to say that the cases of vaccines causing blood clots are extremely rare

and even if that occurs, it is thought that about 85 percent of cases can be cured through treatment. Any widely used drug (such as paracetamol or antacids) is not 100 percent risk free. Vaccines have some side effects too, which is normal and acceptable. Covid-19 is killing 10,000 to 12,000 people every day around the world. Now, think how extremely rare the chances are, if there are any, of blood clots forming from Covid-19 vaccination

two-dose vaccine develops only partial immunity, so do not neglect to take the second dose of the vaccine. Because the immune system is not completely functional with the first dose of the vaccine, it is important to follow perfectly the protective measures even after the first dose. Immunity will be complete within two to three weeks of the second dose of vaccine. Therefore, the second dose cannot be omitted in any way.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

versus how many people are dying from Covid-19 each day. No doubt, the benefits of the approved Covid-19 vaccines far outweigh the risks, and that is why the European Medicines Agency and WHO are constantly advocating that people take the vaccine.

Can vaccinated people get infected, and why is the second dose so critical? People are also worried about the fact that a minority of vaccinated individuals are still being infected with the coronavirus even after taking the Covid-19 vaccine. This is because taking the first dose of a

Can people who have fully completed the vaccine dose become infected with the coronavirus? The answer is that it is very unlikely, because if the coronavirus enters the body, the immune system will be activated very quickly in those vaccinated individuals and will kill the virus and keep us free from the disease.

However, new variants of the coronavirus are being found around the globe, which is also a normal process. If the vaccine is made using the old variant of coronavirus, the effectiveness of the vaccine against the new variant of the virus might be reduced, so a

Even if someone who has been vaccinated becomes positive for coronavirus, the person will develop mild to moderate symptoms.

small number of people who have been vaccinated (with both doses complete) may still be infected with the new variant of coronavirus. But the most important thing is that even if someone who has been vaccinated becomes positive for coronavirus, the person will develop mild to moderate symptoms as the vaccine will give protection. As a result, that person is highly unlikely to require hospitalisation.

Why safe and effective Covid-19 vaccine should be taken

In sum, the possibility of blood clots as a result of the vaccine is extremely low. Even if a person is infected with a new variant of the coronavirus after receiving the vaccine, he or she will develop mild to moderate but not severe versions of the disease because vaccine-induced immunity will give protection, and he or she will not need to be hospitalised. There is no more effective way to eradicate viral diseases than vaccines. For example, smallpox has been eradicated from the world and polio has been eradicated from Bangladesh—both were made possible due to vaccines. Vaccines are one of the most invaluable gifts of science and we should not squander this opportunity.

Dr Rezaul Karim is an immunologist, Drug Discovery and Regulatory Affairs in the Netherlands.

Neanderthals in my DNA: Possible impact on Covid-19 outcomes



ATIQUE U AHMED

As we are passing the one-year mark of the Covid-19 pandemic, it is difficult to wrap my head around the long term consequences of this catastrophe.

To date, this pandemic has infected over 142 million people worldwide and withered the global economy by 4.4 percent in 2020. It is far too early to contemplate the ending of this pandemic as we are still in it, writing our story as it is unfolding before our eyes, navigating our way on a path that none of us has walked before. As for guidance, we are looking back into history, trying to make sense of this unprecedented time by reminiscing the parallel incidents of our past, trying to cope by predicting the possible impacts of this moment on our future. This is a story about my erudition, as a father, scientist and Bangladeshi, pondering on my past as I try and plan for the possible imminent future.

Part one: Decoding DNA to understand my past

Around 600,000 years ago, somewhere in Africa, a group of hominins (human species and all our immediate ancestors) evolved to become Neanderthals, close cousins to us, the Homo sapiens. They left Africa about 350,000 years or more ago for Eurasia. For more than 300,000 years, Neanderthals lived in Europe and Central Asia until they became extinct, around 40,000 years ago. Contrarily, our Homo sapien ancestors, who left Africa approximately 100,000 to 60,000

years ago, eventually conquered the world.

Deoxyribose Nucleic Acid or DNA works as the molecular blueprint of all living things. This unit of inheritance is passed on generation-to-generation, responsible for putting my great grandfather's nose on my son's face even though they've never met each other. Our DNA consists of over three billion of four different chemicals: adenine "A," thymine "T," guanine "G," and cytosine "C," which uniquely combines to create a DNA blueprint for each individual.

When the entire human DNA was decoded 15 years ago, it ushered in a new era of genetic medicine. In 2010, the first draft of the Neanderthal genome sequence was published. One of the surprising discoveries



PHOTO: COLLECTED

in decoding the Neanderthal DNA sequence was the evidence of interbreeding between Neanderthals and the ancestors of Homo sapiens. By combining next-generation sequencing technology with rigorous statistical modelling, scientists can trace back the archaic DNA in the genome of present-day Homo sapiens, including my own, and provide convincing scientific evidence of such propagation. About one to four percent of the DNA of all Homo sapiens outside of the African continent contains pieces of DNA from Neanderthal, also known as variants.

I was born in Dhaka to Bangladeshi parents and immigrated to the USA at the age of 19 to pursue my education. As a cancer biologist, I consider myself a fact seeker of human biology—spending most of my adult life chasing the mystery of genetic disease to mitigate the suffering of cancer patients. My inquisitive nature as a scientist was the only provocation behind the

decision to have my own DNA analysed as soon as such testing was made available to the public in the United States. I chose 23andMe, a widely used DNA testing service to decode my DNA.

As I had anticipated, the test suggested that 100 percent of my ancestry is Bengali. My paternal haplogroup (family of lineages that share a particular set of DNA signature or variant) is O-Page23, a long line of men who lived in eastern Africa 275,000 years ago. This is a rare haplogroup among 23andMe customers as only one in 82,000 shares this same haplogroup assignment. My maternal haplogroup is M30d1, which originated from a single woman whose lineage lived in eastern Africa from around 150,000 to 200,000 years ago. While the M haplogroup is widespread throughout South and East Asia, the degree of diversity of the M haplogroup is the highest in the Indian sub-continent.

My DNA test revealed that out of the 2,872 Neanderthal variants examined by 23andMe, 196 variants in my DNA belong to Neanderthals. This is about five percent more than the other 23andMe customers. For the past 10 years, extensive research has been conducted to understand the functional consequence of the Neanderthal DNA in our genome and how it may influence human evolution. Scientists have utilised genome-wide association or GWAS, a method used in genetic research to examine if a specific genetic variant is related to any trait or disease.

Studies have linked different Neanderthal variants with particular genes, which make up a small section of our DNA. These genes contain the instructions for specific protein—molecular produce by our body by following the instructions written in a gene within our DNA. Protein carries out all the functions for genes. In the presence of a Neanderthal variant, the function of a protein can be altered, which leads to individual functional traits, ranging from hair colour and skin to neuropsychiatric disorders and immune system functions. According to the initial 23andMe analysis, none of my Neanderthal variants are associated with any known Neanderthal traits.

But discoveries in this field are evolving by the minute. In fact, in just one night, the perception concerning my DNA carrying harmless Neanderthal variants, as it was initially reported to me, was suddenly altered in a significant manner.

Part two of this article will be published tomorrow.

Atique U Ahmed PhD is Associate Professor of Neurological Surgery at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine. His Twitter handle is @atiqueahmedphd.

DNA works as the molecular blueprint of all living things. This unit of inheritance is passed on generation-to-generation, responsible for putting my great grandfather's nose on my son's face even though they've never met each other.

Critique, criticism and a new development indicator



RUBAIYA MURSHED

I've always wanted to be a PhD student. I love reading and writing and a PhD is literally being facilitated—often with a full scholarship—to think, read

and write. It's an opportunity to learn about theories, concepts, philosophies and methodologies. Out of these, what stands out for me the most—especially in relation to the education I've received in Bangladesh—are the discussions on philosophies and on new ways of thinking. Some topics sometimes seem so simple at the beginning but in the end, result in blowing my mind. One such discussion was on the difference between criticism and critique, and I found this especially stimulating when I began to find the relevance of the topic in everyday life.

When a teacher scolds a student for making a mistake, is that criticism or critique? When an academic reviews a peer's paper and suggests a change, is it critique or is it criticism? When an aunty compares her daughter's skin colour to yours, is that critique or criticism? What about when a parent pushes you to study for the BCS, when a friend challenges your Facebook status, when someone expresses a different opinion than you, or when citizens take to the streets to protest? What is critique and what, then, is criticism?

There is a fine line between these two concepts. If invited to be either "for" or "against" something, we

may often find ourselves engaging in criticism rather than critique. According to the professor who taught this idea to us, "Criticism invites a complaint, or a state of opposition, or identifying negative aspects". On the other hand, "Critique challenges rather than confirms, disrupts rather than reproduces cultural traditions and conventions, and shows tensions in language use, encouraging dissentation rather than surface consensus". Brookfield (1987) suggests that being appropriately skeptical about any knowledge or solution that claims to be the only truth or alternative is the essence of critique and criticality. According to Alvesson and Deetz (2021), there may be distinctive differences between the language used to critique and the language used to criticise. Once you know this, it may be easier to notice the patterns in the language used—the often more negative connotations used to criticise and the more constructive approach to critique. One of the two is more positive, in essence, than the other.

Critique forces you to question your premise and to rethink the taken-for-granted assumptions and beliefs that power your way of thinking. Critique presumes that it can lead to improvement and social change, whereas that is, in most cases, not likely to be the intention of criticism. On the onset, understanding intention is the key to distinguishing between whether a remark is critique or criticism. This may be tricky, but as indicated in the definitions of critique, language is often indicative, and so may be gestures, tones and body language. It's not just what we say, but also how we say it.

Is it important to be critical? More



PHOTO: COLLECTED

importantly, is it important to have a critical mass? We may each have different takes on this, different answers. Averaging the answers, and weighing whether the "yes" or "no" group is larger, is an indication of the pulse of a country. I believe that a critical mass is the key to progress and that critical thinking and the practice of criticality should be prioritised in education. Learning to accept critique is part of this practice. Passion, the drive to improve and the inclination to receive critique go hand in hand.

There is a history of education systems evolving from the purpose of creating a critical mass. There was a time when a group of individuals sitting under a tree listening to someone wiser constituted a classroom. Over time, what we consider a class, a classroom and an education has transformed into what it is today. In

his book *School on Trial: How freedom and creativity can fix our educational malpractice*, Nikhil Goyal eloquently traces the history behind the development of the American public school system and the consequent purposes of modern-day schooling. One purpose, he suggests, is to teach children how to comply with orders, submit to authority and "fit in". He mentions the thoughts of the eminent Noam Chomsky who once said, "The whole educational and professional training system is a very elaborate filter, which just weeds out people who are too independent, and who think for themselves, and who don't know how to be submissive...". It makes one wonder whether the establishment of a critical mass serves, in actuality, the opposite purpose of modern-day education. It seems very likely that the absence of a critical mass, of the "disobedient", may be a rather desired state for many, if not all, modern states.

The inclination to critique or criticise is a reflection of one's mentality. And I believe that "mentality" should be included as an indicator of development. Recently, there has been much focus on strengthening the approach that we use to assess a country's development. In February, Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud wrote in an oped in *The Daily Star* that GDP, commonly used to measure economic development, ignores many non-income aspects of human well-being. As an unconventional approach to assessing development, he shed light on some new factors, largely emphasising the quality of life, the quality of public transport, tap water, public libraries, human resources etc. I strongly believe that mentality

should be added to the list because, at the end of the day, if there is no development of the mind, of human nature and behaviour, towards goodness and wellness—is development really development? If we have high quality roads and transport, but we don't think twice before wronging someone; if we have the most modern technologies and the best education system, but we are alright with cutting corners for personal gain; if Dhaka becomes like Singapore but we, the people, spend the larger part of our days criticising, backbiting and belittling each other—would our gains really be gains? Mentality matters—are our people more pro-social or pro-self, are our people more prone to criticise than critique, are we by nature mostly kind or mostly selfish? These factors should be a part of our indicators of development. Subsequently, how we reliably measure these traits becomes an important issue and may just be the next big challenge for social scientists to figure out.

What we believe should be considered development indicators will continue to be a topic of debate and discussion as we tread, as a nation, to a better future. The point is that these debates and discussions get to unfold. Be it critique or criticism, opinion or fact—an undeniable indicator of development is that our thoughts can be freely and comfortably shared. For the day that we are silenced, and gradually lose the will to voice our thoughts, is the day that hope no longer has any promise.

Rubaiya Murshed is a PhD student at University of Cambridge and Lecturer of Department of Economics at University of Dhaka.

QUOTABLE Quote

YEVGENY YEVTUSHENKO
Soviet-Russian poet (1932—2017)

When truth is replaced by silence, the silence is a lie.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Busy folks in Apr.
- 5 Take wing
- 9 Urge to be quiet
- 10 Takes on
- 12 Ship of 1492
- 13 Uniform color
- 14 Shakespeare's merchant
- 16 Spot
- 17 Wish undone
- 18 1920 Olympics host
- 20 Warming season
- 22 Tiny workers
- 23 Mystical deck
- 25 Bother
- 28 "Nashville" director
- 32 Tummy relief

DOWN

- 1 Bar exercise
- 2 Football team member
- 3 Regarding
- 4 Mock-'50s band
- 5 Photo session
- 6 Dressing part
- 7 Out of bed
- 8 Change back
- 9 Ship poles
- 11 Percolates
- 15 Fix firmly
- 19 Steam engine pioneer
- 21 "—Wonderful Life"
- 24 From bygone days
- 25 County events
- 26 Fantastic
- 27 Horse house
- 29 Sullen
- 30 Sites for fights
- 31 High homes
- 33 Placates
- 37 Mad as—hen
- 39 Wide shoe marking

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BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

B	L	O	T	S	K	I	S		
L	O	T	I	S	C	E	N	T	
O	C	T	E	T	A	E	S	O	P
G	A	S	R	E	D	L	I	N	E
S	L	I	P	O	N	S	D	E	N
E	D	E	N	S	W	E	S	T	
E	N	G	C	O	T				
F	A	C	T	M	O	O	R	S	
A	S	H	R	A	N	D	A	L	L
S	K	A	T	I	N	G	D	U	O
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T	E	N	S		A	G	E	S	

An uneasy traveller

MAZHAR UDDIN

The beginning of Mominul Haque's Test career was nothing short of a fairytale as the left-hander scored seven fifties and four centuries in his first 12 Tests for Bangladesh.

His role as a batsman since making his international debut in 2012 has changed quite a bit so much so that Mominul is now regarded only as a Test specialist.

And Mominul has done justice to that tag as his Test record is still among the best in the Bangladesh team and recently he became the first Bangladeshi batsman to score a 10th Test century, during the first Test against West Indies earlier this year.

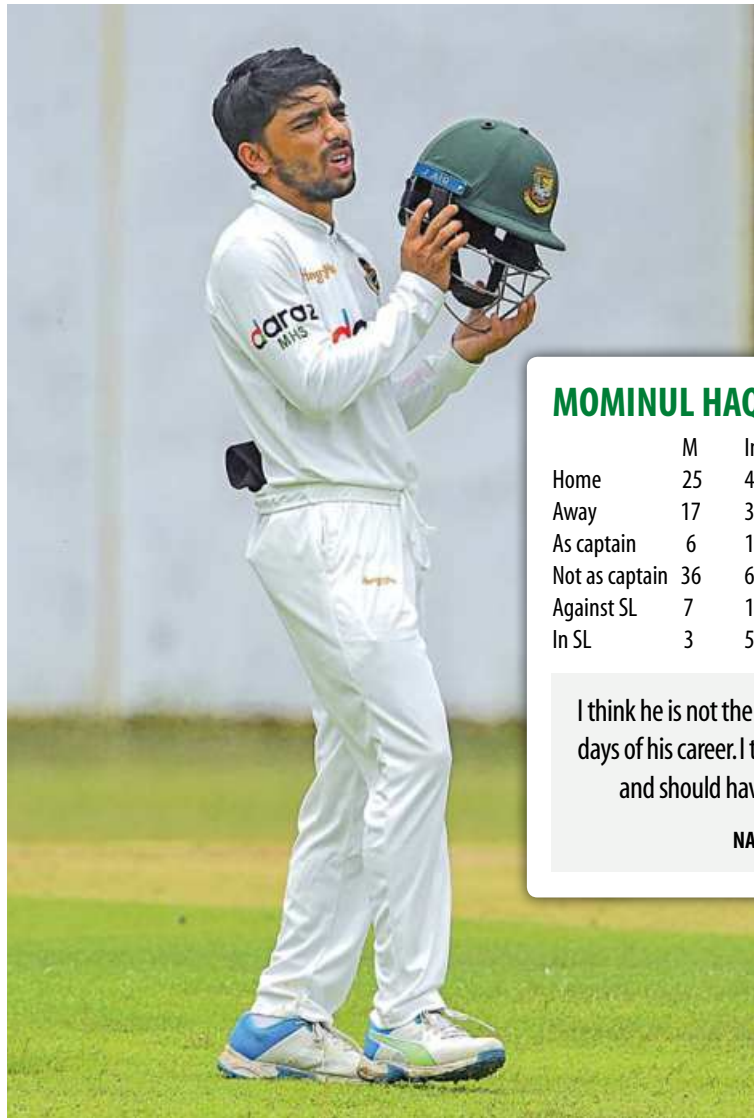
However, that 10th century could not help his side avoid an embarrassing 2-0 whitewash against a relatively inexperienced West Indies side at home and it was the leadership of Mominul that came under immense criticism.

Since his appointment as Test skipper in 2019, Bangladesh have managed to win just one Test while losing the other five games.

With the upcoming two-match Test series in Sri Lanka set to begin from April 21 in Kandy, Mominul will be under heavy scrutiny for both his batting as well as his leadership.

Compared to his records at home, Mominul's Test records abroad are pretty dismal as he averages only 22.30 in 33 innings. The 29-year-old still struggles at foreign conditions and is yet to score a century.

Many people raised questions over Mominul's ability to face quality fast bowling in bouncy



got advice from people around him but I think he has come away from where his mindset was in the past," Fahim told The Daily Star while analysing Mominul's batting issues.

"I did work with him regarding the body-line deliveries which he was having trouble with in the past. This mainly occurs when he plays abroad. Apart from that, I don't see any other issues with his

MOMINUL HAQUE IN TESTS

	M	Inns	R	HS	Ave	100s	50s
Home	25	45	2312	181	56.39	10	7
Away	17	33	736	77	22.30	0	6
As captain	6	11	435	132	39.54	2	0
Not as captain	36	67	2613	181	41.47	8	13
Against SL	7	13	653	176	54.41	3	3
In SL	3	5	168	64	33.60	0	2

I think he is not the same batsman that I saw in the early days of his career. I think he needs to realise his problems and should have a better idea of his own game.

NAZMUL ABEDEEN FAHIM

batting. As a batsman, he needs to fight it out and spend time in the middle and defend balls as much as he can. At times as a batsman you try to play shots to release the pressure and I think he needs to take more time while batting," Fahim added.

According to the prominent cricket coach who has mentored the likes of Shakib Al Hasan, a positive result in the upcoming Sri Lanka series can change the whole dimension of Mominul's thought process in the coming days.

pitches as he often gets dismissed once the ball comes into his body. However, the left-hander did work on that aspect and according to prominent coach Nazmul Abedeen Fahim, it is the approach from Mominul which can make a lot of

difference in his batting. "I think he is not the same batsman that I saw in the early days of his career. I think he needs to realise his problems and should have a better idea of his own game. I can understand that he may have

Tigers land in Kandy

SPORTS REPORTER



The Bangladesh team, led by Mominul Haque, yesterday reached Kandy where the visitors will play both Tests of the two-match series against Sri Lanka. The first Test is scheduled to start tomorrow while the second and final Test will begin from April 29, both at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium.

Bangladesh went to the island nation with a 21-member preliminary squad as the Sri Lankan board had earlier announced it would not provide with any local players for the visitors' warm-up match ahead of the Tests. Bangladesh played a two-day intra-squad warm-up match at Chilaw Marians Cricket Club ground in Katunayake on April 17 and 18 before going to Kandy yesterday.

And though the team management was supposed to announce the final squad yesterday, however, by the time of filing of this report, no such announcements came from the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB).

But it was learnt that a meeting was held following their arrival in Kandy and a final squad of 17 has been finalised with the team management unofficially informing the selected players.

The selectors had raised eyebrows when they included 34-year-old Shuvagata Hom in the preliminary squad, mentioning him as a batting all-rounder and a replacement for all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, who has opted out of the tour to fulfil his IPL commitments for Kolkata Knight Riders. It, however, remains to be seen if Hom, who played his last Test back in 2016, makes it to the final squad.

Bangladesh went to the tour of Sri Lanka on the back of some bleak performances that drew heavy criticism from fans and media. The Tigers resumed after the coronavirus-induced break with a 3-0 win in ODIs against a depleted West Indies side, but then series whitewashes in all formats. Bangladesh lost 2-0 in Tests against West Indies at home earlier this year before being whitewashed in both ODIs and T20Is away to New Zealand last month.



Sri Lanka captain Dimuth Karunaratne inspects the pitch while head coach Mickey Arthur looks on during a practice session yesterday ahead of tomorrow's first Test of the two-match series against Bangladesh at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium in Kandy.



What next for 'Special One' Mourinho?

AGENCIES

Jose Mourinho, who was sacked by Tottenham on Monday, has been fired before winning a trophy for the first time as a manager, in the latest setback to a career veering increasingly off course.

The Portuguese coach, a serial winner across Europe, arrived at Spurs 18 months ago with a point to prove after his reputation was tarnished by his more than two-year spell in charge of Manchester United.

Despite a highly acrimonious reign at Old Trafford, the self-declared "Special One" still claimed three trophies, including the 2017 Europa League, although another was the Community Shield.

Mourinho's failed Tottenham project is evidence his coaching methods are not as effective as they once were as he leaves a club without a trophy for the first time since the early days of his coaching career in Portugal.

Despite a wealth of attacking talent at both Spurs and United, Mourinho's negative tactics drew much criticism.

Former Spurs midfielder Jamie Redknapp said in December Mourinho was "asking for trouble" with such a reserved approach, while ex-striker Darren Bent labelled Mourinho's tactics "outdated".

While Juergen Klopp's high intensity approach has revolutionised the way Liverpool play, and Pep Guardiola's ever-evolving Johan Cruyff-inspired system has steered Manchester City to much success, Mourinho's style has remained unmoved.

Chairman Daniel Levy wanted a blockbuster name when he went for Mourinho, with an Amazon documentary to sell, but on the morning after Spurs joined the prospective 12-team European Super League, Mourinho was surplus to requirements.

There is much uncertainty in the game after the announcement of the much-maligned Super League, with it unclear what the footballing landscape will look like across the continent.

Mourinho's future looks equally up in the air.

BREAKAWAY SUPER LEAGUE hits European football hard

AGENCIES



A planned breakaway Super League announced by twelve of European

football's most powerful clubs and backed by US investment bank JPMorgan was roundly condemned by fans and federations across the continent on Monday.

European soccer's governing body UEFA on Monday said clubs and players joining the proposed breakaway Super League could be banned from all of its competitions and the World Cup as it condemned a "disgraceful and self-serving proposal".

The reaction from fans and pundits was also furious.

Addressing an emergency meeting the day after 12 of Europe's top clubs announced the breakaway, UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin launched a scathing attack on the plan, which has been widely condemned across the game and beyond.

"We're still assessing with our legal team but we will take all the sanctions that we can and we will inform you as soon we can," he said. "My opinion is that as soon as possible they have to be banned from all our competitions and the players from all our competitions."

The meeting was initially scheduled to confirm plans for

an expanded UEFA Champions League but has been overshadowed by the breakaway Super League.

"UEFA and the football world stand united against the disgraceful and self-serving proposal we have seen in the last 24 hours for a select few clubs in Europe motivated by greed. We are all united against this nonsense of a project," Ceferin said.

Six Premier League teams joined forces with three

Spanish and giants to launch the planned competition. A joint statement said three more clubs would be invited to join the founding members before the start of the competition "as soon as possible".

Organisers have also filed a motion "before the relevant courts" to "ensure the seamless establishment and operation" of the Super League, according to a letter seen by AFP and addressed to UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin as well as

FIFA chief Gianni Infantino.

The competition threatens to completely shake up the world's biggest sport and leaves UEFA's flagship Champions League facing an uncertain future. The clubs, most of them saddled with debt and large wage bills, and hit hard by the pandemic, stand to benefit financially. JPMorgan confirmed it is financing the breakaway league. The absence of French and German teams from the founding members is notable.

WHO'S SAYING WHAT

"The clubs concerned will be banned from playing in any other competition at domestic, European or world level, and their players could be denied the opportunity to represent their national teams."—UEFA.

"Against this background, FIFA can only express its disapproval to a 'closed European breakaway league' outside of the international football structures and not respecting the aforementioned principles."—FIFA

"Fans of any club in England and across Europe can currently dream that their team may climb to the top and play against the best. We believe that the concept of a European Super League would destroy this dream."—EPL statement read.

"Football is the only global sport in the world with more than four billion fans and our responsibility as big clubs is to respond to their desires."— Real Madrid president and new Super League president Florentino Perez.

"The newly proposed top European competition is nothing more than a selfish, egotistical proposal designed to further enrich the already super rich," a La Liga statement read.

"I'm disgusted. It's an absolute disgrace. We have to wrestle back power from the clubs at the top of this league and that includes my club."— Former Manchester United captain Gary Neville.

"We, the coaches, are ready to coach the clubs. I have no doubt that the club will make the best decision for what is best for the future of the club."— Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone.

"Plans for a European Super League would be very damaging for football and we support football authorities in taking action. They would strike at the heart of the domestic game, and will concern fans across the country. The clubs involved must answer to their fans and the wider footballing community before taking any further steps."— UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson.

"#Embarrassing as fan representatives we are appalled & completely oppose this decision. (Liverpool's owners) FSG have ignored fans in their relentless & greedy pursuit of money. Football is ours not theirs. Our football club is ours not theirs."— Liverpool supporters' union Spirit of Shankly.

"The president of the Republic welcomes the position of French clubs to refuse to participate to a European football Super League project that threatens the principle of solidarity and sporting merit."— French president Emmanuel Macron



PHOTO: REUTERS

KEY FACTS ABOUT THE SUPER LEAGUE

1. Twelve heavyweights from England (Arsenal, Chelsea, Liverpool, Manchester City, Manchester United and Tottenham Hotspur), Spain (Atletico Madrid, Barcelona and Real Madrid) and Italy (AC Milan, Inter Milan and Juventus) have agreed to establish a new competition, the Super League, governed by its founding clubs. This challenges the supremacy of Europe's top club competition, the UEFA-run Champions League.

2. Three more teams are expected to join as founding clubs, which are guaranteed

participation each year, with another five qualifying annually, making it a 20-team competition. Games will be mid-week, ruling teams out of the Champions League but leaving them free for domestic fixtures.

3. The inaugural edition will take place "as soon as practicable", the announcement says. With an August start, it will feature two groups of 10 playing home and away, and the top three qualifying for the quarter-finals. The fourth and fifth-placed teams will play off for the remaining quarter-final spots. The quarter and semi-finals will be played

over two legs and the final is a single game at a neutral venue. There are also plans for a women's version.

4. Europe's top clubs have long agitated for the income that guaranteed, annual competition against their fellow powers would bring. Currently, they have to qualify for the Champions League by placing high in their domestic competitions, and then make it through the season-long tournament to reach the high-profile latter stages. The clubs, saddled with big debts and huge wages

for their star players, say the pandemic has "accelerated the instability in the existing European football economic model". The Super League will bring them far more than the Champions League. The founding clubs are expected to receive more than 10 billion euros in uncapped "solidarity payments" during their initial commitment period. They will also receive 3.5 billion euros for infrastructure investment and to offset their losses from the pandemic. By comparison, UEFA competitions generated 3.2 billion euros in TV earnings in the pre-pandemic 2018-2019 season



Valid passports so dear

Slow issuance of passports leaves migrants in Oman unable to come home, draw salary



EZAZ MAHMUD

Timely renewal of passports has suddenly become like winning the lottery for Bangladeshi migrants in Oman.

Frustration is growing among Bangladeshi expatriates as thousands of workers are not getting their passports renewed on time.

Amid such a situation, pressure is growing on the Bangladesh embassy in Oman and the money exchange firms tasked with the job.

Slow supply of passports from Dhaka are blamed for the crisis. However, the Bangladesh embassy and the Department of Immigration and Passports (DIP) hoped the crisis will be over in a month.

According to expatriates, the passport crisis in Oman has been prevailing for the last six to seven months, causing

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The Mayor Hanif flyover in the capital's Jatrabari area is usually teeming with vehicles. However, it has been almost empty since a "lockdown" was enforced by the government from April 14 to curb the spread of the novel coronavirus. The photo was taken yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

MIGRANTS' TRAVEL Suspension of flights another blow for them

RASHIDUL HASAN

The return of several thousand Bangladeshi migrants to their workplaces abroad faced another blow as suspension of regular international flights to and from Bangladesh was extended for another week from April 22.

However, special flights to Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar, UAE and Singapore will continue despite the suspension.

Leaders of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira) and Association of Travel Agents of Bangladesh (Atab) said migrant workers were facing various difficulties in returning to work.

Baira and Atab leaders said many migrants can't afford the tickets as their prices have gone up. Some can't even come to Dhaka amid the "lockdown" to catch their flights.

Besides, migrant workers are also facing problems in getting tested on time for Covid-19, mandatory for travel abroad.

Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) yesterday extended the flight suspension inline

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DCOTOR, COPS ALTERCATION HC decline to hear petition

Their professional bodies back them

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A High Court bench yesterday refused to pass any order regarding an altercation between a doctor, a magistrate and a police officer over the possession of a movement pass, the video footage of which went viral on social media yesterday.

The incident occurred when the physician was pressed to show a movement pass amid a "lockdown", despite her identity as a healthcare professional.

Supreme Court lawyer Md Eunos Ali Akond placed the newspaper reports published about the incident before the HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Sardar Md Rashed Jahangir seeking necessary orders on the issue.

He prayed to the court to pass a suo motu (voluntary) order.

The HC bench, however, told the lawyer that he has no locus standi (right to appear in court) to seek such an order as he is not an aggrieved person.

"We will look into the matter if any aggrieved person comes before us for any order," Justice Enayetur Rahim told Eunos.

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ROAD TO FREEDOM THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

Bhashani writes to Mao

APRIL 20, 1971

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

BHASHANI'S LETTERS TO CHINESE LEADERS

Maulana Bhashani, leader of the National Awami Party (Bhashani), had written personal letters to Chairman Mao and the Premier of the People's Republic of China, Chou en-Lai, expressing surprise at Peking's support to the Pakistani military junta.

Bhashani had at the same time expressed his sincere support to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Tajuddin Ahmad, for jointly fighting with the Mukti Fauz to oust the occupation army of Pakistan.

It was learnt that Bhashani, who had been given a heroic reception during his visit to Peking and knew the Chinese leaders personally, described in his recent letters in vivid detail the ruthless atrocities of the Pakistani army on the innocent unarmed people in Bangladesh.

Bhashani appealed to the Chinese leaders for lending



whole-hearted support to the liberation struggle of Bangladesh against the genocide let loose by the Pakistan occupation army. He also hoped to see a change in China's policy in favour of the freedom fighters of Bangladesh sooner than later. China would soon, he expected, publicly condemn the brutal atrocities of the Pakistan army and back the people's liberation struggle in Bangladesh.

PAKISTAN DEMANDS INDIA OUST DIPLOMATS Pakistan demanded today that India oust dissident East Pakistani diplomats who "seized" the Pakistani deputy high commission, or consulate, in Calcutta on April 18, 1971.

India refused. The foreign ministry of India said the

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7 cops hurt in Hefajat attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

At least seven policemen, including the officer-in-charge of Mollahat Police Station, were injured as activists of Hefajat-e-Islam, a Qawmi madrasa-based organisation, attacked them yesterday.

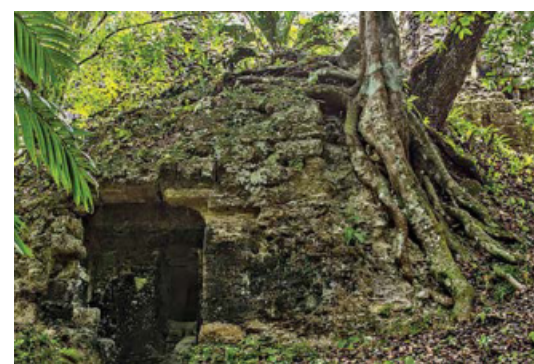
Injured OC Kazi Golam Kabir said Hefajat activists gathered near Mollahat Upazila Health Complex to bring out a procession to protest the arrest of its leader Maulana Mamunul Haque around 11:00am. On information, police went to the spot and Hefajat activists attacked them, he added.

Mamunul's maternal grandfather's house is in Udaipur village of Mollahat.

The other injured are Mollahat Police Station SI Thakur Das Mandal, ASI Mohammad Liakat, Mohammad Bahar, police constables Nazmul Fakir, Sohag Mia and

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Hidden 'embassy' of legendary Mayan city found



MAIL ONLINE

Archaeologists in Guatemala believe they have discovered a hidden "embassy" in the legendary Mayan city of Tikal.

The compound includes a pyramid, burial site and various items indicative of Teotihuacan, a rival city-state hundreds of miles away in Mexico.

It was recently discovered thanks to aerial laser scans that could pierce through centuries of dirt and jungle growth.

The finding suggests Teotihuacan, which conquered Tikal in the late 4th century, was once

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PRAYER TIMING APRIL 20

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-09 12-45 4-45 6-26 8-00
JAMAAT 4-19 1-15 5-00 6-36 8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN APRIL SEHRI IFTAR

7	20	6:26
8	21	4:08 6:26
9	22	4:07 6:27

SUED UNDER DSA Labour leader Ruhul Amin gets bail

2 held in DSA cases in Bandarban

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

Ruhul Amin was released from jail after a court yesterday granted him bail in a case filed under the controversial Digital Security Act.

The Metropolitan Sessions Judges Court passed the order around noon, Ruhul's lawyer Akhter Jahan Ruku told The Daily Star, adding that the bail was granted upon a bond of Tk 10,000.

Meanwhile, police arrested two more men under the Digital Security Act (DSA) in remote Naikhyangchhari, Bandarban, for making "anti-state" posts on Facebook.

Ruhul Amin, coordinator of Sramik-Krishak-Chhatra-Janata Oikya Parishad, and Niaz Murshid Dolan, a member of the association, were arrested on February 26 at the house of cartoonist

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People of all ages sitting in front of the "Bhalo Kaajer Khabar Hotel" near Kamalapur Railway Station in the capital. Run by school-going children scattered all across Dhaka, who dream of doing good for the nation through their own expenses, the hotel has been distributing free food to the poor and will be doing so throughout the holy month of Ramadan during this pandemic. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

US hits vaccine milestone

More than half of its adults got at least one dose; India locks down capital

AGENCIES

The hard-hit United States passed a hopeful milestone of giving at least one Covid-19 vaccine dose to half its adults, as India locked down its capital New Delhi for a week from last night to try and control a raging outbreak.

There was good news from Australia and New Zealand as well as the two neighbours opened a travel bubble that would allow people to travel without a mandatory quarantine.

Infections are skyrocketing in India, however, with hospitals running out of beds and the government forced to reimpose economically painful restrictions again.

Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal said the capital's "health system is at a tipping point".

"If we don't impose a lockdown now, we will be looking at a bigger disaster."

Kejriwal said businesses would be shut and movement around the city of 20 million limited to essential services.

The Delhi lockdown came after the vast nation of 1.3 billion people reported a record high of 273,810 infections yesterday -- the fifth consecutive day of more than 200,000 cases.

The restrictions followed similar measures in other parts of India, including in the western state of Maharashtra, home to financial capital Mumbai, reports AFP.

India said yesterday it will open its vaccination drive to all adults from May 1.

Former Indian prime minister Manmohan Singh has

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