

**POST-COUP MYANMAR**  
Country's pro-democracy  
unity govt tells Asean no  
talks until prisoners freed  
**SEE PAGE 6**

# The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION



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## Risking own lives to save lives

154 doctors died, 2911 infected so far on the frontline of Covid-19 pandemic

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Muhammad Asaduzzaman, a doctor treating Covid-19 patients, has nightmares that people are gasping for air and pleading to be saved.

"When someone touches your hand, begs for help to breathe and when that person dies before you, it's very difficult to keep your calm. It's extremely hard to sleep at night peacefully. It comes back to haunt you," he says.

An assistant professor and head of the department of critical care at the capital's Kuwait Bangladesh Friendship Hospital, the 42-year-old doctor has been providing care to coronavirus patients for a year now. But over the last few weeks, the conditions of many critical patients have deteriorated fast, leaving physicians like Asaduzzaman absolutely hapless.

"I am tired of seeing people die. I could not do anything [in many cases] ... I feel like I am on the verge of having a psychological breakdown," he told The Daily Star.

Apart from claiming the lives of many doctors and health workers, the Covid-19 is also taking a heavy toll on their mental health.

According to Bangladesh Medical Association, 154 doctors have died and 2,911 others have been infected amid the pandemic. Besides, 23 nurses have lost their lives and 2,567 others contracted the virus, it said.

Although the health professionals have been resolute in the fight against the invisible enemy, they are now struggling due to exhaustion, anxiety, depression and sleep disorder owing to their long working hours

- 23 nurses died, 2,567 infected
- 3,296 medical professionals infected
- 78.5% physicians experiencing psychological distress
- 61.9% nurses suffered from some degree of mental distress



Motiur Rahman, a 68-year-old Covid-19 patient, is being brought to Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday by his family members who said they could not afford the treatment costs at a private facility. Motiur was in a private hospital for three days and raked up a few lakh takas in bills.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Vaccines must be distributed with equity

FMs of 6 nations including Bangladesh, China say in joint statement

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

China and five South Asian countries, including Bangladesh, have opposed the idea of vaccine nationalism while calling for distribution of vaccine under the principles of equity and justice.

"The foreign ministers agreed that vaccines, as a key weapon to defeat Covid-19, should be distributed in accordance with the principles of equity and justice," said the foreign ministers of Bangladesh, China, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal in a joint statement issued yesterday, following a video conference on Tuesday.

China expressed its readiness to provide continued medical supplies and technical assistance to the participating countries to the best of its ability.

At the video conference, the foreign ministers

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## Govt struggles for lack of enough data

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The government faces a challenge in reaching the target population in need of financial assistance amid the Covid pandemic in the absence of a comprehensive database of poor people.

To store basic information of all citizens, a Cabinet Division committee in November last year sent a proposal to the Prime Minister's Office for having a separate authority that will provide services relating to National Identity (NID) cards.

However, the proposal has been lying with the PMO for more than four months.

"We are yet to get any feedback from the Prime Minister's Office..." Cabinet Division Additional Secretary Sultan Ahmed, the chief of the committee, told The Daily Star recently. Sultan said they made the recommendation

so that all vital statistics of the citizens are stored in one platform under a programme titled "Civil Registration and Vital Statistics (CRVS) of the Cabinet Division".

The move came after the home ministry last year sent a proposal to the PMO, saying all activities regarding NID cards should be handed over to it, said Cabinet Division sources.

In response, the PMO directed the Cabinet Division to submit a report with its views on the matter. And a seven-member committee headed by Sultan was formed.

Now, the NID services are being provided through the "Identification System for Enhancing Access to Services (IDEA)" project under the Election Commission.

Different ministries have developed a number of electronic databases but those

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## EXPERT'S VIEWS



### Should we be worried about India variant?

DR. KHONDOKER MEHEDI ARRAM

India is witnessing a devastating second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Hospitals are overwhelmed with patients amidst a nationwide shortage of oxygen supply -- the primary element of Covid-19 treatment. While the country's healthcare system is crumbling, helpless patients are gasping for air and dying with their lungs filled with the new killer variant of the coronavirus.

The magnitude of the current wave, which has yet to reach its peak, dwarfed the first wave that was considered

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## DEATH OF COLLEGE GIRL

### Her diaries hold vital evidence

Say police about the case against Bashundhara MD Sayem Sobhan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Six diaries of the college student found dead in a Gulshan flat on Monday contain crucial evidence supporting the allegations against Bashundhara Group Managing Director Sayem Sobhan Anvir of abetting suicide, police said.

"The victim's utter frustration and mental breakdown are reflected in her diaries, which we have seized. Her writings will be important evidence," Sudip Chakrabarty, deputy commissioner (Gulshan division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told reporters yesterday.

Meanwhile, the victim's elder sister, who filed a case with Gulshan Police Station under section 306 of Bangladesh Penal Code on Tuesday, said she received threatening calls from unknown people asking her to withdraw the case against Anvir or suffer the same fate as her sister.

In another development, the accused Bashundhara MD sought anticipatory bail from the High Court. The bail petition has been included in the cause list for hearing today.

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## BUSINESS

### Is FBCCI becoming a puppet organisation?

The business community is deprived of an opportunity to choose their leaders through a participatory election as directors of the FBCCI are picked through consensus among hopefuls, who are often backed by ruling parties. In keeping with the recent trend, all directors have already been elected uncontested in the poll due May 5.

STORY ON B1



## RUSSIAN, CHINESE VACCINES

### Govt now going for coproduction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government approved in principle the local coproduction of Russia's Sputnik V and China's Sinopharm coronavirus vaccines involving Bangladeshi drug makers.

The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) yesterday approved the proposal made by the health ministry, said Additional Secretary Shahida Akhter of the Cabinet Division told reporters yesterday.

The development came a day after the government authorised the emergency use of Sputnik V and also sought immediate supply from Sinopharm at a meeting with Chinese delegates.

Bangladesh's mass inoculation

programme suffered serious setbacks after the Indian government restricted the export of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine produced by the Serum Institute of India.

Shahida did not explain how the "coproduction" will take place.

"The names of the companies were not mentioned. The health minister said several companies in the country are capable of producing the vaccines," said the cabinet official.

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) in its next meeting may approve the funds needed for the technology transfer and other steps of the process, she added.

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## Khaleda's condition stable

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, who recently tested positive for Covid-19, is physically stable and her lungs are in good condition, said her doctor.

The former prime minister was hospitalised

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**BANGLADESH UPDATE**



**2,955**  
New cases in 24hrs



**7,58,614**  
Total cases



**11,305**  
Deaths



**6,72,319**  
Recoveries



**3,157,768**  
Deaths



**149,999,469**  
Total cases

## Tk 1604cr purchase proposals okayed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Cabinet Committee on Government Purchase yesterday approved five proposals for procuring services involving Tk 1604.76 crore.

The approval came just two days after the government has asked all ministries, except health and agriculture, not to issue work orders for any physical work during the remainder of the current fiscal year.

As a result, implementing agencies may not be able to issue work orders to contractors even after the purchase committee approved the proposals, officials said.

The finance ministry issued a circular in this regard on Monday and forwarded it to all ministries and government agencies concerned, as the government sticks to austerity policy in the face of the pandemic.

The directive came into effect immediately, according to the circular.

Asked about the matter, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal, who presided over the virtual meeting of CCGP, said he was not aware of any such circulars.

"I think there is a misunderstanding here. I will clear it later," he said.

The finance ministry circular reads no "Notification of Award" can be issued for any physical work (construction/structure) under the revenue and development budget in the remainder of the current fiscal year.

The fiscal year ends on June 30. However, work against orders already issued will continue as usual.

After the bidding process completion, the CCGP approves the proposal of the successful bidder. Then the project implementing authorities issue "Notification of Award" to the successful bidder and then signs relevant contracts with it.

Each proposal, submitted by the

contractor, has a validity period. However, it can be extended with approval from the authorities concerned.

### THE PROPOSALS

The committee approved a proposal for extending the tenure of consultancy services for a railway project.

The project is for constructing third and fourth dual-gauge line from Dhaka to Tongi of Gazipur and constructing a second dual-gauge line from Tongi to Joydebpur.

An Indian joint venture firm was supposed to give consultancy services for two years, but now they would provide one more year's service at the cost of Tk 16.3 crore, shows document.

One project proposal is for building a jail in Narsingdi by the Public Works Department (PWD). The first phase of the project will be implemented by Noorani Construction Ltd. It will need Tk 67.30 crore, shows document.

As per another proposal, Wahid Construction will do the package-1 work of the project titled "Expansion of National Institute of Neuroscience and Hospital" for Tk 124.31 crore.

The committee also approved a proposal for building a power plant in Noakhali.

The committee yesterday cancelled the work order of a PWD project for constructing 104 large buildings in Uttara's B and C blocks in capital.

A Malaysian company was supposed to carry out the work at the cost of Tk 5,097.97 crore through public-private partnership under government-to-government initiative.

But after the change in the government of Malaysia, the present government declined to own the company and the authorities concerned could not reach the company, said Sahida Akter, an additional secretary of Cabinet Division.



Two men moving a loaded rickshaw van across a trench using precariously placed planks near Postogola fire station in the capital yesterday. Residents and businesses said the trench, dug for the maintenance of utility pipes about seven months ago, has made it difficult for them to use the road.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

## Risking own lives to save lives

FROM PAGE 1

and involvement in high-risk procedures while treating Covid patients, according to studies.

Suman Kundu is one such physician. The doctor, who has been working at the ICU unit of the Dhaka Medical College Hospital since April last year, said he was living in constant fear.

"For the time-being, going through this horrible situation and surviving are the biggest challenges for me and my colleagues," he said.

After the first spell of the pandemic, Suman had a feeling that the storm might have been over as the infection and death rates subsided by the end of last year. But over the last few weeks, the situation turned dreadful.

"Now many patients' condition deteriorates quickly leaving us absolutely clueless," Suman said.

A recent study on the mental condition of doctors in the country paints a dismal picture.

The study, titled "Covid-19 Pandemic: Mental Health of Doctors in Bangladesh", shows that 78.5 percent physicians are experiencing stress, sadness, inadequate sleep/sleeping problems, poor concentration, low self-confidence and/or difficulty in doing daily activities.

The study, published in the Acta Scientific Neurology journal, said those issues can affect their personal and professional lives and also their relationships with others.

It assessed the mental health of 358 Dhaka-based doctors applying the

"General Health Questionnaire-12" through an online survey.

"This psychological distress can turn into a mental disorder if it remains untreated," Roufouf Naher, who teaches educational and counselling psychology at Dhaka University, told The Daily Star. She also said in the study they found that female doctors were psychologically more distressed and vulnerable than their male counterparts.

Like the physicians, nurses are equally facing severe stress-related problems while treating Covid patients.

Kamrunnahar, a nursing officer at the Osmani Medical College and Hospital, said she never had Tachycardia (when the heart beats over 100 times a minute), but she is now taking medicines for it. She is also relying on pills for sleep.

Nahar said she has been taking antidepressants and sleeping pills for the last six months. "Still, I can't sleep at night."

Such cases were also evident in a study titled "Mental health symptoms among the nurses of Bangladesh during the Covid-19 pandemic", published in international journal Springer.

"Among the 547 nurses included in the study, the prevalence of mild to extremely severe depression, anxiety, and stress was 50.5 percent, 51.8 percent, and 41.7 percent respectively, and 61.9 percent of the respondents reported mild to severe psychological impact due to Covid-19," the study report said.

It also said that psychological symptoms were more prevalent among female nurses than the male ones.

The study, prepared on a web-based survey, collected data on the respondents between November 22 and December 6, 2020.

A total of 547 nurses participated in this study. The majority of the respondents were female.

This study revealed that 61.9 percent of the nurses suffered from some degree of mental distress during the pandemic.

Another significant finding of the study is that the nurses who faced any emotional abuse for being healthcare workers and working in the Covid-19 pandemic were associated with higher levels of depression, anxiety, stress, and psychological impact.

Sabbir Mahmud Tihan, one of the authors of the study and general secretary of Society for Nurses Safety and Rights, said, "Nurses are exhausted both physically and mentally. They need immediate support."

Tihan, also a nursing officer at the BSMU, said the government should fulfil its promise of providing incentives to nurses.

Iqbal Arslan, president of Swadhinata Chikitsok Parishad or Swachip, said healthcare professionals involved in treating Covid-19 patients have been under tremendous physical and mental pressure for the last one year.

He suggested that those who have been serving the Covid patients for the last one year should be given rest.

"They should be replaced with those who are treating other general patients. Otherwise, the system may collapse anytime," he feared.

## Her diaries hold

FROM PAGE 1

Sudip Chakrabarty said, "... she [the victim] wrote [in the diary] about their relationship, the social barriers to recognition of the relationship, her expectation of a happy conjugal life with the accused and the barriers from his family."

She detailed her serious frustration in her diaries and these will be the key to establishing the case, he said.

Police collected CCTV footage from the building, information from the victim's phones, and other circumstantial evidence.

"Through proper analysis of the evidence, we will be able to create an important dimension in the investigation," the DC said.

Police are looking forward to receiving the post-mortem report as early as possible because it might determine the cause of death, the DC said, adding that officers were also awaiting the results of the DNA and forensic tests.

"We need all the evidence to prove the case when we submit the investigation report to court."

The police will think about arresting the accused after getting all the necessary evidence, he said.

"We are all trying to ensure justice for the victim and there is no pressure on police about the investigation."

The incident caused a stir in the country and Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan yesterday told reporters at his Dhanmondi residence: "Whoever commits a crime will face the law. The incident is under investigation. We will share the details after the investigation is complete."

A Dhaka court issued a travel ban on Anvir after the police submitted a petition seeking a directive in this regard.

Police on Monday night recovered the body of the college student of Cumilla at a rented flat in Gulshan.

The following day, her sister sued the Bashundhara Group MD Anvir for abetting her death by suicide.

According to the complaint, Anvir developed a relationship with the victim, aged 21 at the time of her death, and promised to marry her.

Security guards of the building in Gulshan told police that the accused used to visit her flat, where she lived by herself.

The complainant told The Daily Star yesterday that her sister called her in tears on April 25, saying that Anvir would not marry her and that she was in trouble and an accident could happen any time.

The victim's elder sister said after arriving in Dhaka from Cumilla the following day and breaking the lock on the door of the flat, she found her sister's body hanging from the ceiling fan.

"I filed the case over instigating suicide against Anvir based on what I saw and what my sister had told me. Whether it was a murder or an instance of abetting suicide will be revealed by the law enforcement agencies after a proper investigation," she said.

According to the complaint, in 2019, Anvir took the victim to a rented

flat in the capital's Banani where they started living together.

Last year, Anvir's family came to know about his relationship with the woman and his mother threatened the victim with dire consequences, asking her to leave Dhaka, the complainant said in the FIR.

### THREATS

The victim's elder sister, who filed the case, told The Daily Star yesterday that she received several calls from various unknown numbers since Tuesday night.

"Some of the callers threatened me with similar consequences faced by my sister if I didn't withdraw the case," she said.

She provided two of the phone numbers from which she received the threatening calls. These correspondents called the numbers several times yesterday but found both switched off.

According to the complainant, the callers used abusive words and told her that she had filed a case against the Bashundhara MD for monetary gains.

The complainant said she informed the matter to the police station of her hometown.

Meanwhile, Sharun Chowdhury, son of Awami League lawmaker and parliament whip Shamsul Haque Chowdhury, told The Daily Star that a screenshot of his conversation with the victim that has gone viral on social media was fake.

"It's a fake screenshot. There was no date in the conversation. I requested the law enforcement agencies to conduct a digital forensic examination of the screenshot. I never met her [the victim] or had any conversation with her," he said over the phone, adding that he had not been contacted by law enforcement about the issue.

"Anvir has a personnel enmity with me... Bashundhara Group is trying to divert the issue by spreading the fake screenshot. I urge the law enforcement agencies to do a proper probe," he said.

**ANVIR SEEKS ANTICIPATORY BAIL**  
Anvir sought anticipatory bail from the High Court through his lawyers, Supreme Court lawyer Sayed Ahmed Raza told The Daily Star.

The bail petition has been included as item No 14 in the cause list of the bench of Justice Mamnoon Rahman and Justice Khandaker Dilrurzaman for hearing today.

Contacted, Deputy Attorney General Md Tahirul Islam said his office was yet to receive a copy of the petition as of 8:25pm last night. Anvir must appear before the HC bench for anticipatory bail during the hearing, he added.

### PROTESTS

The central committee of Amra Muktiyoddhar Shantan in a statement yesterday demanded a judicial probe into the incident to find out whether it was a suicide or a planned murder.

Signed by the organisation's President Sazzad Hossain and General Secretary Rashedul Shahin, the statement demanded fair trial and punishment of the culprit.

## Govt struggles for lack of enough data

FROM PAGE 1

have been prepared in formats that are not interoperable.

Cabinet Division officials said they made the proposal, keeping in mind the necessity to have a "combined data hub" to store information on NID cards, birth and death certificates, educational and professional records and other necessary data.

Once completed, this will allow all the officials concerned to collect necessary information from one place.

A number of experts say that had there been such a database, it would have been easier for the government to reach the poor people in need of financial aid amid the pandemic.

For example, the government in May last year decided to provide Tk 2,500 each as cash incentive to 50 lakh poor people who did not receive any support under the existing social safety net programmes.

The target beneficiaries included rickshaw-pullers, day labourers, construction workers, farmers, employees of shops, people employed at small businesses, poultry labourers and transport workers.

But the distribution of money was stopped midway following allegations of anomalies in the list of beneficiaries with names of solvent people also found in it.

The authorities cancelled transfer of money to 15 lakh people on the list as many of them were already getting benefits under social safety net programmes. Besides, information provided by many of them did not match that in their NID cards.

**DATABASES WITHOUT INTEROPERABILITY**  
According to the CRVS website, different ministries and agencies have developed large electronic databases.

The EC has developed the NID

database containing information on 100 million citizens aged above 18 while the Local Government Division has registered 120 million people in another electronic database.

Besides, the health and family welfare ministry conducts a periodical health census covering nearly 100 million people. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) has been tasked with developing a poverty database covering 160 million people.

But all these databases have been developed in different formats which are not interoperable, say Cabinet Division officials.

Moreover, there is no way to say who are being included multiple times in those databases, they pointed out.

Many citizens eligible for social safety net schemes are left out of the databases. This means they are being deprived of the benefits of programmes like vulnerability group development, widow allowance and disability allowance, they added.

Seeking anonymity, a finance ministry official said, "A comprehensive database can also be useful in helping the genuine beneficiaries in crunch time."

Sultan said the media on many occasions reported incidents of lack of proper data and misuse of government funds. Some of those are true, some are not, he said.

"If a separate body is formed, these types of problems can be addressed easily."

### NEED FOR COMPREHENSIVE DATABASE

Noted economist Binayak Sen, director general of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS), said that if there is a comprehensive database of citizens, it will be easier to stop misuse of funds.

There have been some issues

regarding selection of the beneficiaries of social safety net programmes, and also some problems cropped up when the government wanted to provide financial aid to 50 lakh poor people.

A recent BIDS study titled "Poverty in the Time of Corona: Trends, Drivers, Vulnerability and Policy: Responses in Bangladesh", submitted to the planning ministry, showed that a large part of monetary transfers under social safety net programmes end up in "non-deserving" non-poor groups.

Binayak also thinks that payment through digital platforms alone is not going to solve the problem of misuse.

A number of fake beneficiaries are already on the list but it's not possible to track and drop them from the list for a lack of data. "So misuse will continue," he said.

The economist suggested that the government introduce something like Aadhaar Card in India to solve the problem and exclude the fake beneficiaries from the list.

This database should have NID-related information as well as data on a person's bank account, mobile number, and whether he or she is beneficiary of any social safety net programmes, he said.

Aadhaar is a one-time identity card issued by the Unique Identification Authority of India free of cost for all residents of India. It contains a 12-digit unique number and is registered by taking a person's biometric details such as fingerprints and demographic data.

The card was initially issued to create a more rationalised and transparent process of allotting certain government benefits and subsidies for Indian citizens. Now, the benefits and usage have evolved as a payment system, tax regulator and much more, making it an essential document for all Indian residents.

## Govt now going for coproduction

FROM PAGE 1

After the CCEA meeting yesterday, Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said, "We have to keep alternative sources [of vaccines] in consideration. That does not mean the first source got cancelled. We are pursuing the first source [India's Serum] and at the same time discussing about the Russian Sputnik V and Chinese Sinopharm vaccines as alternatives."

Around 31.21 lakh people have yet to receive their second jab of the AstraZeneca vaccine produced and supplied by Serum. The government had 21 lakh doses in stock as of yesterday.

Russia has offered to sell around 2.5 crore doses of the Sputnik V in phases to Bangladesh by December and assistance in producing the shots locally.

The Russian government offered another 3.5 crore doses by April next year.

Sinopharm committed to giving six lakh doses to Bangladesh for free and the drug maker also said it could supply 15 lakh doses every week, health officials said.

### DIRECT PROCUREMENT OF HEALTHCARE EQUIPMENT

The CCEA approved two other proposals in principle to purchase equipment needed for Covid-19 tests and treatment.

One proposal was about purchasing RT-PCR test kits and PCR consumables while the other was about purchasing protective gear and treatment equipment from private firms utilising the direct procurement method (DPM) through the Central Medicine Store Depot (CMSD).

Asked whether the DPM will make room for purchasing substandard

products at exorbitant price, the finance minister said, "We also look after such issues."

### ADB TO LEND \$940 MILLION FOR VACCINE PURCHASE

Officials in the Economic Relations Division said the ADB board might approve the fund by the end of May.

"ADB's money that is coming is to provide for those vaccines that are cleared by the WHO," ADB Country Director Manmohan Parkash told a briefing yesterday.

Only the AstraZeneca and Pfizer/BioNtech vaccines have WHO approvals.

Several other pharmaceutical companies have sought for vaccine listing with the WHO, he said, adding that many of the potential vaccine suppliers were demanding almost full payment in advance. "We have to be ready for this."

## 77 deaths, 2,955 new Covid cases in 24 hours

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh yesterday reported 77 more coronavirus-related deaths and 2,955 new cases as the country grapples with the second wave of the virus.

The daily infection rate dropped to 10.48 percent from Tuesday's 12.51 percent, but the mortality rate rose to 1.50 percent.

So far 754,614 cases and 11,305 deaths have been recorded, the Directorate General of Health Services said in a handout.

The number of recoveries now stands at 672,319, including 5,392 new ones in 24 hours till yesterday morning. This means, 89.09 percent of the patients have recovered.

Bangladesh has so far tested 5,423,730 samples, including 28,206 in the same 24-hour period.

The country reported its first novel coronavirus cases on March 8 last year and the first death on March 18.

### DEATHS, CASES SOAR

In the last 28 days, Bangladesh has seen 2,259 coronavirus-related deaths, making it the most fatal month since the outbreak began last year.

The virus claimed 568 lives in January this year, 281 in February and 638 in March.

Dhaka division remains the worst-hit region, registering most of the deaths -- 6,610 or 58.47 percent.

Forty-six of the 77 deaths reported yesterday are from Dhaka division and nine from Chattogram division.

## Two garment worker raped in Sunamganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Two garment workers were raped while they were trying to get back to Dhaka from their village home in Sunamganj's Jamalganj upazila on Monday.

A case was filed with Jamalganj Police Station on Tuesday night by one of the victim's father accusing two persons -- Alamgir Miah, 25, and Abul Kalam, 26.

The victims, aged 21 and 18, are undergoing treatment at the One-stop Crisis Centre of Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College Hospital, said Mohammad Saiful Alam, officer-in-charge of Jamalganj Police Station.

According to the case statement, the victims were workers of a garment factory in Dhaka's Kamrangirchar area and went to their village home before the current lockdown was imposed.

On information of their factory reopening, they decided to go to Dhaka. Thus, they reached Jamalganj upazila sadar and hired an auto-rickshaw to go to the boat dock.

Upon reaching the dock, they came to know that buses to Dhaka were not operating and they decided to return with the same auto-rickshaw, being driven by Abul Kalam while his associate Alamgir was also beside him.

## Khaleda's condition

FROM PAGE 1

for her routine medical check-up which was due for more than a year and a half.

"As madam [Khaleda] was taken to hospital for CT scan, doctors suggested a comprehensive medical check-up as it was due for more than one and half years," her personal physician AZM Zahid Hossain told The Daily Star.

Khaleda was admitted to Evercare Hospital in the capital on Tuesday night. She was admitted under cardiologist Shahabuddin Talukdar.

Zahid said to complete all the medical tests, it may need one more day of stay in the hospital.

A 10-member medical board was formed to treat Khaleda yesterday.

Zahid told journalists that some new medicines were added to treat her and her condition was stable.

"A medical board has been formed. This board examined the test reports and suggested some new tests," he said.

Zahid said as per the medical board's advice, the tests would be done and her treatment will be planned accordingly.

He said Khaleda's lungs are good and she does not have any cardiological problems.

The physician said she was undergoing treatment in the non-Covid-19 unit of the hospital as she does not have any Covid-19 symptoms.

Asked when Khaleda will return home, he said, "It is tough to say but she will return soon once her tests are completed."

He said the BNP chief has been suffering from arthritis, diabetes and ophthalmological issues.

Khaleda tested Covid-19 positive on April 11 and in the follow-up test on April 24, she tested positive again.

Amid the coronavirus outbreak, the government on March 25 last year freed Khaleda from jail for six months through an executive order suspending her jail sentences in two graft cases.

She was released from the prison cell at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University the same day. Since then, she has been staying at her Gulshan residence.

## Covid vaccines to be collected no matter what

Says Obaidul Quader

UNB, Dhaka

The government will take necessary initiatives to procure vaccines from any source to save people's lives, road transport and bridges minister Obaidul Quader said yesterday.

"There's no need for any special relationship with anyone to manage coronavirus vaccines... the government will collect it from any source," he told reporters in the morning.

Earlier, Obaidul Quader, also general secretary of Awami League, paid homage to Shaheed Sheikh Jamal, son of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, by placing wreaths at his Banani graveyard marking his 68th birth anniversary.

The senior party leader paid homage on behalf of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina first and then for the party.

He said the biggest challenge now is to avoid the politics of blame game over dealing with coronavirus, the common enemy of all, irrespective of party affiliation.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Only lower trunks of the 15 trees felled by authorities at Suhrawardy Udyan remain, and even those will vanish, as buildings and a road will take their place under a project to develop the premises. Experts have called for protecting the environment first, and then carrying out any development work.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

SUHWARWADY UDYAN

## Greenery being erased for beautification!

Razing of trees, building concrete structures draws flak from experts, locals

SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

A project was undertaken to develop the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan and make it greener, but authorities are seemingly contradicting one of their own goals, as under the same project, they are felling old trees to construct buildings.

A number of signs can be seen at the historic grounds stating "Project to enhance the beauty and greenery of Suhrawardy Udyan is ongoing under Public Works Department". It is worth wondering whether building concrete structures at the expense of greenery, as sources are claiming, is "enhancing the beauty".

The project, which started decades ago, is currently in its third phase.

Experts say if the government decides to cut down trees, it should consult them. Important aspects of the environment need to be protected first, and then authorities may go on with development.

Sources at the Ministry of Housing and Public Works said the trees were cut down without consulting experts.

This correspondent visited the spot recently and saw ongoing construction of six structures for making canteens. Three are in the west, two in the north-east, and one in the south-east parts of the park.

In the west, there were a number of trees that have been there for a long time. But they were cut down, and now, the area looks barren. According to eyewitnesses, 15 trees, planted in the 1970s, have already been felled.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

## 'Hefajat definitely has political ambitions'

Says home minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal yesterday said Hefajat-e-Islam has done enough vandalism across the country.

"Land office, district commissioner's bungalows, police bungalows, police outposts have come under attack. They even vandalised Ustad Alauddin Khan Institute. After evaluating all these, we will reveal their true purpose," said the minister while addressing reporters at his Dhanmondi residence.

Technically, Hefajat is a non-political organisation, he said.

"But we see that Hefajat sometimes gets stuck in political entanglements and gets involved with identified militants and criminals who always act against the state," the minister said.

Putting everything together, they of course have political ambitions. Investigators found that there is an ill-attempt to create another Shapla Chattar-like incident using Hefajat, the minister said regarding recent spate of violence.

At least 17 people died during a three-day long mayhem that began on March 26 surrounding Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bangladesh marking the golden jubilee of the country's independence.

Asked why Hefajat chief Junayed Babunagari was not arrested even though he was an accused in cases, the minister said the investigation of the cases filed against him is still ongoing.

"Babunagari was arrested in 2013 after cases were filed against him. He was released on bail at the time," said the home boss.

Regarding the funding of Hefajat, he said, "The intelligence agencies are working to find those who did the financing. There are some leads but we do not want to announce right now. We will continue investigation for a few more days and then we will make an announcement."

"The money trail will be revealed in the investigation," the minister claimed.

Meanwhile, around 10 more people were arrested in the last 24 hours by law enforcers for their alleged involvement in attack, vandalism and arson in Brahmanbaria between March 26 and 28.

With the arrest, the total number of arrests now stand at 365 people in the district, reports our Brahmanbaria correspondent.

According to police headquarters, around 142 cases were filed and around 900 people were arrested in different areas of the country in connection with the incidents between March 26-28.

## Dhaka's sound pollution triple of tolerable level

New laws to be enacted if needed, sees env minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka city is suffering from sound pollution three times of tolerable level. As a result, around half a crore people are at health risk, Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change Mohammad Shahab Uddin said at a programme yesterday.

He also said that if necessary, steps will be taken to enact new laws by amending the existing one in order to keep "silent zones" declared in the nine city corporation areas free from sound pollution.

The minister was speaking from his residence in the capital at a virtual workshop organised by the Department of Environment on the occasion of International Noise Awareness Day-2021.

He said "silent zones" were declared at all nine city corporations in locations where hospitals, educational institutions and administrative areas are situated.

"Various agencies including Department of Environment, police, city corporation, BRTA will work together to ensure all silent zones are free from noise," he also said.

The minister said Dhaka South City Corporation has been contacted to implement silent zone area around the secretariat. This project will be implemented after the Covid-19 situation becomes normal.

Shahab Uddin said according to the World Health

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Volunteers from Help Plus Mymensingh are always there for those who can't afford ambulances during this lockdown. In addition to arranging and paying for ambulances, they have so far carried out 15 burials since the start of the second-wave of the Covid-19 pandemic in the country.



## Hope, in the form of help

M'singh volunteers help bury the dead in the critical days of the lockdown

MD AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

Minara Begum died on Monday night. At 60 years old, she could no longer withstand the continuing suffering caused to her by a slew of old-age complications, including a deadly heart disease.

On Monday, the Ishwarganj native silently passed away at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH).

After her passing, her two daughters Sumi and Suraiya Akter, 27 and 25 years old respectively, fell into real crisis. With the strict lockdown in full effect, they could not think of a way to get the body to their remote village home in Ishwarganj. Although ambulances were available, their financial insolvency did not allow for that option.

Helpless, they stood beside their mother's dead body at MMCH.

Around 11:30 in the night, someone informed Alok Sarker of their situation. Alok is the vice-president of Help Plus Mymensingh, a volunteers' forum. Without wait, Alok called up Ali Yusuf, a prominent volunteer of the city.

Within an hour of this, Sumi and Suraiya were at home with their mother's body. Within this time, Yusuf had managed an ambulance and found a donor to pay for it, while Alok rounded up three more volunteers and accompanied the sisters on their journey.

Once there, the volunteers also offered to arrange for and bear the cost of Minara's burial, but the indebted family politely refused it, thanking them for all they've done already, Alok said while speaking to The Daily Star yesterday.

In another two hours, the volunteers

were back in the city, ready to attend to some other distress call. This organisation and efficiency of the volunteer networks in the city already has a reputation, and more plaudits soon flowed in for this particular act.

"It is a remarkably noble gesture. I thank the volunteers who came forward to support the helpless family," said upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) of Ishwarganj Md Zakir Hossain.

Saluting the volunteers for such a humanitarian act at such a critical time, the UNO said, "Their activities are exceptional beyond doubt. I appreciate the volunteers and seek their good health so that they can continue helping people like this."

At a time when people are in extreme fear to step outside, helping others seems like a far cry, said a neighbour of Minara. "That the volunteers would do all this for the family, braving the pandemic, shows how fearless they are with their mission."

Talking to this correspondent, Ali Yusuf informed they have already performed the burial rituals of 15 people from Mymensingh and Netrakona since the start of this second wave of Covid-19. And this is not just limited to Muslims, as six of the funeral rites were of people belonging to the Hindu community.

He also thanked the patrons who enable their organisation to keep up the good work, without even asking for recognition. For example, Minara's ambulance was paid for by an assistant professor of Department of Botany at Govt Ananda Mohan College who specifically asked not to be named.

## Child rescued five days after abduction, three arrested in Savar

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Police yesterday rescued a nine-year-old boy from Manikganj, five days after he had been abducted from Karnapara in Savar.

The law enforcers also arrested three people for their alleged involvement in kidnapping Estefaq, a student of a local madrasa living at Karnapara with his family.

The arrestees -- identified as Habu Miah (40), Badsha (34) and Karim Byapari -- hail from Manikganj, confirmed Saiful Islam, inspector (investigation) of Savar Model Police Station, to The Daily Star.

A police team rescued the boy in a drive at Nabagram Bengur village in Manikganj, in cooperation with Rab-4 and Manikganj police around 4am, said the inspector.

Savar Model Police Station Sub-inspector Hamidur Rahman said the arrestees abducted Estefaq around 11am on Friday after enticing him to give him a pet bird. Later, they demanded Tk 1 lakh as ransom from his family over phone, he said.

"Following a GD filed by the family, we started investigation and were able to rescue him," said the SI. All accused confessed to their involvement during primary interrogation, said the police officer.

## DEATH, INJURY OF WORKERS AT SS POWER I PLANT

## Writ petition seeks judicial probe, halt of construction

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Another writ petition was filed with the High Court yesterday seeking necessary directives in connection with the incidents of killing and injuring the workers of the SS Power I Plant in Banshkhalia upazila of Chattogram since 2016 to April 17 this year.

Five rights organisations collectively submitted the petition as a public interest litigation seeking HC order on the authorities to conduct a judicial inquiry into the incidents of killing and to stop construction of SS Power I Plant, a coal fired power plant, in Banshkhalia, till completion of the inquiry.

The petitioner organisations are -- Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), Nijera Kori, Safety and Rights, and Association for Land Reform and Development (ALRD).

In the petition, the organisations sought HC directive on the labour ministry to submit a report on the environment and the protection and safety and security of the workers of the power plant to the court.

They also requested the HC to direct the deputy commissioner and superintendent of police of

Chattogram to submit their inquiry reports on the incidents of killing and injuring workers to this court.

Petitioners' lawyer and chief executive of Bela Syeda Rizwana Hasan told The Daily Star that the five organisations in their petition urged the HC to issue a rule asking authorities concerned to explain why appropriate legal action should not be taken against the people who are responsible for killing and injuring the workers.

Rizwana Hasan said a total of 12 workers were killed and several were injured in different incidents at the power plant in Banshkhalia in 2016, 2017 and April 17, 2021.

The HC has been requested to ask the authorities to show causes why they should not be directed to pay compensation to the families of the victims of police firing and why the agreement concerned for constructing the SS Power I Plant in Banshkhalia should not be cancelled as there is no need for this power plant, Rizwana Hasan said.

The lawyer said the HC may hold hearing simultaneously on both the writ petitions over the incident of killing and injuring workers at the power plant, as Ain O Salish Kendra (ASK) filed another

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



The absence of public transportation on the capital's streets is making life hard for people who have to get out for work, as they are struggling to reach their destinations. This is creating crowding across the city's major thoroughfares. This photo was taken yesterday from Paltan intersection.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



### Reliance Insurance gets New Chairman & Vice-Chairman



Mrs. Shahnaz Rahman and Mr. Rajiv Prasad Shaha were elected Chairman & Vice-Chairman, respectively of Reliance Insurance Limited at the company's 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual General Meeting held through a digital platform. The meeting was presided over by outgoing Chairman, Ms. Zakia Rouf Chowdhury.

Mrs. Shahnaz Rahman is the Chairman of Transcom Group which employs over 17,000 people. The business originated with tea plantations in 1885. The family of Mrs. Rahman has been recognized by the National Board of Revenue, Government of Bangladesh as "TAX ICON FAMILY" (Kar Bahadur Paribar) being one of the highest tax-payers of the country. In 2019, Mrs. Rahman was recognized as highest tax payer in Dhaka City Corporation.

Mr. Rajiv Prasad Shaha has been the Managing Director of Kumudini Welfare Trust of Bengal (BD) Limited and Kumudini Pharma Limited since January 2000. He is a member of Micro Industries Development Assistance and Service (MIDAS).



**Demanding the immediate arrest of Bashundhara Group Managing Director Sayem Sobhan Anvir in a case filed over abetting the suicide of a college girl, Bangladesh Nari Mukti Kendra and Samajtantrik Chhatrofront formed a human chain in front of the capital's Jatiya Press Club yesterday.**

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

CLASH BETWEEN TWO FACTIONS

# Intern doctors' work abstention spell patients' mystery at CMCH

ARUN BIKASH DEV, Ctg

Intern doctors of Chattogram Medical College Hospital suddenly went for work stoppage yesterday following a clash between two factions of CMC unit of Bangladesh Chhatra League the day before, causing suffering to patients.

Campus sources said two factions -- one loyal to former city mayor AJM Nasir Uddin and the other to Deputy Minister for Education Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury -- locked in a scuffle over a "trifling issue" at CMC cafeteria on Tuesday evening.

In that clash, some interns also sustained minor injuries, said Jahirul Islam, in-charge of CMCH Police Camp. Police brought the situation under control, he said.

As Nasir's followers are leading intern doctors' association at CMCH, they suddenly went for work abstention yesterday, campus sources

said.

Internee doctors play a key role in providing treatment, said Prof Dr Prabir Kumar Das, cardiology department head. "As they [intern doctors] remain out of duty, we face difficulties to deal with the patients," he further said.

Preferring anonymity, several attendants alleged that their patients' treatment was being hampered.

"A professor advised treatment of my patient in the morning but none came to make me understand in three hours," said an attendant at medicine ward. "I don't understand whether any medicine is to be bought from outside."

Prof Dr Sujat Paul, head of Medicine Department at CMCH, told The Daily Star yesterday, "We hope a solution would come."

This correspondent tried to contact Habibur Rahman and MA Awal Rafi,

two joint conveners of CMCH intern doctors' association, but neither of them responded to phone calls.

CMCH Director Brig Gen SM Humayun Kabir said they held a meeting with both the factions. A committee will be formed to identify the liable people behind Tuesday's incident, he said.

Asked whether the intern doctors would join work, he said they did not confirm.

About the sudden physicians' shortage, the director said a good number of medical officers and postgraduate trainee doctors are on duty at night.

"Besides, against the backdrop of Covid-19 situation and countrywide lockdown, the number of patients at different wards is low," he said. "So it would not be a problem to deal with patients in absence of intern doctors," he added.

## Writ petition

FROM PAGE 3

writ petition with this court earlier in connection with the April 17 incident in Banshkhali.

ASK filed a writ petition on April 21, seeking its directive on the authorities concerned to conduct a judicial inquiry into incident of killing and injuring the workers of the SS Power I Plant.

In the petition, ASK requested the HC to order authorities to take appropriate legal action against those involved in killing and injuring the workers and to give Tk 3 crore in compensation to the family of each of the workers who were killed, and to give Tk 2 crore in compensation to family of each of the workers who were injured in the clash with police.

Five workers of the SS Power I Plant -- an under-construction coal-fired power plant -- were killed and at least 21 others injured during a clash with police in Banshkhali on the morning of April 17.

The workers alleged that law enforcers opened fire on their peaceful demonstration demanding arrears and pay hikes. They said they were supposed to get arrears of one to three months.

## Greenery

FROM PAGE 3

A few weeks ago, floating people tried to stop workers from cutting the trees, and then informed Dhaka University (DU) students about the issue, according to some floating people who seek refuge under shades of the trees.

Wishing anonymity, a woman from the group said, "They are building some concrete structures and a road. For this reason, a number of trees, including medicinal plants, have been cut down."

On Tuesday, this correspondent saw a man drawing a picture, sitting under the shade of a tree at Suhrawardy Udyan. Golam Mortuza criticised the authorities. "To ensure people's health, trees are necessary. In European countries, they plant trees in front of mills and factories, so that people feel at peace and breathe fresh air."

"Buildings are being constructed in vacant spaces of the park, which is an eyesore," he added.

After news of the felling started circulating, many people have been protesting on Facebook, sharing the

pictures of workers cutting trees.

Shakil Hasan, a former DU student, on Monday posted on his Facebook account. "Recently, it has been seen that one tree after another is being cut down at Suhrawardy Udyan, and concrete structures are being built. Why?"

"This is a place where the memory of Bangabandhu's March 7 speech lives on," he said.

Wishing anonymity, an official of Ministry of Housing and Public Works said, "The project is under the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs. Some trees, which were in our construction layout, have been cut down for development work."

Asked if any expert opinion was sought, he said, "Permission was taken from the Liberation War ministry. There is no need to take opinions of any other expert here."

Prof Zashim Uddin of DU's Botany department said, "It is not desirable to do development work at the expense of the environment; such work must be eco-friendly. And if there is a government decision to fell trees at Suhrawardy Udyan, authorities should take experts' opinions."

## 6 killed, 7 injured in road crashes

STAR REPORT

Six people were killed seven others injured in road accidents in two districts yesterday, report our correspondents.

In Jhenidah, three passengers of an 'easy-bike' were killed and six others injured as the battery-run auto-rickshaw collided head-on with a car on Jhenidah-Kushtia road in Dudshar bus stand area.

The deceased are Tahura Khatun (25), Tuhin Hossain (28) and Renu Khatun.

Shaikupa Police Station Officer-in-Charge Jahangir Alam said on information, a firefighting unit took the victims to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital where doctors declared the three dead.

In Mymensingh, three people were killed and another injured after an auto-rickshaw and a truck collided on Mymensingh-Netrakona road in Khicha area.

The victims are auto-rickshaw driver Shahid Mia (33), Khalil Mia (32) and Masum Mia (36).

Police seized the truck and auto-rickshaw but the driver managed to flee the scene.

## Dhaka's

FROM PAGE 3

Organization, 1.1 billion people at the age of 12-35 are at risk of hearing loss due to their involvement in excessively noisy recreational activities.

He called upon people to be aware of the various harmful effects of noise pollution as well as to make others aware in order to lead a quality life.

Deputy Minister for Environment, Forests and Climate Change Habibun Nahar, Secretary Ziaul Hasan, and former vice chancellor of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University Prof Pran Gopal Dutta, among others also spoke at the workshop chaired by Md Moniruzzaman, director general of Department of Environment.

## Covid

FROM PAGE 3

Those involved in the brutal assassination of Bangabandhu's family were not spared, he said. "Murder begets murder. Had Bangabandhu not been assassinated, another group of murderers would not dare to kill Ziaur Rahman."

Quader urged BNP to avoid the politics of murder and conspiracy. "BNP is now conspiring to remove Sheikh Hasina from politics," he claimed.

To establish true democracy in Bangladesh, Quader called upon BNP to move away from the path of murder, conspiracy and terrorism.

**ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশন**

নগর ভবন, ঢাকা  
[www.dscc.gov.bd](http://www.dscc.gov.bd)

**বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

এতদ্বারা সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশনের গাড়ীচালক (ভারী) পদের ফিল্ড টেস্ট, লিখিত ও মৌখিক পরীক্ষা ০১ মে ২০২১খ্রিঃ তারিখে ধার্য ছিল। কোভিড-১৯ বিস্তার রোধকল্পে সরকার ঘোষিত চলমান লকডাউনের মেয়াদ বৃদ্ধির কারণে উক্ত পরীক্ষা ০১ মে ২০২১খ্রিঃ তারিখের পরিবর্তে আগামী ০৮ মে ২০২১খ্রিঃ তারিখে নগর ভবনে অনুষ্ঠিত হবে। ইতোমধ্যে ইস্যুকৃত প্রবেশপত্র দিয়ে পরীক্ষার্থীগণ উক্ত পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণ করবেন। নতুন কোনো প্রবেশপত্র ইস্যু করা হবে না।

আকরামুজ্জামান  
সচিব

ডিএসসিসি/পিআরডি/১৭০/২০২০-২০২১  
জিডি-৮৫০

ঢাকা দক্ষিণ সিটি কর্পোরেশন



**In complete violation of transport guidelines, this overloaded truck is plying through Chattogram city's Bayzid area. Though there are fewer vehicles on the streets due to the lockdown, this is no excuse for running overloaded vehicles and putting everyone under risk. The photo was taken yesterday.**

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**

Ansar & VDP Headquarters  
Khilgaon, Dhaka

Memo No. 44.03.0000.017.07.050.21-568 Date: 28-04-2021

**Corrigendum of International Tender Notice**

1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Home Affairs, Public Security Division.
2	Agency	Bangladesh Ansar & Village Defence Party.
3	Purchaser name	Director (Admin-Q) on behalf of Director General Bangladesh Ansar & VDP.
4	Purchaser code	Not used present.
5	Purchaser district	Dhaka.
6	Invitation for	<b>Goods (12 Bore Shot Gun).</b>
7	Invitation Ref. No.	No. 44.03.0000.017.07.050.21-326
8	Date	16/03/2021
9	Tender last selling date	29-04-2021
10	<b>Corrected tender last selling date</b>	<b>06-05-2021</b>
11	Tender closing date and time	02-05-2021 11:30am
12	Tender opening date and time	02-05-2021 11:35am
13	<b>Corrected tender closing date and time</b>	<b>09-05-2021 11:30am</b>
14	<b>Corrected tender opening date and time</b>	<b>09-05-2021 11:35am</b>

**Md. Saifullah Russell**  
Director (Admin-Q)

GD- 857

### SECTION 200 OF CRPC

## Record statements physically following health guidelines

### CJ asks judicial magistrates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain has directed the judicial magistrates concerned to record statements from the complainants of the relevant cases in their physical presence under Section 200 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) following the health and hygiene guidelines.

Supreme Court's Registrar General Md Ali Akbar issued a notification to this effect yesterday.

The notification said cases can be filed with the subordinate civil courts, and with the courts under the chief judicial magistrates and chief metropolitan magistrates in physical presence following the health directives.

The subordinate civil and criminal courts and tribunals across the country will virtually hold hearing and dispose of very urgent cases without physical presence through using information technology in order to prevent spread of the Covid-19 virus. The directives will come into effect immediately and will remain in force till further order, according to the notification.

### Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Office of the Director  
National Institute of Preventive and Social Medicine (NIPSOM)  
Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212  
Web: [www.nipsom.gov.bd](http://www.nipsom.gov.bd)

Memo No. NIPSOM/ADMIN/e-GP/MSR/2021/386

Date: 27/04/2021

### e-Tender Notice

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). For more details, please contact support desk contract numbers.

e-Tender are invited in e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Prof. Dr. Baizid Khorshid Riaz, PhD, Director, National Institute of Preventive and Social Medicine (NIPSOM), Mohakhali, Dhaka for the Procurement of:

Tender Id	Name of goods	Tender/proposal publication date & time	Last date of tender submission
573994	Procurement of Medical and Surgical Requisite (MSR) Goods for the financial year 2020-2021	28-Apr-2021 12:00	16-May-2021 14:00

e-Tender details can be downloaded on e-GP System Portal (<https://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for pursuer.

e-Tender will be accepted only as stated in above list; accepted tenders will be opened online immediate as stated in above list.

**Prof. Dr. Baizid Khorshid Riaz, PhD**  
Director

National Institute of Preventive and Social Medicine (NIPSOM)  
Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212

GD-855

Phone: 02-222262275, Email: [director@nipsom.gov.bd](mailto:director@nipsom.gov.bd)

COVID-19 FALLOUT

# Sheetalpaati weavers of Munshiganj hit hard

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

The closing of marketplaces and various businesses for containing the spread of coronavirus pandemic has adverse effect on daily wage earners as well as artisans across the country.

Sheetalpaati artisans of Tongibari upazila in Munshiganj are also facing financial hardship amid the ongoing restrictions on movement and operations of shops and marketplaces while the second wave of the pandemic is sweeping the country.

About 80 Hindu families in Paikpara village of the upazila have been weaving Sheetalpaati and various other types of mats, locally known as Paati, for generations.

An artisan who weaves a Paati is popularly known as Paatikar and the area where the Paatikar families live in the village is known as 'Paatikarpara'.

The mat weavers said the pandemic has put a dent in their ancestral trade as their earnings have been dipping sharply without being able to procure raw materials and sell their goods.

As such, many of them urged the government to provide financial stimulus for them so they can recover from the crisis.

Widow Kalpana Rani Dey, 70, from the Paatikarpara, said she had been weaving mats for 50 years and everyone in her family depends on her income.

Many of the weaver families are now facing starvation, as they cannot sell their goods at markets, which are closed, or by going from door to door due to health concerns, she also said.

Gopal Chandra Dey, another mat weaver, said around 15 to 20 Paatikar families are hired every year by Sheetalpaati sellers in different parts of Sylhet, especially in Gowainghat area, to weave Sheetalpaati for them.

Each family usually comes home with at least Tk 50,000 in cash, on which they live through the rest of the year and invest part of it on making mats for selling locally.



Hoping for a better day, the artisans of Paikpara village in Tongibari upazila of Munshiganj keep themselves busy by weaving Sheetalpaati.

PHOTO: STAR

April is a high time for selling mats, but they cannot even meet local demands now, he added.

Mat weaver Jhunu Rani Dey said each bundle of Murta -- a type of reed that is the primary raw material for making Sheetalpaati, and has to be procured from Sylhet only -- used to be available at less than Tk 50 before the restrictions, but now the price for each has shot up to Tk 100.

She said a few of them are still making the mats for selling those when the restrictions will be lifted.

Shanto Dey, a mat seller, said, "I go out in the morning with five mats every day amid the lockdown. Only one or two mats can be sold

every other day now. Before, 15 to 20 mats could be sold each day, for a price range of Tk 500 to 2,000 -- depending on their size."

Door to door sale is a laborious work, he said, adding that despite high demands for the mats in other districts -- including Narsinghdi, Narayanganj, Cumilla, Chandpur and Brahmanbaria -- he is unable to sell the goods there due to the ongoing movement restrictions.

Contacted, Munshiganj Deputy Commissioner Moniruzzaman Talukder said they were preparing a list to assist those who have been affected by the restrictive measures of the government.

## They feed the hungry like their 'guests'

RABIUL HASAN, Chapainawabganj

Voluntary organisation 'Mehman' has been providing free dinner and Iftar among patients and their attendants at Chapainawabganj Sadar Hospital during the month of Ramadan.

The 250-bed hospital only provides meals only for 250 of its inpatients and it does not have the capacity or a canteen from where the excess patients, attendants of patients or visitors can buy food or meal.

Organisers of Mehman use fresh ingredients to prepare the meals five days a week and distribute the freshly-cooked meal the same day at the hospital.

This service has been immensely helpful especially for the attendants who cannot afford to buy food from outside or do not have any relative living in the vicinity.

During a visit to the hospital on last Saturday, this correspondent found a good number of attendants who lined up to get free meal, being distributed by Mehman near the kitchen of the hospital.

Julfan Begum of Kholsi village in Nachole upazila got her 22-year-old son, Mohammad Masud, admitted to the hospital on Thursday.

She said she has to get dinner for both her son and herself from Mehman, as the hospital is too far from her home, from where her family members are not able to bring food for them at night.

Buying one meal and Iftar from

restaurants is not a feasible option either, because that way she would need to spend at least Tk 100 for one person each day, she explained.

According to Mehman, around 150 people received meal from them that day.

One of the organisers of Mehman and a retired government employee, who requested not to be named, said in 2019, after the misery of attendants of poor patients came to their notice, they started a programme to provide meal at Tk 5 for attendants at the hospital.

Although number of inpatients often exceeds the hospital's 250-bed capacity, meal is provided to only 250 patients every day, forcing the rest to arrange meals from elsewhere.

The situation initially prompted five humanitarians to start serving meals for the attendants and currently 50 of them, all of whom prefer to remain anonymous, are volunteering for Mehman.

Their regular menu includes vegetable hotchpotch and sometimes chicken vegetable hotchpotch. Some days during this Ramadan, they are also serving chicken biriyani and Iftar, he added.

"It feels good to be a part of this programme. We spend a lot of money on trivial things. But once in a while, why can't we spend only Tk 3,000 or Tk 4,000 to feed the hungry?" said another organiser of Mehman.



Volunteers of Mehman distributing free meal for patients and their attendants at Chapainawabganj Sadar Hospital.

PHOTO: STAR

## People suffer as bridge lies unrepaired for long

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

People of 36 villages under two unions in Kaliganj upazila have been suffering immensely since an important bridge over the Buribhairab river on Chowgachha-Barobazar road has been lying unrepaired for nearly two years.

Local people, especially vegetable growers and girl students, are the worst sufferers as they have the cross the area using an alternative makeshift bridge, which is also turned risky for lack of renovation.

Farmers of the two unions, famous for producing quality vegetables, said due to the broken bridge they cannot take their produce to nearby Barobazar, largest vegetable market in the area.

Villagers said although the bridge has been lying broken for two years, the authorities concerned are yet to take any step to renovate or rebuild it.

As a result, farmers of 36 villages under Barobazar and Kashtobhanga unions in the upazila have to walk three to four kilometres more to reach the nearby t vegetable market spending more time and money.

Farmer Gafur Ali of Fulbari village said cyclist, motorcyclists and pedestrians have to face serious difficulties while using the alternative makeshift bamboo bridge.

The authorities concerned should take immediate step to repair the bridge, he added.

Sohel Mahmud, a student at Barobazar Degree College, said they have to cross the ramshackle bamboo bridge risking their lives.

Kashtobhanga Union Parishad (UP) Chairman Ayub Hossain said he is trying to get allocation of fund for repairing the bridge.

Kaliganj Upazila LGED Engineer Ruhul Amin said he was not aware of the broken bridge and he will take necessary step after visiting the spot soon.



This bridge over the Buribhairab river on Chowgachha-Barobazar road in Jhenidah's Kaliganj upazila is lying unrepaired for long.

PHOTO: STAR

### Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat Administration Section Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1225

#### Invitation for Tenders

1. Ministry/Division	Bangladesh Parliament Secretariat
2. Procuring entity name	Deputy Secretary, Administration Section, Parliament Secretariat.
3. Invitation for	Supply of Photocopier
4. Invitation Ref. No.	11.00.0000.604.07.028.21/187, Date: 27.04.2021
5. Procurement method	Open Tendering Method (National).
6. Budget and Source of funds	Revenue Budget
7. Tender package name and short description of goods	Package-7(Lot-1)-Photocopier
8. Tender place selling date	Block: North-East, Ground Floor, Room No-131, Parliament Secretariat.
9. Tender selling date	04/05/2021 - 17/05/2021.
10. Tender submission & opening place, date and time	Deputy Secretary (Admin-1), Level-7, Block-East, Room No-7, (Lift-13,14,15 & 16) Submission date: 18/05/2021, Time: 9:30AM-12:00PM Opening date: 18/05/2019, Opening Time: 12:05 PM.
11. Brief eligibility and qualification of tenderer	(a) Reputed supplier firms/Organization having valid trade license (2020-2021), Income Tax clearance Certificate for 2020-2021 (for company 2019-2020), Vat registration certificate (11 Digit)/BIN, Experience Certificate, Authorization letter (Where Applicable) (b) Detailed terms & conditions will be mentioned in tender schedule.
12. Price of tender schedule	Schedule price of TK. 2,000/- (Two thousand) only.
13. Tender security & Tender Validity Period	Tender Security 30,000/-, Validity period: 120 days.
14. Name designation, address & Phone number of official inviting tender	A S M Humayun Kabir, Deputy Secretary (Administration), Block: North-East, Ground Floor, Room No-131, Parliament Secretariat. (9131100-2306/2188/2794, 55029007
15. Special instructions	The procuring entity reserves the right to reject all tenders or annul the tender proceedings.

(A S M Humayun Kabir)  
Deputy Secretary  
Phone: 9131100-2188/2794  
55029007

GD-856

## বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক

হিউম্যান রিসোর্সেস ডিপার্টমেন্ট-১

প্রধান কার্যালয়

ঢাকা।

বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং: ২৯/২০২১

তারিখ: ১৪ বৈশাখ, ১৪২৮  
২৭ এপ্রিল, ২০২১

### নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক 'অফিসার (পুরকৌশল)', 'অফিসার (তড়িৎকৌশল)' এবং 'অফিসার (মন্ত্রকৌশল)' এর শূন্য পদে নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে নিম্নবর্ণিত শর্তে বাংলাদেশী স্থায়ী নাগরিকদের নিকট হতে দরখাস্ত আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে:

- ০১। পদ নাম ও সংখ্যা : 

পদনাম	পদ সংখ্যা (কম/বেশি হতে পারে)
অফিসার (পুরকৌশল)	০৬টি
অফিসার (তড়িৎকৌশল)	১৪টি
অফিসার (মন্ত্রকৌশল)	০৮টি
- ০২। বেতন স্কেল : জাতীয় বেতন স্কেল, ২০১৫ এর টাকা ১৬০০০-১৬৮০০-১৭৬৪০-১৮৫০০-১৯৩৪০-২০১৮০-২১০২০-২১৮৬০-২২৭০০-২৩৫৪০-২৪৩৮০-২৫২২০-২৬০৬০-২৬৯০০-২৭৭৪০-২৮৫৮০-২৯৪২০-৩০২৬০-৩১১০০-৩১৯৪০-৩২৭৮০-৩৩৬২০-৩৪৪৬০-৩৫৩০০-৩৬১৪০-৩৬৯৮০-৩৭৮২০-৩৮৬৬০-৩৯৫০০-৪০৩৪০-৪১১৮০-৪২০২০-৪২৮৬০-৪৩৭০০-৪৪৫৪০-৪৫৩৮০-৪৬২২০-৪৭০৬০-৪৭৯০০-৪৮৭৪০-৪৯৫৮০-৫০৪২০-৫১২৬০-৫২১০০-৫২৯৪০-৫৩৭৮০-৫৪৬২০-৫৫৪৬০-৫৬৩০০-৫৭১৪০-৫৮০০০-৫৮৮৪০-৫৯৬৮০-৬০৫২০-৬১৩৬০-৬২২০০-৬৩০৪০-৬৩৮৮০-৬৪৭২০-৬৫৫৬০-৬৬৪০০-৬৭২৪০-৬৮০৮০-৬৮৯২০-৬৯৭৬০-৭০৬০০-৭১৪৪০-৭২২৮০-৭৩১২০-৭৩৯৬০-৭৪৮০০-৭৫৬৪০-৭৬৪৮০-৭৭৩২০-৭৮১৬০-৭৯০০০-৭৯৮৪০-৮০৬৮০-৮১৫২০-৮২৩৬০-৮৩২০০-৮৪০৪০-৮৪৮৮০-৮৫৬৮০-৮৬৫২০-৮৭৩৬০-৮৮২০০-৮৯০৪০-৮৯৮৮০-৯০৬৮০-৯১৫২০-৯২৩৬০-৯৩২০০-৯৪০৪০-৯৪৮৮০-৯৫৬৮০-৯৬৫২০-৯৭৩৬০-৯৮২০০-৯৯০৪০-৯৯৮৮০-১০০৬৮০-১০১৫২০-১০২৩৬০-১০৩২০০-১০৪০৪০-১০৪৮৮০-১০৫৬৮০-১০৬৫২০-১০৭৩৬০-১০৮২০০-১০৯০৪০-১০৯৮৮০-১১০৬৮০-১১১৫২০-১১২৩৬০-১১৩২০০-১১৪০৪০-১১৪৮৮০-১১৫৬৮০-১১৬৫২০-১১৭৩৬০-১১৮২০০-১১৯০৪০-১১৯৮৮০-১২০৬৮০-১২১৫২০-১২২৩৬০-১২৩২০০-১২৪০৪০-১২৪৮৮০-১২৫৬৮০-১২৬৫২০-১২৭৩৬০-১২৮২০০-১২৯০৪০-১২৯৮৮০-১৩০৬৮০-১৩১৫২০-১৩২৩৬০-১৩৩২০০-১৩৪০৪০-১৩৪৮৮০-১৩৫৬৮০-১৩৬৫২০-১৩৭৩৬০-১৩৮২০০-১৩৯০৪০-১৩৯৮৮০-১৪০৬৮০-১৪১৫২০-১৪২৩৬০-১৪৩২০০-১৪৪০৪০-১৪৪৮৮০-১৪৫৬৮০-১৪৬৫২০-১৪৭৩৬০-১৪৮২০০-১৪৯০৪০-১৪৯৮৮০-১৫০৬৮০-১৫১৫২০-১৫২৩৬০-১৫৩২০০-১৫৪০৪০-১৫৪৮৮০-১৫৫৬৮০-১৫৬৫২০-১৫৭৩৬০-১৫৮২০০-১৫৯০৪০-১৫৯৮৮০-১৬০৬৮০-১৬১৫২০-১৬২৩৬০-১৬৩২০০-১৬৪০৪০-১৬৪৮৮০-১৬৫৬৮০-১৬৬৫২০-১৬৭৩৬০-১৬৮২০০-১৬৯০৪০-১৬৯৮৮০-১৭০৬৮০-১৭১৫২০-১৭২৩৬০-১৭৩২০০-১৭৪০৪০-১৭৪৮৮০-১৭৫৬৮০-১৭৬৫২০-১৭৭৩৬০-১৭৮২০০-১৭৯০৪০-১৭৯৮৮০-১৮০৬৮০-১৮১৫২০-১৮২৩৬০-১৮৩২০০-১৮৪০৪০-১৮৪৮৮০-১৮৫৬৮০-১৮৬৫২০-১৮৭৩৬০-১৮৮২০০-১৮৯০৪০-১৮৯৮৮০-১৯০৬৮০-১৯১৫২০-১৯২৩৬০-১৯৩২০০-১৯৪০৪০-১৯৪৮৮০-১৯৫৬৮০-১৯৬৫২০-১৯৭৩৬০-১৯৮২০০-১৯৯০৪০-১৯৯৮৮০-২০০৬৮০-২০১৫২০-২০২৩৬০-২০৩২০০-২০৪০৪০-২০৪৮৮০-২০৫৬৮০-২০৬৫২০-২০৭৩৬০-২০৮২০০-২০৯০৪০-২০৯৮৮০-২১০৬৮০-২১১৫২০-২১২৩৬০-২১৩২০০-২১৪০৪০-২১৪৮৮০-২১৫৬৮০-২১৬৫২০-২১৭৩৬০-২১৮২০০-২১৯০৪০-২১৯৮৮০-২২০৬৮০-২২১৫২০-২২২৩৬০-২২৩২০০-২২৪০৪০-২২৪৮৮০-২২৫৬৮০-২২৬৫২০-২২৭৩৬০-২২৮২০০-২২৯০৪০-২২৯৮৮০-২৩০৬৮০-২৩১৫২০-২৩২৩৬০-২৩৩২০০-২৩৪০৪০-২৩৪৮৮০-২৩৫৬৮০-২৩৬৫২০-২৩৭৩৬০-২৩৮২০০-২৩৯০৪০-২৩৯৮৮০-২৪০৬৮০-২৪১৫২০-২৪২৩৬০-২৪৩২০০-২৪৪০৪০-২৪৪৮৮০-২৪৫৬৮০-২৪৬৫২০-২৪৭৩৬০-২৪৮২০০-২৪৯০৪০-২৪৯৮৮০-২৫০৬৮০-২৫১৫২০-২৫২৩৬০-২৫৩২০০-২৫৪০৪০-২৫৪৮৮০-২৫৫৬৮০-২৫৬৫২০-২৫৭৩৬০-২৫৮২০০-২৫৯০৪০-২৫৯৮৮০-২৬০৬৮০-২৬১৫২০-২৬২৩৬০-২৬৩২০০-২৬৪০৪০-২৬৪৮৮০-২৬৫৬৮০-২৬৬৫২০-২৬৭৩৬০-২৬৮২০০-২৬৯০৪০-২৬৯৮৮০-২৭০৬৮০-২৭১৫২০-২৭২৩৬০-২৭৩২০০-২৭৪০৪০-২৭৪৮৮০-২৭৫৬৮০-২৭৬৫২০-২৭৭৩৬০-২৭৮২০০-২৭৯০৪০-২৭৯৮৮০-২৮০৬৮০-২৮১৫২০-২৮২৩৬০-২৮৩২০০-২৮৪০৪০-২৮৪৮৮০-২৮৫৬৮০-২৮৬৫২০-২৮৭৩৬০-২৮৮২০০-২৮৯০৪০-২৮৯৮৮০-২৯০৬৮০-২৯১৫২০-২৯২৩৬০-২৯৩২০০-২৯৪০৪০-২৯৪৮৮০-২৯৫৬৮০-২৯৬৫২০-২৯৭৩৬০-২৯৮২০০-২৯৯০৪০-২৯৯৮৮০-৩০০৬৮০-৩০১৫২০-৩০২৩৬০-৩০৩২০০-৩০৪০৪০-৩০৪৮৮০-৩০৫৬৮০-৩০৬৫২০-৩০৭৩৬০-৩০৮২০০-৩০৯০৪০-৩০৯৮৮০-৩১০৬৮০-৩১১৫২০-৩১২৩৬০-৩১৩২০০-৩১৪০৪০-৩১৪৮৮০-৩১৫৬৮০-৩১৬৫২০-৩১৭৩৬০-৩১৮২০০-৩১৯০৪০-৩১৯৮৮০-৩২০৬৮০-৩২১৫২০-৩২২৩৬০-৩২৩২০০-৩২৪০৪০-৩২৪৮৮০-৩২৫৬৮০-৩২৬৫২০-৩২৭৩৬০-৩২৮২০০-৩২৯০৪০-৩২৯৮৮০-৩৩০৬৮০-৩৩১৫২০-৩৩২৩৬০-৩৩৩২০০-৩৩৪০৪০-৩৩৪৮৮০-৩৩৫৬৮০-৩৩৬৫২০-৩৩৭৩৬০-৩৩৮২০০-৩৩৯০৪০-৩৩৯৮৮০-৩৪০৬৮০-৩৪১৫২০-৩৪২৩৬০-৩৪৩২০০-৩৪৪০৪০-৩৪৪৮৮০-৩৪৫৬৮০-৩৪৬৫২০-৩৪৭৩৬০-৩৪৮২০০-৩৪৯০৪০-৩৪৯৮৮০-৩৫০৬৮০-৩৫১৫২০-৩৫২৩৬০-৩৫৩২০০-৩৫৪০৪০-৩৫৪৮৮০-৩৫৫৬৮০-৩৫৬৫২০-৩৫৭৩৬০-৩৫৮২০০-৩৫৯০৪০-৩৫৯৮৮০-৩৬০৬৮০-৩৬১৫২০-৩৬২৩৬০-৩৬৩২০০-৩৬৪০৪০-৩৬৪৮৮০-৩৬৫৬৮০-৩৬৬৫২০-৩৬৭৩৬০-৩৬৮২০০-৩৬৯০৪০-৩৬৯৮৮০-৩৭০৬৮০-৩৭১৫২০-৩৭২৩৬০-৩৭৩২০০-৩৭৪০৪০-৩৭৪৮৮০-৩৭৫৬৮০-৩৭৬৫২০-৩৭৭৩৬০-৩৭৮২০০-৩৭৯০৪০-৩৭৯৮৮০-৩৮০৬৮০-৩৮১৫২০-৩৮২৩৬০-৩৮৩২০০-৩৮৪০৪০-৩৮৪৮৮০-৩৮৫৬৮০-৩৮৬৫২০-৩৮৭৩৬০-৩৮৮২০০-৩৮৯০৪০-৩৮৯৮৮০-৩৯০৬৮০-৩৯১৫২০-৩৯২৩৬০-৩৯৩২০০-৩৯৪০৪০-৩৯৪৮৮০-৩৯৫৬৮০-৩৯৬৫২০-৩৯৭৩৬০-৩৯৮২০০-৩৯৯০৪০-৩৯৯৮৮০-৪০০৬৮০-৪০১৫২০-৪০২৩৬০-৪০৩২০০-৪০৪০৪০-৪০৪৮৮০-৪০৫৬৮০-৪০৬৫২০-৪০৭৩৬০-৪০৮২০০-৪০৯০৪০-৪০৯৮৮০-৪১০৬৮০-৪১১৫২০-৪১২৩৬০-৪১৩২০০-৪১৪০৪০-৪১৪৮৮০-৪১৫৬৮০-৪১৬৫২০-৪১৭৩৬০-৪১৮২০০-৪১৯০৪০-৪১৯৮৮০-৪২০৬৮০-৪২১৫২০-৪২২৩৬০-৪২৩২০০-৪২৪০৪০-৪২৪৮৮০-৪২৫৬৮০-৪২৬৫২০-৪২৭৩৬০-৪২৮২০০-৪২৯০৪০-৪২৯৮৮০-৪৩০৬৮০-৪৩১৫২০-৪৩২৩৬০-৪৩৩২০০-৪৩৪০৪০-৪৩৪৮৮০-৪৩৫৬৮০-৪৩৬৫২০-৪৩৭৩৬০-৪৩৮২০০-৪৩৯০৪০-৪৩৯৮৮০-৪৪০৬৮০-৪৪১৫২০-৪৪২৩৬০-৪৪৩২০০-৪৪৪০৪০-৪৪৪৮৮০-৪৪৫৬৮০-৪৪৬৫২০-৪৪৭৩৬০-৪৪৮২০০-৪৪৯০৪০-৪৪

## NEWS IN BRIEF

## 200 endangered species threatened by conflict: IUCN

Civil unrest and military exercises pose heightened risk to more than 200 threatened species, including elephant populations and the critically-endangered Eastern gorilla, conservationists warned yesterday. A report from the International Union for Conservation of Nature examined the close interplay between the environment and armed conflict, warning that human violence and unrest were taking a devastating toll on nature. The report also stressed that the sustainable management of natural resources should be seen as a tool to help preserve peace. Looking at more than 85,000 armed conflict events over the past 30 years, which have been responsible for the deaths of more than two million people, the report determined they more likely to erupt where there is less productive agricultural land available and when droughts are frequent. "These findings suggest that conservation, restoration and sustainable management of natural resources can help reduce the pressures that drive conflict by improving the condition and productivity of the landscape," IUCN chief economist Juha Siikamäki said in the statement.

## UN: 29m in Sahel need humanitarian assistance

The United Nations and NGOs said Tuesday that a record 29 million people need humanitarian assistance in the Sahel, noting "unparalleled" insecurity and hunger across six countries in the war-torn African region. In Burkina Faso, northern Cameroon, Chad, Mali, Niger and north-eastern Nigeria, five million more people than last year are in need of aid, according to a statement. Much of the semi-arid Sahel -- a vast region that stretches along the southern rim of the Sahara from the Atlantic to the Red Sea -- has been plagued by violence for years.

## Apartment refurbishment: UK PM faces formal probe



Britain's Electoral Commission began an investigation yesterday into the refurbishment of Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Downing Street apartment, saying there were grounds to suspect an offence may have been committed. Johnson's opponents say he may have broken British rules by letting party donors secretly contribute tens of thousands of pounds to a luxury renovation of his living quarters. In a hot-tempered appearance in parliament yesterday, Johnson repeatedly insisted he had covered the cost of the renovation himself. If it finds sufficient evidence of an offence, the commission can issue a fine of up to 20,000 pounds or refer the matter to the police.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

## ADDRESS TO CONGRESS ON THE EVE OF 100 DAYS IN OFFICE

## Biden eyes to end inequality

Set to unveil reversal of Trump's tax cuts for most wealthy

AFP, Washington

President Joe Biden was scheduled to use his first address to Congress yesterday to call for an epic effort to make the United States fairer, funded in part by reversing Donald Trump's tax cuts on the wealthy.

Speaking to a joint session of Congress on the eve of his 100th day in office, Biden will likely hail what on Tuesday he called "stunning" success in vaccinating Americans -- a national effort that has transformed the country from coronavirus catastrophe to leader in global recovery.

But with solid approval ratings and a Democratic majority -- albeit razor thin -- in Congress, Biden feels he has momentum on his side to take on new challenges.

Speaking on primetime television, he will promote what he touts as a plan of massive government spending to get the United States not just back on its feet but striding forward.

In the foreign policy segment, Biden "will talk about his commitment to



reengaging with the world, taking America's seat back in the world," White House Press Secretary Jen Psaki said.

At the center of his domestic agenda will be the unveiling of the \$1.8 trillion American Families Plan, funded by closing loopholes used by the wealthiest and imposing a top income tax rate of 39.6 percent, administration officials said.

"The president will be proposing a set of measures to make sure the wealthiest Americans pay the taxes that they owe, while also ensuring that no one making less than \$400,000 a year will see their taxes go up," one official, who asked not to be identified, told reporters.

The spending plan, which will need approval by a deeply divided Congress, would pour money into early education, childcare, higher education and other building blocks in what the Biden administration argues will be reconstruction of the country's battered middle class.

But this comes after Congress already approved a \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan, injecting stimulus into almost every corner of the US economy, and is now debating a proposed \$2 trillion-plus American Jobs Plan aimed at rebuilding national infrastructure.

The speech will also run through the rest of a lengthy Democratic wish list, including police reform, pro-immigrant reforms and gun control -- some of the most sensitive issues in US politics and ones where Biden insists he can deliver.

Today, on his 100th day, Biden will follow the speech by launching what Psaki called a "Getting America Back on Track" tour, starting with trips to Georgia and Philadelphia.



People stand near bodies of Covid-19 coronavirus victims lined up before cremation at a cremation ground in New Delhi, yesterday. India's coronavirus death toll shot past 200,000 yesterday as a relentless wave of new cases swamped hospitals and sent desperate families out into the streets of the capital in search of oxygen supplies and medicine.

PHOTO: AFP

## Brexit saga completes

European Parliament ratifies trade deal

AFP, Brussels

The European Parliament yesterday overwhelmingly ratified the EU's post-Brexit trade deal with Britain, but promised to keep a close eye on London with cross-channel hostility still high.

A big majority of MEPs approved the bare bones trade deal with the bloc's third-biggest trading partner that was sealed on Christmas Eve after nine months of tough negotiations.

The agreement provides the framework for London's new relationship with the 27-member union, five years after British voters shocked the world by voting to end its 47-year membership.

In the final tally, 660 MEPs voted in favour of the trade deal, five against with 32 abstentions, results released yesterday showed.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson hailed the "final step in a long journey" that brought "stability to our new relationship with the EU as vital trading partners, close allies and sovereign equals."

"Now is the time to look forward to the future and to building a more Global Britain," he added.

The vote comes amid multiple feuds over the UK's implementation of Brexit agreements and angry finger-pointing about the supply of the Covid-19 vaccine from AstraZeneca.

Deepening tensions further, France has threatened to block UK financial firms doing business in the EU if the London does not respect its commitments on fishing, a key part of the deal.

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen "warmly welcomed" the approval, but in a final debate in parliament on Tuesday, assured MEPs that the agreement had "real teeth" and the legal means to keep the UK in check.

## Panic as strong quake hits Assam

AFP, Gauhati

A strong earthquake and nerve jangling aftershocks cracked walls and sent inhabitants pouring onto the streets in several towns across northeastern India yesterday.

There have been no reports of casualties so far, with residents saying the main human toll was stress, minor cuts and bruises.

The US Geological Survey said the epicentre of the 6.0 magnitude quake was in a hilly region in Assam state near India's border with Bhutan. The quake's relatively shallow depth of 34 kilometres aede the impact more powerful.

Both the main tremor and aftershocks were felt hundreds of kilometres away in the northern state of Bengal, as well as in Bhutan and Bangladesh.

Residents near the epicenter told AFP that the tremor lasted for more than 20 seconds. They said many buildings suffered cracked walls and broken windows. Fissures spread across roads.

At least two big aftershocks were felt. The Himalayan region is notorious for big earthquakes. A 1950 quake killed about 4,800 people in Assam and Tibet. The Great Assam Earthquake of 1897 is said to be one of the most powerful to have hit India, leaving hundreds dead in the remote hills.

## No dialogue until all prisoners are freed

Myanmar unity government tells Asean; military launches more air strikes on Karen rebels

AGENCIES

Myanmar's pro-democracy unity government, formed to oppose the military junta that seized power nearly three months ago, yesterday ruled out talks on the crisis until all political prisoners are released.

The 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) has been trying to find a path for Myanmar out of the bloody turmoil that followed the Feb. 1 coup and has called for an end to violence and talks between all sides.

But the junta has already declined to accept proposals to resolve the crisis that emerged from an Asean summit last weekend that was attended by Myanmar's Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

The pro-democracy National Unity Government (NUG), which includes members of parliament ousted by the coup, said all political prisoners including President U Win Myint and State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi must be released to pave the way for any dialogue.

Pro-democracy protests have taken place in cities and towns across the country since

the coup. The military has cracked down with lethal force on the protesters, killing more than 750 people, an activist group says.

The coup has also exacerbated old conflicts between the military and ethnic minority insurgents.

Fighting has flared between the army and Karen insurgents in the east near the Thai border, and between the army and Kachin insurgents in the north, near the border with China. Clashes have also broken out in Chin State, which is on the border with India, between anti-coup activists and security forces. Myanmar Now reported 30 government soldiers were killed in four days of clashes there.

Karen insurgents captured Myanmar army posts near the Thai border on Tuesday in some of the most intense clashes since the coup which included air strikes by the military.

The military launched more air strikes in the area yesterday with both jets and helicopters, Thai authorities monitoring the fighting said, but there was no immediate word on casualties.



Ethnic minority Karen troops are seen after setting fire to a building inside a Myanmar army outpost near the Thai border, which is seen from the Thai side on the Thanlwin, also known as Salween, riverbank in Mae Hong Son province, Thailand yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS



বাংলাদেশ সিকিউরিটিজ অ্যান্ড এক্সচেঞ্জ কমিশন

সিকিউরিটিজ কমিশন ভবন

ই-৬/সি আগারগাঁও, শের-ই-বাংলা নগর প্রশাসনিক এলাকা, ঢাকা-১২০৭

www.sec.gov.bd

তারিখঃ ১৫ বৈশাখ ১৪২৮  
২৮ এপ্রিল ২০২১

স্মারক নং-বিএসইসি/প্রশাসন/২০:০১/১৯৯৩/খস-১৩/৩৬৭

বিষয়ঃ চাকরি'র আবেদনের সময়সীমা বর্ধিতকরণ।

চলমান কোভিড-১৯ এর সংক্রমণ পরিস্থিতির কারণে বিভিন্ন পক্ষের অনুরোধ বিবেচনায় নিয়ে বাংলাদেশ সিকিউরিটিজ অ্যান্ড এক্সচেঞ্জ কমিশন এর লোকবল নিয়োগের আবেদনের সময়সীমা ৩০ এপ্রিল ২০২১ হতে ২৩ মে ২০২১ পর্যন্ত বৃদ্ধি করা হলো। উল্লেখ্য, উক্ত নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি নিম্নোক্তভাবে প্রকাশিত হয়েছেঃ

ক্রমিক	পত্রিকার নাম	প্রকাশের তারিখ
১	দৈনিক বনিকবার্তা	২৭/০৩/২০২১
২	দি ফিন্যান্সিয়াল এক্সপ্রেস	২৮/০৩/২০২১
৩	দৈনিক প্রথম আলো	২৮/০৩/২০২১
৪	দি ডেইলি স্টার	২৯/০৩/২০২১
৫	দৈনিক আমাদের অর্থনীতি	২৯/০৩/২০২১
৬	দৈনিক ইত্তেফাক	৩১/০৩/২০২১
৭	দৈনিক ইনকিলাব	৩১/০৩/২০২১
৮	দৈনিক যুগান্তর	০১/০৪/২০২১

প্রকাশিত বিজ্ঞপ্তির অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী অপরিবর্তিত থাকবে।  
আবেদনের জন্য নিচের QR কোডটি স্ক্যান করুন।



GD-854

মোঃ সহিদুল ইসলাম  
সহকারী পরিচালক (প্রশাসন)

## 'We want Iran to grow'

Saudi prince strikes conciliatory tone with Iran

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's crown prince on Tuesday struck a conciliatory tone towards the kingdom's arch-nemesis Iran, saying he sought "good" relations, after sources said the rivals held secret talks in Baghdad.

The two countries, locked in a fierce struggle for regional dominance, cut ties in 2016 after Iranian protesters attacked Saudi diplomatic missions following the kingdom's execution of a revered Shiite cleric.

"Iran is a neighbouring country, and all we aspire for is a good and special relationship with Iran," Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman said in a TV interview broadcast late Tuesday.

"We do not want Iran's situation to be difficult. On the contrary, we want Iran to grow... and to push the region and the world towards prosperity."

He added that Riyadh was working with regional and global partners to find solutions to Tehran's "negative behaviour".

That marks a change in tone compared to Prince Mohammed's



previous interviews, in which he lashed out at Tehran, accusing it of fuelling regional insecurity.

The prince did not mention any negotiations with Tehran. Riyadh has officially denied the talks in its state-backed media while Tehran has stayed mum, asserting only that it has "always welcomed" dialogue with Saudi Arabia.

The initiative comes at a time of shifting power dynamics, as US President Joe Biden is seeking to revive the tattered 2015 nuclear deal that was abandoned by Donald Trump.

Saudi Arabia and Iran have backed opposite sides of several regional conflicts, from Syria to Yemen, where a Saudi-led coalition is fighting the Huthi rebels.

## US orders staff to leave Kabul due to threats

AFP, Washington

The United States has ordered non-essential staff to leave its Kabul embassy, citing increased threats as Washington prepares to end its 20-year war in Afghanistan.

The State Department said in a travel advisory that it had "ordered the departure from US embassy Kabul of US government employees whose functions can be performed elsewhere."

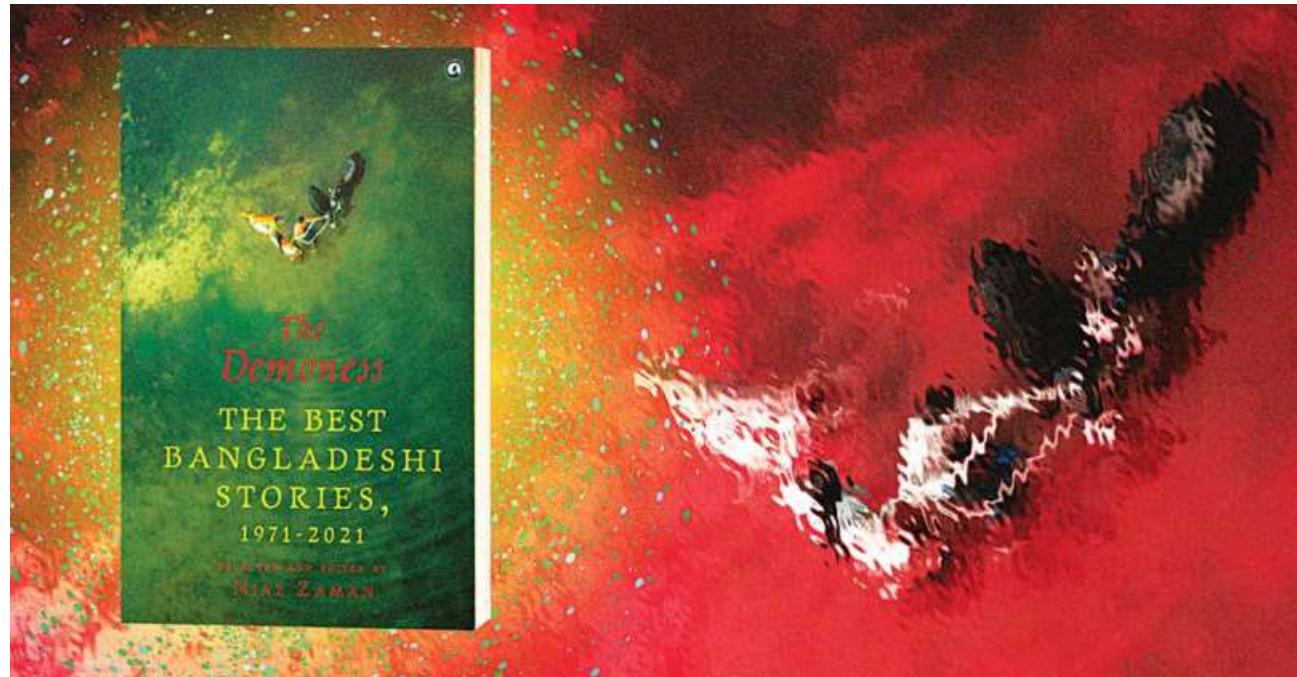
Ross Wilson, the acting US ambassador in Kabul, said the order affected an unspecified "relatively small number" of employees and that the embassy would remain operating.

Earlier this month Biden said he would withdraw all troops from Afghanistan by September 11.

FRESH OFF THE PRESS: FICTION

# Creating an appetite for Bangladeshi fiction

SHAMSAD MORTUZA



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

**Catch Shamsad Mortuza LIVE in conversation with Niaz Zaman, editor of The Demoness: The Best Bangladeshi Short Stories, 1971-2021, at 4 PM on Monday, May 3, 2021 on The Daily Star Facebook and YouTube channels.**

A good story is hard to find. Niaz Zaman, the editor of *The Demoness: The Best Bangladeshi Short Stories, 1971-2021* (Aleph Book Company, 2021), has found 27 “best” short stories to create an appetite for Bangladeshi fiction. Zaman has made sure that these stories do not lose the flavour of the original, and in the golden jubilee of this nation, the platter she has arranged can easily be devoured in one sitting—such is the pace of the prose.

Bangladeshi writings often fail to get the attention they deserve in the absence of either decent translation or strategic marketing positioning. The hegemonic role of Bangla literature coming out of the other side of the border coupled with the wilful ignorance of our own literature has deprived local creative works of their expected niche. *The Demoness* is, therefore, a timely utterance. At a time when the world is taking note of the magical goodies coming out of a country that was once written-off by political pundits as a “bottomless basket”, the anthology showcases some of the great cultural ambassadors of Bangladesh.

The title, which is also the title of the first story included in the anthology, however, does not do justice to the collection. While it perhaps subsumes the editor’s personal preferences for Kazi Nazrul Islam, the national poet, it does not indicate why the interior monologue of a woman who has murdered her husband to prevent him from marrying for the second time should be the overarching theme of a book that is celebrating the best authors of a proud nation.

Similarly, the inclusion of writers such as Kazi Nazrul Islam and Syed Mujtaba Ali is sure to raise some brows, as the temporal bracket in the title limits the anthology to only 50 years for the collected short stories. But the editor, in her elaborate introduction, offers a broad definition of “Bangladeshi”. She posits, “Bangladeshi Stories’ [...] refer to Bengali short stories written by persons associated with the land that gained its independence from Pakistan in 1971 and came to be known as Bangladesh. They are not all contemporary stories written post-1971, but predate the creation of Bangladesh”. Zaman is also conscious of reducing

the gender gap, which is prevalent in any regular anthology. There are 11 female authors against 16 male authors to reassert the strong contributions women writers have made in the Bangladeshi canon formation. Most of these female writers are critical of the patriarchal violence and male gaze in which they must operate. Nasreen Jahan’s story is a case in point, where religious conversion is tinged with fanatic frenzy that leads to a murderous rampage. Authors such as Jharna Das Purkayastha, Selina Hossain, Purabi Basu, and Shaheen Akhtar, according to Zaman, carry on the feminist spirit of Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain who could

not be included for “technical” reasons (Rokeya wrote her best short story in English).

The experimental vein of contemporary Bangladeshi writing is evident in the works of Shahaduzzaman, Zakir Talukdar, and Mashiul Alam among others. “The Meat Market”, translated by Shabnam Nadiya, involves a macabre murder that will send a cold chill down anyone’s spine. You will never eat your meat in quite the same way again, to say the least. Another highlight, Syed Manzoorul Islam’s “Daedalus’s Kite” is surreal, entertaining, and poignant in its depiction of Old Dhaka.

Quite a few stories involve religious hypocrisy. Shaukat Osman’s “Father Johannes”, set in Chota Nagpur during the Second World War, exposes the greed of a Christian missionary who came to India to preach among the tribal population. Ahmed Mostafa Kamal’s “Waiting”, too, takes up the theme of colonisation where the protagonist reflects on his dervish ancestors who managed to set up a landed aristocracy while preaching Islam. The mighty River Padma devours the heritage to have the final say in a battle between imported spirituality and rooted resistance in nature.

Any history of Bangladesh will remain incomplete without the story of its Liberation War. Zaman includes stories by Hasan Azizul Huq, Rizia Rahman, Akhtaruzzaman Elias, Humayun Ahmed, and Jharna Rahman to make sure that we get a glimpse of the horrors that were entwined with the birth-pangs of the nation. Tales of heroism and cowardice, betrayal and bravery, violence and love come together to remind us of the trials and traumas behind the birth of the nation that this anthology is celebrating.

Etimologically, the word “anthology” means a gathering of flowers. Niaz Zaman has assorted some of the best writings coming out of Bangladesh to offer a bouquet to the world. This is a highly readable book that has the potential to grow into a series.

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

## THE BOOK REPORT

### Between the two partitions of Bengal

M RASHIDUZZAMAN

In my book, *Identity of a Muslim Family in Colonial Bengal: Between Memories and History* (Peter Lang, NYC, 2021), I focus on the era of pre-Partition Bengal, trekking through old family recollections, oral anecdotes, memoirs, and other available books and documents on pre-independence India, and blend them with the larger history of British Bengal. Working on my earlier book, *The Central Legislature in British India, 1921-47: Parliamentary Experiences under the Raj* (Peter Lang, 2019) had taken me back to the undivided subcontinent’s history, which I had researched as a PhD student in England in the early 1960s. Over the years, I reassessed aspects of my old findings and added fresh resonance to the narrative. The recently released *Identity of a Muslim Family* is largely built around parallel memories and Muslim identity imaginations in Colonial Bengal, wracked as it was by religious, social, and political turmoil between its 1905 and 1947 divisions. It explores, therefore, the real-life experience of Bengal between the two World Wars, and even more importantly, this trajectory aims at Bangladesh’s amnesia about its inheritances from the yore.

By the time the concept of Pakistan as an independent Muslim state seriously hit the South Asian consciousness in the 1940s, Muslim

Why, then, did Huq’s “alternative of 1940-43” not gain political traction? How did the Bose-Hashem-Suhrawardy-Roy backed “third way” for united Bengal collapse? In his autobiography, Nirad C Chaudhuri did not hide his discontent for the British-introduced parliamentary institutions that had challenged the Hindu *bhadralok*’s eminence in Bengal. The same sentiments were echoed in the memoir of politician and activist, Abul Mansur Ahmed. Fascinatingly, Ayesha Jala’s *The Sole Spokesman* (Cambridge, 1985) asserts that Jinnah finally accepted the 1947 Partition when negotiations for the anticipated post-independence federal and provincial configurations



ILLUSTRATION: MEHRUL BARTI

disappointingly collapsed. As I discuss in *Identity of a Muslim Family*, my father the late M Badruzzaman, an inquisitive schoolteacher and essayist, with predilections for history and Sufism, periodically alleged that most well-known Bengali writers did not tolerably project Muslim experiences in their genre. He regretted that Muslims were the shadowy “others” in most notable works of fiction. Such “literary disenfranchisement” spurred Bengali Muslims towards identity politics.

Several autobiographies from the 1920s also confirmed how both Hindus and Muslims tended to help their own kind more often. Influential zamindar-politicians like Nawab Salimullah of Dhaka, Nawab Ali Chaudhuri, and Nawab Shamsul Huda had earlier helped numerous Muslim young men with jobs and encouraged education among Muslims. Fazlul Huq also looked after Muslim educational interests, and individually, he helped countless young men and women gain employment. So while the Muslims usually approached the Nawabs or senior Muslim politicians and officials for government jobs, Hindus usually contacted their Hindu patrons for such favours.

What my research into such grassroots vibrations, oral recounts, legislative scholarship, and recollections of colonial Bengal have revealed is that Muslim politics in British India and pre-partition Bengal had multiple layers—religion was not its exclusive *raison d’être*.

An extended version of this article will be available online.

M Rashiduzzaman, PhD is Professor Emeritus in Political Science at Rowan University, New Jersey, USA and author of several books, scholarly essays and articles on British India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan.

## BOOK REVIEW: NON-FICTION

### An ode to cricket, taken with a pinch of salt

ASRAR CHOWDHURY

*The Commonwealth of Cricket: A Lifelong Love Affair with the Most Subtle and Sophisticated Game Known to Humankind* (HarperCollins India, 2020) is Ramachandra Guha’s latest book on cricket. It is his ode to a game his mother introduced him to at the age of four, and his father told him stories of.

In this memoir, Guha narrates his personal journey in cricket, covering an almost six decade, “lifelong affair”. The book offers us the partisan, though honest, view of an Indian cricket fan (not necessarily a fan of Indian cricket) who has seen and experienced the game at multiple levels. The book also describes the evolution of Indian cricket from its infancy to its current status as a powerhouse of the sport and host of the world’s most lucrative cricket franchise.

There are eleven chapters designed to represent a cricket team. Except for chapters nine and ten, the memoir is written from memory. Only one cricketer commands a single chapter—national icon, Sachin Tendulkar—in chapter six. This is not only a tribute to one of India’s greatest cricketers, but also a portrayal of the transformation of Indian cricket into a global power during Tendulkar’s era, and the craze it continues to generate in a country of 1.3 billion where cricket is “the” only sport.

Guha pens a personal vision of the whole gamut of cricket in India, which he either personally experienced, observed, or heard from his father and mother. It ranges from school cricket, college cricket, university cricket, club cricket, the Ranji Trophy, and international cricket. It also includes cricketers outside India with a

special chapter on “Some favourite Pakistanis” (Chapter 8), where we see the mutual love and admiration cricketers have for one another, regardless of the fans who view the game as warfare.

Guha captures established cricketers and also those who never made the “big time”, or played the game just for the love of it, as he himself often did, recreationally. This is typical Guha at his best, digging out lesser giants who tend to get overshadowed by larger giants. In *A Corner of a Foreign Field* (Penguin, 2014) Guha portrayed



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

Palwankar Baloo, a Dalit, who, in his eyes, was the first great Indian cricketer, though one who has been historically overlooked given India’s caste system.

Guha’s love for cricket is as undying as it is stringent. It is based on the notion of ethics and fairness the storied sport was built on. So it was fate that he, in January of 2017, found himself as an administrator of the BCCI—the highest cricket body in India. Chapters nine and ten narrate insights from his diary on the IPL, and the many conflicts



of interest that arose. He soon found that he could no longer turn a blind eye to the corruption within the system. In less than six months, Guha quit his role as administrator.

In spite of the pinch of salt from the BCCI and the IPL, the book shines with its love for cricket and for cricketers of integrity, as exemplified by the likes of Bisen Singh Bedi, Durai, and others. Guha was present at the quarter-final of the 1996 World Cup, a match between India and Pakistan at Bangalore. After Miandad was run out for 38, he was one of the few in the stadium who stood and saluted Miandad’s last international innings. The rest of the stadium jeered. This jingoism in cricket is something that Guha worries about.

In his young days, all Guha wanted to see was an Indian victory. As he turns 63 on the day this review is published (Apr 29, 2021), he finds himself becoming “less nationalistic”. Like legendary batsman, Jack Fingleton, he looks forward to any good performance so he can say “with joy in his voice, I saw that performance”.

*The Commonwealth of Cricket* is a beautiful love-letter that captures cricket from its many different angles. It may well stand the test of time and earn itself a place beside *Beyond a Boundary* (Hutchinson, 1963) by CLR James.

Ramachandra Guha’s *The Commonwealth of Cricket* is available at Omni Books, Dhanmondi. Orders can be placed at [fb.com/omnibooksbd](https://fb.com/omnibooksbd).

Asrar Chowdhury is Professor of Economics at Jahangirnagar University and a lover of Test Cricket. Email: [asarul@juniv.edu](mailto:asarul@juniv.edu)

## Urban poor need immediate aid interventions

*With so much at stake, lack of foresight and planning is unacceptable*

THE second wave of the coronavirus coupled with the most recent round of lockdown, which took effect from April 14, has once again laid bare the extreme vulnerabilities faced by the urban poor in Bangladesh. According to an estimate from the BIDS, the countrywide shutdown last year had caused an 80 percent drop in income of people belonging to the labouring class in urban areas. A report in this daily yesterday details how the circumstances are likely to be the same this year, too. However, despite the severity of the situation, the government is yet to come up with a coherent plan to include these marginalised households into its social safety net schemes.

This lack of planning is particularly disturbing given the fact that a government survey in December had already revealed that the country's social safety net schemes fail to cover millions of urban people facing food insecurity. Despite having this information, why did the authorities not have the foresight to come up with programmes targeting the urban poor, especially since so many global health experts had by then already started issuing warnings about a second wave of the pandemic and the possibility of future lockdowns in order to stop transmission?

On top of lost income and depleted savings, the rising prices of essentials have created an unprecedented crisis for the urban poor. But the inefficient planning in terms of food reserves means the government will no longer be able to sell rice at a subsidised rate of Tk 10/kg through its OMS outlets either. As a result, millions of people will now face food insecurity and be forced to cut back on essential spending, such as on healthcare, in the middle of a pandemic.

The government needs to demonstrate its ability to govern and provide for the most marginalised citizens, taking coordinated actions on long-term policies instead of simply reacting in a haphazard manner when faced with a crisis. For now, there must be quick and transparent collaboration among relevant ministries, city corporations, local government bodies and NGOs to ensure that pandemic relief funds reach their targeted populations as soon as possible, and more allocations must be made for the urban poor.

In the long run, the authorities must listen to the experts and design a social security system for the urban poor that is free of incorrect targeting, leakages and lack of coordination. The importance of a comprehensive household database for this purpose cannot be stressed upon enough. It is extremely disappointing that the National Household Database, which was meant to be the country's first poverty registry, is nowhere near being finished even after seven years. The delay means that not only are poor households deprived of benefits, but that the data collected is now obsolete due to the fast-changing conditions of the pandemic and the creation of a "new poor". When projects such as this drag on, it does not only cost taxpayers' money but also, as the pandemic amply demonstrates, eventually cost lives. All because of inefficient planning and unnecessary delays. The authorities can, and must, do better.

## Bangladesh joins Chinese initiative for vaccine, oxygen

*A much-needed partnership that should be seen through diligently*

WE welcome the government's decision to join five other South Asian countries in a multilateral effort to ensure vaccine and oxygen supply among the countries. The China-led initiative, called "China-South Asia Platform for Covid-19 Consultation, Cooperation, and Post-Pandemic Economic Recovery", had its first meeting held virtually with the foreign ministers of Bangladesh, China, Nepal, Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan in attendance. During the meeting, Bangladesh's foreign minister stressed on the importance of multilateralism and cooperation among countries during the Covid-19 crisis.

There are plans of establishing a Covid Emergency Medical Facility, a Poverty Alleviation Centre, and of exploring e-commerce in rural areas in Bangladesh, as proposed by China. While there are no solid plans yet as to when and where the medical facility would be built, we would urge the government to see the plan through diligently. Last March, the prime minister had reportedly proposed setting up a regional institution for emergency medical services but the plan never reached fruition. Now that the pandemic has resulted in dire situations across the region, such multilateral partnerships are more crucial than ever.

While Bangladesh is trying to purchase China's vaccine doses following an unexpected halt to supplies from the Serum Institute of India, China had also agreed earlier to provide five lakh shots of its vaccine as a gift. Both the Chinese vaccine and the Russian Sputnik V will be imported under "emergency use authorisation". However, we must also stress on the importance of ensuring an adequate supply of not only vaccines but also oxygen. There is no better example for us now than India's current situation of oxygen shortage, to the point where its supply to Bangladesh has been kept on hold for almost a week. Bangladesh itself does not have enough supply of oxygen, as demand has doubled amid the recent Covid-19 surge. Even with companies switching production from industrial oxygen to medical oxygen (as reported in this daily on April 21), many patients are not being able to get oxygen at public hospitals.

Therefore, while we congratulate the government on joining the Chinese initiative that will hopefully promote cooperation amongst the partners in fighting the pandemic in their respective countries, we must also urge it to ensure that maximum benefits are derived from this partnership in terms of vaccine and oxygen supply for our citizens.

# Has Hefazat been put in its place?

NAZMUL A KHAN

FACED with the full might of the state, the Hefazat-e-Islam has started to crumble. In a sudden move on Sunday night, Hefazat chief Junaid Babunagari dissolved its central committee, as more than half a dozen of its leaders reportedly prepared to defect. On record, they blame what they call a blunder of the Hefazat leadership when the group's angry supporters took to the streets to challenge the visit of the Indian premier Narendra Modi. Off the record, however, they cite serious pressure from the authorities that undertook a multi-

secretly meeting with the home minister, understandably to negotiate with the government, further hurt Hefazat's uncompromising posture. Finally, the government was able to quickly find support from a few renegades within Hefazat who bolstered the government's position, such as Maolana Abdullah Mohammad Hassan, who resigned in a press conference blaming the Hefazat leadership for the recent deadly violence in Brahmanbaria and elsewhere.

All these factors culminated in a serious crisis for Hefazat, one where Babunagari had little choice other than disbanding the central committee to

possibly the largest political gathering in decades, during its heyday in 2013.

The group's Chattogram-based leaders, except for one or two, have so far avoided any harsh treatment from the government. However, given the still-lingering tensions, it is necessary that both parties take a step back. Hefazat has already signalled its willingness to scale back its rhetoric, and the government may reciprocate.

Although the government refrained from arresting Babunagari and his secretary general, Nurul Islam Jihadi, Hefazat may soon have to compare itself with the BNP's situation during 2008-

mutually sympathetic to each other, BNP and Hefazat leaders now increasingly consider each other rivals.

Harun Izhar, the charismatic Hefazat cleric, recently harshly criticised a "neo-pro-India" BNP for its "betrayal". BNP secretary general, Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, complained days ago that their activists were being detained by the government in its anti-Hefazat crackdown. "They often say that [we] are associated with Hefazat. But it is you (Awami League) who are attached with Hefazat. You have struck an agreement with them... the prime minister was awarded 'Qawmi Mother' by them (Hefazat). So are we involved with Hefazat or are you?" he posed the question to the government in a virtual meeting held last week. Therefore, as Hefazat and BNP may see it as a zero-sum game, the government may not yet want to diminish Hefazat and allow BNP to recapture the vacuum.

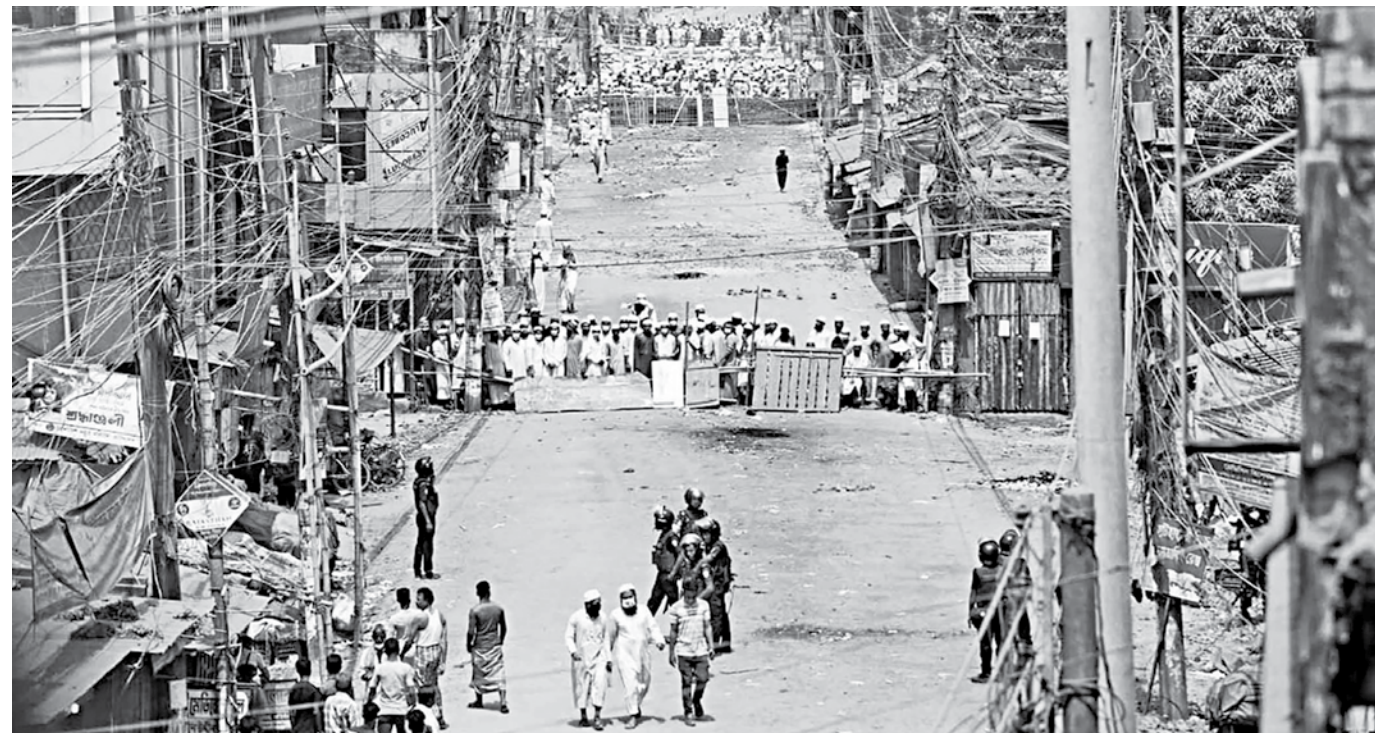
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When Ahmad Shafi was at the helm of Hefazat, it reached what seemed like a mutually beneficial understanding with the government, albeit to the dissatisfaction of the country's secular forces. Shafi and others backed down from inflammatory rhetoric against the Awami League. In return, they had some of their demands met by the government, even though some of these demands strikingly collided with the secular ideals preached by the ruling party.

It is strange how realpolitik supersedes ideology. It was only after Hefazat forcefully challenged a core political tenet of the government—its alliance with India's current government—that the group provoked its wrath. Until now, the government was very much willing to entertain this group's regressive, misogynistic and communalist agenda, as long as it did not test the government politically.

Shafi's demise, amid a chaotic internal power struggle within the group, paved the way for Babunagari to become the new custodian of the Qawmi madrasa-based organisation. The government watched warily as the Islamist ideologue started strengthening his support base after taking over Hefazat. In the end, it was probably because of Babunagari's inflexible attitude that cost the group dearly. Its leaders, driven purely by dogmatic rage, seriously lack political shrewdness and maturity to take on a party as resourceful and efficient in political manoeuvring as the ruling Awami League.

Nazmul A Khan is a journalist based in Bangladesh.



Activists of Hefazat-e-Islam build lines of defence on a road near the main gate of Hathazari Madrasa in Chattogram on May 27, 2021 protesting the visit of the Indian prime minister, as policemen stand guard in front of them.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

pronged approach in dealing with the group.

First, popular Hefazat figures such as the firebrand Mamunul Huq or Nurul Islam had their image blemished with embarrassing leaks about their private life which hampered their political authority, making them a fair target of legal prosecution (some would say, harassment). Second, the arrests of a number of Hefazat leaders, particularly those based in Dhaka, put the group on the back foot. Rattled to the core, its aging leaders were quick to make it clear that the group was no political threat to the government, nor did it have any political ambition.

Third, the carefully orchestrated leaks about the group's senior leaders

avoid more embarrassing desertsions.

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The government has treated the Islamist group just like any other political opponent. Incidentally, the recently imposed "strict" lockdown went in favour of the government. With a nationwide lockdown in effect and Covid-19 infections rising fast, Hefazat was unable to summon its supporters to the streets as its leaders were picked up, one after another, by law enforcement agencies.

However, it will be too early to write off Hefazat-e-Islam as a formidable political actor. Its appeal will stay strong to the masses who may view the group as oppressed and marginalised. One would be wise to recall that the group did not need a committee to organise what was

2013. Back then, the BNP chairperson and secretary general were generally considered safe from arrests, although the party activists had innumerable cases filed against them. But things changed within the span of a few years. If the government crackdown continues, it is a plausible scenario to imagine Babunagari and others in jail in the near future—unless, of course, Hefazat is able to make the tables turn. To avoid a repeat confrontation, both parties should now restrain themselves and live to fight another day.

Surely, the government has many reasons to not let this crisis escalate, one being to avoid a possible political revival of the BNP, which vied with Hefazat for the spotlight in recent years. Once

## Covid-19 vaccine divide and diplomacy: What we must do

DELWAR HOSSAIN

THE global Covid-19 pandemic has caused catastrophic consequences in every corner of the world. Rich and poor nations have suffered almost equally but with asymmetric capacity and resources. The detection of coronavirus in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 and its subsequent outbreak in more than 216 states and regions has been termed as the biggest public health threat after the Spanish flu in 1918-20. As it happened with other global public health crises, vaccine development was immediately considered to be an effective response to the devastating impacts of Covid-19. The global drive for vaccine development witnessed an unprecedented success led by powerful countries and multinational pharmaceutical corporations, with countries like the USA, Russia, China, the UK and India engaging national resources to develop vaccines at the earliest—whether under private or public enterprises.

Eventually, vaccine became a new hotspot of global diplomacy triggered by the existing patterns of competition and rivalry among the great powers. Vaccine nationalism soon captured the imagination of experts. The race for developing vaccines within the shortest time possible can be attributed to the nationalist tendencies of vaccine-producing countries such as the USA, Russia and China. While the states are involved in diplomacy, companies are focused on profiteering. Both the phenomena have created an adverse situation for millions and millions of people across the globe who have become victims of the vaccine divide. The ever-growing numbers of deaths and infections have created a hostile environment where lives and livelihoods are being traded off. Even experts now argue that the coronavirus will not completely go away; people in the world will have to live with it for an indefinite period.

In this context, large-scale vaccination has become the only way to save people and economy. But what one can see is a timid response by the global institutions. The utter disregard for multilateralism since the inception of this crisis exacerbated the situation in different countries, particularly in the developing and underdeveloped regions. It is true that WHO, along with the European Union and France, has launched COVAX

as a Covid-19 global vaccine access point. Coordinated by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) and the WHO, COVAX aims to ensure that vaccines are shared fairly among all nations, rich and poor. Countries that have joined the COVAX are divided into two groups: self-financing rich countries, and middle- and low-income economies. By now, 80 members have joined in the first category, while 92 entered the second category.

But one can clearly see that the COVAX initiative is quite inadequate, given the magnitude of the present crisis and its devastating consequences. Besides, the process of COVAX is flawed as rich

vaccine procurement is also alarming. According to a report published by Duke University, the world's wealthiest nations have locked up much of the near-term supplies. For their population of 1.2 billion, the wealthier nations have booked 4.6 billion doses, so the manufacturing capacities of vaccine firms will be locked up for months to fulfil these orders.

Coming to Bangladesh, one can see how vaccine diplomacy is being played out. The uncertainty of getting 30 million Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccines from the Serum Institute of India—due to a sudden halt to export—has forced Bangladesh to look for alternative sources. Bangladesh has received new

global attention to it when she placed a three-point proposal in the special UNGA session in September 2020 to deal with the challenges of Covid-19. These include: ensuring universal and equitable access to quality Covid-19 vaccine, transferring technology to developing countries to manufacture vaccine locally, and providing them with financial assistance to face challenges in the wake of the pandemic. Bangladesh repeatedly asserted in global forums that Covid vaccine is a global public good and urged vaccine-producing countries to help others to produce the vaccines with a view to attaining universal vaccine coverage. Bangladesh also pointed out that the world should recognise the vaccine manufacturing capacities of developing countries like Bangladesh.

Three issues become critically significant against the backdrop of insufficient access to vaccines by developing and least developed countries. First, the world has been witnessing a new vaccine divide between the Global North and Global South. It's likely the worst form of divide the world has ever seen in history. Secondly, all the powerful nations who are capable of manufacturing vaccines are the key actors in vaccine nationalism and vaccine diplomacy. The third issue is the dominance of the market mechanism which indicates to the profit-seeking behaviour of vaccine-manufacturing countries and companies. One can see a rising private-sector involvement, often at the invitation of governments, as countries struggle to ensure both supply and distribution. It may lead to a situation where private companies could purchase their own vaccine and provide it to those capable of paying.

If the current trends continue, the vaccine divide will create an alarming situation, causing the deaths of millions of people and damaging the livelihoods of marginalised populations around the world. More importantly, it would have devastating consequences for the low-income countries. It would deeply compromise their national capacities in healthcare, economy, education, and other vital sectors. So the world must declare and treat Covid-19 vaccines as a public good, and must effectively deal with vaccine divide based on a spirit of multilateralism and humanity.

Delwar Hossain is a professor of international relations at Dhaka University, and director of the university's East Asia Center.



PHOTO: REUTERS

countries under this scheme enjoy non-binding provisions—for them, it is merely a vehicle to further facilitate their vaccine diplomacy. The fate of initiatives to distribute vaccines to middle- and low-income countries also depends on funding from the rich countries, which is also not fully available. Hence, the COVAX, as a global facility to ensure fair access to vaccines, has a minimal capacity.

More worrying is the currently low level of access to vaccines in the developing and least developed nations compared to the developed countries. As per vaccine doses per 100 people in countries with the highest total vaccinations, rich countries are in a solid position. Discrimination in

offers of support from China and Russia. China has come forward with a regional platform to provide emergency vaccine support for South Asian countries barring India. It's a new twist in South Asian vaccine diplomacy. Like India, China has also offered some vaccine doses as a gift for Bangladesh. Similarly, Bangladesh and Russia are in collaboration for vaccine production in Bangladesh. But challenges persist as Bangladesh faces a crisis of vaccine availability due to the aforementioned global vaccine diplomacy. It may be mentioned that COVAX is also delaying its delivery of vaccines to its signatory states.

This reality certainly contributes to the vaccine divide. Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina drew



# Low levels of testing are hampering our Covid response



NAHELA NOWSHIN

It has been more than a year since Covid-19 was first detected in Bangladesh. Much has been, and continues to be, said about the country's handling of the pandemic.

From the perplexing policies on "strict" lockdowns and "lockdown lite" to the lack of enforcement of health guidelines, experts have cried hoarse about it all. But one aspect that is unfortunately absent from the conversation is Bangladesh's dismally low levels of Covid-19 testing. Although there was some talk about the low testing rates during the first few months after the virus was detected, now more than a year later, the critical issue of bare minimum testing rates seems to have faded into oblivion.

One does not have to be a public health expert or biostatistician to understand the problem at hand. In a country with a population of over 160 million, anywhere between 25,000 and 30,000 samples are being tested each day. This is a drop in the ocean. It is true that testing rates all over the world are sub-par and Bangladesh is not alone. But there is an urgent need to acknowledge that this is a serious obstacle in our Covid-19 response.

According to the Covid-19 dataset compiled by Our World in Data (which, by the way, is an excellent

repository of global Covid-19 stats), Bangladesh is trailing its South Asian neighbours India, Nepal and Pakistan when it comes to *new* tests per thousand population. As per the latest figures (April 25-26) presented by Our World in Data, India is conducting 1.016 new tests per 1,000 people each day; Nepal 0.319; and Pakistan 0.227. Bangladesh is carrying out 0.157 new tests per 1,000 people. Developed

testing, more Covid-positive cases will be detected. Patients can then be identified, isolated and treated. Without enough testing, we risk Covid-positive individuals going undetected, roaming free and unknowingly spreading the virus.

Secondly, low testing rates lead to low number of identified cases which in turn significantly influences health behaviours. People without adequate

people's overall health behaviour and demotivates them to adhere to health guidelines. This explains why weddings and social gatherings had resumed early this year, when Bangladesh was recording lows of 200 and 300-something cases (in February). All this must also be viewed within our cultural context where people are inherently social in nature and generally lack health consciousness.

transmission and suggests that there are likely more infected people who have not been tested yet. Lack of testing, on the other hand, means that the virus is spreading silently, increasing the possibility of larger outbreaks that will be hard to contain in the future. So while it is reasonable to rely on the positivity rate to understand how widespread the virus is, it is not a substitute for increased testing.

Even less attention is being given to *who* is being tested and *where*. Data on district-wise daily number of tests are not available; neither are disaggregated data, by income and location, of those who have been tested and have tested positive. This would have given us a clearer picture of who is being tested and where, which socioeconomic groups the majority of infected people belong to, and more importantly, which groups are being left out of Covid-19 testing. One can't help but wonder how the absurd idea that the poor in Bangladesh have "immunity against corona" originated. Such unscientific claims are being spewed by even the educated sections of society. Could it be due to the lack of testing and therefore lack of detected cases among these low-income groups?

There is an urgent need to ramp up Covid-19 testing across the country. This is necessary not only to detect cases silently spreading the virus at a time when the country is well into its second wave, but also to create a strong evidence base to formulate well-thought-out strategies of containment of the virus. Data matters. Lack of proper data, as a result of low levels of testing, creates misconceptions about the spread of the virus and disincentivises people from taking preventative health measures. We must also play our part and continue to emphasise the importance of maintaining health guidelines to those we come into contact with, regardless of what the official figures say.

This is not the time to let a false sense of security set in.

Nahela Nowshin is a doctoral student at McMaster University, Canada.



File photo of people waiting in a queue outside the Mugda Medical College Hospital in Dhaka to get tested for Covid-19, on March 21, 2021.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HUQ

*There is an urgent need to ramp up Covid-19 testing across the country. This is necessary not only to detect cases silently spreading the virus at a time when the country is well into its second wave, but also to create a strong evidence base to formulate well-thought-out strategies of containment of the virus.*

countries with high figures for new daily tests per thousand population include the United Kingdom (21.768) and United Arab Emirates (25.9).

Most people seem to gloss over the little detail about the number of tests presented in the daily government briefings regarding Covid-19 cases. But there are a number of reasons (some quite obvious) why testing rates are so important. Firstly, with more

health literacy (the majority of the population) do not critically look at the official number of Covid-19 cases that are released every day through a scientific lens. They blindly rely on these figures to understand the spread of the virus. So, when they see "low" numbers of Covid-19 cases being detected, the message they receive is that the Covid-19 situation is "under control". This no doubt negatively influences

In an article published in the website of the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, the authors, both professors of epidemiology at Bloomberg School, explain the significance and implications of "percent positive" and inadequate testing. "Percent positive", quite simply, indicates the percentage of all tests that turned out to be positive. A higher percent positive points to higher

# We cannot end poverty without ending corruption

ISMAIL ALI

How do corruption and poverty impact each other? I remember reading "Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity, and Poverty", a book gifted by a German friend of mine on my birthday. A comparative study of Germany and Bangladesh can offer important insights. The difference in the levels of poverty and prosperity between the two countries is staggering. In Germany, the current rate of per capita Gross Domestic Product is USD 45,466; the country is placed sixth in the global Human Development Index ranking (a measure combining health, wealth and education), and it ranks 22nd in the world in terms of ease-of-doing-business. Whereas in Bangladesh, per capita GDP stands at around USD 2,122—and it comes in at 133rd and 168th positions, respectively, in the aforementioned rankings. In the Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index (2020), while Germany is ranked ninth, Bangladesh ranks at 146th as

residing on the Mexican side of the border.

Although some scholars view corruption as an enabler of development rather than an obstacle, particularly at an early stage of modernisation and development, numerous studies on corruption concluded that communities incur substantial economic and social costs as a result of it. The use of public office for private gains always benefits a powerful few,

resources, geography, political instability, culture, weather and knowledge base, among other influences, play a pivotal role in answering one of the most heavily discussed economic questions of our time: why are some countries rich and the others poor? In his pioneering work "The Bottom Billion", Oxford University professor Paul Collier identifies four distinct poverty traps—civil war, natural resource endowment, being

drive massively overloaded trucks by paying a small bribe to the police.

It is not just the city of Nogales—the differences between South and North Korea, the former countries of East and West Germany, and the massive economic leaps made by

Botswana, Malaysia, and Singapore prove that good governance matters very much when it comes to economic development. Myanmar could be Asia's next failed state due to its ongoing political chaos, as *The Economist* predicts. So to move

from poverty to prosperity, it is not enough for a country to figure out good economic policies, it must root out corruption from its political and governance processes.

Ismail Ali is a London-based freelance journalist.



ILLUSTRATION: COLLECTED

while imposing huge costs on large sections of society.

Jeffrey Sachs, one of the most talented development scholars of our time, sees corruption as a poverty trap: poverty causes corruption, and corruption causes poverty. Likewise, the World Bank—while determining corruption as a major challenge in achieving its twin goals (ending extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity) for the poorest 40 percent of people in developing countries—pointed out that, "every stolen or misdirected dollar robs the poor of an equal opportunity in life and prevents governments from investing in their human capital."

Empirical studies have also shown that the poor pay the highest percentage of their income in bribes when accessing services such as health, education and justice. Moreover, corruption diverts precious government resources away from schools, hospitals and other essential services, and locks people into poverty.


The International Monetary Fund (IMF) estimates that the annual cost of bribery alone is about USD 1.5-2 trillion (roughly 2 percent of global GDP) which is siphoned out of developing countries each year through money laundering and dodgy deals. This cash could generate tax revenues which could be used to invest in fighting poverty, stimulating growth and creating jobs, according to the IMF.

It is true that the lack of natural


landlocked with bad neighbours, and having bad governance—in 58 of the world's poorest countries. However, he highlights that corruption can make even resource-rich societies poor. Collier shows how leaders of many of the poorest countries, pocketing from large surpluses of natural resources and embezzling funds from mega development projects, are themselves among the global super-rich.

The Begum Para in Toronto, Canada—an opulent neighbourhood where Bangladeshi millionaires are known for buying and settling in luxurious houses—is a prime example of how the powerful plunder public money while keeping their own countrymen impoverished.

Banerjee and Dufo, two Nobel Prize winning economists, in their seminal book, "Poor Economics", further explore the connection between corruption and poverty. Although they dispute the widely-held belief that the single greatest cause of entrenched poverty is poor governance and corruption, they also observed that it would be a waste of time for North Koreans to read their book if they cannot somehow get rid of their dictator. It is not possible to implement good policies if politics is not right. For example, spending billions of dollars in building schools, hospitals and roads could be a waste of money if the political system is unable to ensure that teachers and nurses regularly go to work and that truck drivers cannot



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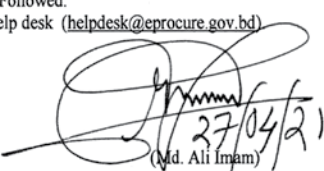
### Invitation for e-Tender

Tender Notice No: 25/e-GP/EED/CUM/7016(TMED)/7016(SHED)/4931(SHED)/6821(TMED)/2020-2021. Date: 27/04/2021.

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System portal ([www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents of following Package from the National e-GP System portal have to be deposited online through any registered Bank's Branches up to the Following Date & Time.

Tender ID	Lot/Package Location (Name of Institution)	Procurement Method	Publication Date & Time	Tender Document Last Selling/ Date & Time	Tender Closing Date & Time
572531	Construction of Single Story Academic Building with 4-storied foundation including Sanitary Water supply Electrification & Deep Tube well works at Mudaffarjonj A. U. Fazil Madrassha, Laksam, Cumilla	NCT (LTM)	02/05/2021 (22.00)	19/05/2021 (16.00)	20/05/2021 (12.00)
572532	Construction of Single Story Academic Building with 4-storied foundation including Sanitary Water supply Electrification & Deep Tube well works at Pipulia Fazil Madrassha, Sadar South, Cumilla	NCT (LTM)	02/05/2021 (22.00)	19/05/2021 (16.00)	20/05/2021 (12.00)
572494	Construction of Single Story Academic Building with 4-storied foundation including Sanitary Water supply Electrification & Deep Tube well works at Baraipur Islamia Dhakhil Madrassha, Lalmai, Cumilla	NCT (LTM)	02/05/2021 (22.00)	19/05/2021 (16.00)	20/05/2021 (12.00)
573270	Vertical Extension of 1st and 2nd floor including Sanitary Water supply & Electrification works at Juranpur Adarsha University College, Daudkandi, Cumilla	NCT (LTM)	02/05/2021 (22.00)	19/05/2021 (16.00)	20/05/2021 (12.00)
573272	Vertical Extension of 1st and 2nd floor including Sanitary Water supply & Electrification works at Jamua High School, Lalmai, Cumilla	NCT (LTM)	02/05/2021 (22.00)	19/05/2021 (16.00)	20/05/2021 (12.00)
573273	Vertical Extension of 1st and 2nd floor including Sanitary Water supply & Electrification works at Borokota School and College, Daudkandi, Cumilla	NCT (LTM)	02/05/2021 (22.00)	19/05/2021 (16.00)	20/05/2021 (12.30)
573275	Vertical Extension of 2nd floor EED Building at Cumilla Govt. College Adarsha Sadar Cumilla	NCT (LTM)	02/05/2021 (22.00)	19/05/2021 (16.00)	20/05/2021 (12.30)
574141	Vertical Extension of 1st and 2nd floor (Horizontal Toilet Block) including Sanitary Water supply & Electrification works at Joytipal Mohathero Buddhist Orphan Home High School, Laksam, Cumilla	NCT (OTM)	02/05/2021 (22.00)	19/05/2021 (16.00)	20/05/2021 (12.30)
574142	Vertical Extension of 1st and 2nd floor including Sanitary Water supply & Electrification works at Choudhagram Nojomia Dhakhil Madrassha, Choudhagram, Cumilla	NCT (OTM)	02/05/2021 (22.00)	19/05/2021 (16.00)	20/05/2021 (12.30)
574143	Manufacturing & Supply of Furniture at Khurul Ajouria Alim Madrassha Muradnagar Cumilla	NCT (OTM)	02/05/2021 (22.00)	19/05/2021 (16.00)	20/05/2021 (12.30)

The Provisions laid down in the "PPA & PPR -2008 including latest amendment" and STD will be Followed.  
 Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd))



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one of the most corrupt countries in the world.

In "Why Nations Fail", authors Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson conclude that "underdevelopment is the result of political elites in developing countries who deliberately plunder their people and keep them impoverished." Citing examples from the city of Nogales—which is located half in Mexico and half in the United States—they show that people living on the US side are well-educated, prosperous, and enjoy far higher life expectancies than those

*In "Why Nations Fail", authors Daron Acemoglu and James Robinson conclude that "underdevelopment is the result of political elites in developing countries who deliberately plunder their people and keep them impoverished."*

# Govt starts buying of paddy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government started procurement of paddy directly from farmers at Tk 27 per kg from yesterday.

Food Minister Sadhan Chandra Majumder inaugurated the countrywide "Boro Collection-2021" programme through a video conference from Dhaka yesterday morning.

High officials of the administration of nine districts -- Netrakona and Kishoreganj of Dhaka division, Naogaon and Bogura of Rajshahi division, Dinajpur of Rangpur division and Sylhet Sadar, Habiganj, Moulvibazar and Sunamganj of Sylhet division -- joined him virtually.

Officials of the food departments, mill owners and farmers' representatives also attended the programme.

The food minister directed the officials and employees concern to be careful so that no farmers would be subject to harassment going to provide rice to the warehouses.

The minister gave instructions to the officials and staff to collect paddy and expedite food storage, maintaining health rules.

However, he also instructed not to compromise with the quality of the paddy and rice during the procurement.

In Bagerhat Sadar, Nani Gopal Hira, a farmer of Chitalmari upazila, provided 2.5 metric tonnes of paddy to the local storage of the food ministry.

"There is no food godown in Chitalmari upazila, so he had to bring his paddy to Bagerhat Sadar renting vehicle," he said.

Food Department will collect 6.50 lakh metric tonnes of paddy directly from farmers at Tk 27 per kg.

Most of the paddy will be collected by selecting farmers through a lottery with agricultural cards given to farmers while in some districts a portion of paddy will be collected using apps, food officials said.

The ministry will also procure 10 lakh metric tonnes of parboiled rice and 1.5 lakh metric tonnes of sunburn (Atap) at Tk 40 and Tk 39 per kg from millers during the current Boro season.

The ministry could not immediately say how much paddy they would be collecting on the first day of procurement.

## Govt makes it must for all

FROM PAGE 12  
more than 2,700 deaths every day over the last week. It is also dealing with oxygen shortages.

The government imposed a ban on entry of travellers from India via land, river and air ports. Concerned by the situation in India, the government is mulling more restrictions in Bangladesh in the future.

However, Bangladeshis in India with expired visas can return after taking a release/certificate from the Bangladesh High Commissioner in India.

They too would have to be in a 14-day quarantine. The Health Services Division, Public Safety Division, Security Services Division, shipping ministry and deputy commissioner concerned will take necessary measures in this regard. The notification did not mention where they would need to quarantine.

However, vehicles carrying goods and essentials would be allowed in.

Shops and shopping malls would remain open from 10:00am to 8:00pm ensuring health guidelines, the notification said.

Sources said the government allowed shops and malls to stay open ahead of Eid because businesses were hurting. Shops might be closed again after Eid.

Commerce ministry, labour and employment ministry, trade organisations and bazaar managing committees would take measures in this regard. Legal action would be

taken against those found violating the directives, the notification added.

The notification said the religious affairs ministry would decide on Eid congregations. The ministry has urged Muslims to offer Eid prayers at mosques instead of at Eidgahs.

Traffic movement on streets has been increasing significantly day by day.

Congestion was seen at some intersections in the capital, like Bijoy Sarani, Gulshan, Farmgate, Mirpur and also in adjacent areas of shopping centres, like New Market and Bashundhara City Mall.

Visiting some major shopping malls and markets in Dhaka -- New Market, Chandni Chawk, Gausia, Noor Mansion, Chandrima Super Market, and Bashundhara City Mall yesterday, The Daily Star correspondents found customers pouring into the shops from 10:00am.

At most shopping centres, only a few of the health safety guidelines were being followed as the rush was overwhelming.

Many shop owners and customers were seen with their masks down. Besides, there was not enough space inside most shops to maintain physical distancing.

Buses, train and launches have been out of service. Sources said the government had considered allowing buses and trains to run but changed its mind.

## 3-way battle amid Covid

FROM PAGE 12  
was fewer than the Left-Congress alliance's 42.51 percent, while the BJP got 7.27 percent of votes.

But the scenario changed after three years in the last Lok Sabha (national election) polls in 2019 where the TMC managed 41.17 percent votes while the BJP gained 30.77, with most of the votes shifted from the Left-Congress alliance, which secured 24.69 percent votes.

Considering the Lok Sabha polls, the TMC now is leading in 19 seats while the BJP became TMC's main challenger, leading in 11 seats. The Left-Congress on the other hand is leading in only five seats.

In this phase, the main focus will be on Birbhum, as all its 11 assembly seats are going to be voted for today. This district is a traditional stronghold of the TMC, which won nine seats against Congress and CPIM's one each in 2016.

But the BJP staged a massive turnaround in the Lok Sabha polls in the two constituencies of the district securing 39.3 percent in Birbhum and 40.9 percent in Bolpur against TMC's 45.5 percent and 48.3 percent respectively.

The TMC won 48.3 percent votes against the BJP's 11 percent in Birbhum in the last assembly elections.

Kolkata is always a tough place for the BJP as the voters in the city, especially South Kolkata, have an exceptional bonding with TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee -- the seven time MP and two times MLA from the area.

But this time around, the BJP is trying its best to woo the voters of the city by offering many of its promises especially to the urban poor, who account for over 30 percent of the city's population.

Over 84 lakh voters will decide the fate of 283 candidates in this this phase. The EC has deployed 641 companies of central forces to ensure free and fair voting.

Voting for the previous seven phases were held between March 27 and April 26. The vote count will take place on May 2.

Meanwhile, the EC has banned all victory processions and celebrations after the results in West Bengal as well as in Tamil Nadu, Assam, Puducherry and Kerala due to Covid-19 health restrictions.

## Heavier inflow of refugees

FROM PAGE 12  
Kosygin. According to Radio Pakistan the message was in reply to one sent by Yahya. The content of the message was not disclosed. Soviet President Podgorny in a message to Yahya early this month had called for an end to the bloodbath in Bangladesh. BE READY FOR ANY EVENTUALITY: BHUTTO

The Pakistan People's Party Chairman Zulfikar Ali Bhutto asked the people of Pakistan to be prepared for any eventuality. He was speaking to newsmen at the Islamabad airport today following a meeting with Yahya Khan. He told questioners that he could not say whether there was any danger of war in view of India's present attitude.

Bhutto also informed that he would soon visit East Pakistan to observe the situation there and meet local political leaders.

Earlier, Bhutto had a meeting with the Chinese ambassador in Pakistan. He told newsmen that he

had conveyed his country's gratitude towards China for its support to "unity and integrity of Pakistan".

**POLITICS REVIVING IN WEST PAKISTAN**

Political figures had been holding small meetings and news conferences around West Pakistan for two weeks or more, asking that the military government turn over at least some power to the people and their elected representatives.

Parties of both the right and the left in West Pakistan wanted a restoration of popular government because they had no effective power now and could only gain from a return to conventional political life.

In recent days officials of the Pakistan People's Party and of lesser groups had been quietly seeking the support of former notables of the Awami League, which was banned when the military action began.

Shamsuddoza Sajen is a journalist and researcher. He can be contacted at sajen1986@gmail.com



A cyclo driver shares donated meals with people, after all public markets were ordered to close amid the latest outbreak of the coronavirus disease, in Phnom Penh, Cambodia yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

## Should we be worried about India variant?

FROM PAGE 1  
horrifying since the pandemic began.

The daily cases in India began to rise at the end of February this year after a steady fall from mid-September 2020. It suddenly spiked sharply in March and reached record highs this month, setting the global record of daily infections with over 3.4 lakhs cases and staggering 2,761 deaths only on April 24.

Now the question is, what was the switch that catalysed the dramatic surge in infection? Was it the crowded election rallies that ran through February and March, followed by voting throughout April? Or was it due to public gatherings? Or is it the emergence of new variants?

Is Indian variant in play? Viruses naturally mutate to produce different strains or variants of themselves. Most of these mutations are harmless. But others can make it more contagious, virulent, immune evader and often vaccine resistant.

India has recently detected such a variant -- officially known as B.1.617 -- in October. This variant is popularly known as a "double mutant" due to its two significant mutations on its Spike protein.

The variant was detected in 220 out of 361 Covid-19 samples collected between January and March in Maharashtra.

According to the GISAIID database, it has been spotted in at least 21 countries. In the UK, 103 cases with the Indian variant have been detected, which were carried in by international travellers since February.

Public Health England has listed it as a "variant under investigation". Many Indian scientists believe that this variant is behind the unprecedented surge in infections that is sweeping through the entire country.

India variant has two key mutations on its Spike protein: one is L452R and other is E484Q. The L452R mutation has been found in the California variant previously.

A study published in the journal "Cell" in April 20 2021 showed that the presence of L452R mutation increases viral shedding from infected persons and increases its infection capability compared to the original version, meaning that this mutant becomes more contagious. This variant also exhibits decreased antibody neutralisation, suggesting a potential chance of vaccine resistance.

The second mutation -- E484Q -- in the India variant has similarities with the one present in the South Africa and Brazil variants (E484K).

These two mutations share the same location (484) on the Spike protein; but their amino acid alterations are

dissimilar. While the South Africa and Brazil mutants' glutamic acid is replaced by lysine, in the India variant, it is replaced by glutamine. This is why these two variants are similar but not the same.

The India variant has an additional 11 other mutations as well.

Preliminary study suggests that B.1.617 variant is more contagious than the original virus as predicted by earlier laboratory investigations. But it is important to consider that in India, the UK variant (B.1.1.7), South Africa variant and Brazil variant have also been detected.

An article published in "Nature" on April 21, 2021, shows that the UK variant has become the dominant virus in the state of Punjab, whereas the Indian B.1.617 variant has become dominant in the state of Maharashtra.

Both variants are highly contagious and immune evaders. Therefore, it is plausible that the new variants are playing a pivotal role in driving the second wave.

The current situation in India appears similar to that we have seen last year in Brazil, where sudden surge of infection devastated the city of Manaus due to the spread of the highly transmissible and immune evader variant known as P.1.

During the first wave, 1 in 5 people in India were infected by the original variant of coronavirus and fifty percent of the urban population developed antibodies in their blood, suggesting that they are somewhat protected from Covid.

However, the scale of the current nationwide infection raised a question -- why has the pre-existing immunity failed to protect a large part of population from infection?

This can be explained, at least in a part, with the fact that the immune evader variant B.1.617 could underlie the surge of second wave. A further large-scale genome sequencing is needed to confirm this speculation.

Due to the potential devastating nature of the B.1.617 variant, the UK has banned entrance of travellers from India into their country.

Have election rallies fuelled the spread? In March, at the beginning of the second wave, India's political parties started a series of election campaigns in West Bengal, Assam, Kerala and Tamil Nadu. Each rally was crowded with thousands of people with no social distancing and a minimal use of masks.

As expected, all these states witnessed a rapid surge of infections. In West Bengal, from mid-March to mid-April, the number of daily cases jumped from one thousand cases to

12 thousand per day.

Surprisingly, within this timeframe the surge in daily cases was not unique to only these four states, rather similar infection rises were noted in other parts of India as well.

For instance, in Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh and Karnataka, a rapid surge of infection took place, although they were not holding any state polls.

Therefore, large gatherings during election rallies may not be the main reason for the skyrocketing trend of the second wave infection.

Lessons to be learnt from India's crisis:

India is not alone. We have seen similar devastating second waves in Brazil, the UK, Germany and France, which were largely attributed to the new variants.

In Bangladesh, we have found the UK and South Africa variants.

We also witnessed a violent spike in infection rates during March to mid-April, which, for now, appears to be getting under control due to a nationwide "lockdown".

But this downfall of the second wave could be a temporary event before it rises again if no effective mitigation measures are taken. To avoid a potential cataclysmic of the pandemic crisis, such as the one India is facing right now, the following measures should be considered --

(1) To stop entry of the India variant to our country, for which all access points at the border must be closed for at least two weeks. A 14-day institutional quarantine must be implemented for all incoming travellers when the ban is lifted. Similar approach should be applied for travellers from the UK, South Africa and Brazil.

(2) A large-scale variant surveillance should be conducted by genome sequencing or targeted RT-PCR. Constant monitoring of variants is paramount to trace and contain any problematic variant of concern that tends to be dominant.

(3) After easing of the nationwide strict lockdown, a long-term tier-based area-specific lockdown or mitigation measures should be in place to control transmission. People should be forced to abide by health rules.

(4) Hospital beds, ICU capacity and uninterrupted oxygen supply should be increased in every district to avoid crumbling of the healthcare system in the event of worse surge in infection rates.

(5) Vaccination efforts should be increased to cover at least 60 percent of the population by the end of 2021. Without an extensive vaccination programme, the Covid-19 pandemic cannot be overcome.

## Third gender

FROM PAGE 12  
Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Dewan Moudud Ahmed said the government has set up Ashrayan-2 project for 50 third gender people in Dhopkandi area in the upazila.

"When the government is working to give third gender people homes, village arbitrators have no right to forcibly displace them," he said.

The accused must be punished, the UNO added.

## Apollo 11's

FROM PAGE 12  
rank of Major General.

He is best known for being a member of the Apollo 11 mission when his crewmates Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin became the first people to set foot on the Moon.

Collins would go on to say the experience forever changed his perspective, impressing upon him the fragility of our home planet.

"When we rolled out and looked at (the Moon), oh, it was an awesome sphere," he said at a 2019 event at George Washington University commemorating the 50th anniversary.

But "as magnificent as that was, as impressive, and as much as I will remember that, that was nothing, nothing compared to this other window out there," he continued.

"Out there was this little pea about the size of your thumbnail at arm's length: blue, white, very shiny, you get the blue of the oceans, white of the clouds, streaks of rust we call continents, such a beautiful gorgeous tiny thing, nestled into this black velvet of the rest of the universe."

Collins never returned to space but went on to become a diplomat, serving as assistant secretary of state for public affairs at the height of the Vietnam war.

He later became the first director of the National Air and Space Museum in Washington.

## Erfan Salim walks

FROM PAGE 12  
officer in October last year.

There was no legal bar for Erfan to get released from jail following the apex court order, Erfan's lawyer Sayed Ahmed Raza said after the verdict.

Erfan was arrested after a case was filed against him in connection with attacking Lt Wasif Ahmed Khan of Bangladesh Navy in the capital's Dhanmondi area on October 25 last year.

Earlier, he had been cleared from two cases filed under Narcotics Control Act and Arms Act after investigation officers submitted final reports saying they did not find any evidence against him.

The cases were filed after Rab raided Erfan's Chawkbazar house on October 26 last year, a day after his arrest. Rab claimed to have seized five bottles of foreign liquor and an unlicensed pistol with two bullets.

But Chawkbazar police, which later investigated the cases, submitted final reports in the cases on January 5.

During the Rab drive, Erfan was sentenced by a mobile court of Executive Magistrate Sarwoer Alam to six months' jail in connection with the recovery of illegal alcohol and another six months for possessing illegal walkie-talkies.

In those cases, Salim secured bail from Additional District Magistrate Court on January 4.

## India's virus toll

FROM PAGE 12  
B.1.617 variant had as of Tuesday been detected in over 1,200 sequences uploaded to the GISAIID open-access database "from at least 17 countries".

Offering a glimmer hope, the co-founder of BioNTech -- which developed a Covid-19 vaccine with Pfizer -- said he is confident the shot works against the variant.

"We are still testing the Indian variant, but the Indian variant has mutations that we have already tested for and which our vaccine works against, so I am confident," said Ugur Sahin.

White House Chief Medical Adviser Anthony Fauci said on Tuesday Covaxin, India's home-grown Covid vaccine produced by Bharat Biotech, has been found to neutralise the B.1.617 variant.

**SEARCH FOR VACCINES**  
Experts said India's best hope to fight the pandemic was to vaccinate its vast population and yesterday it opened registrations for everyone above the age of 18 to be given jabs.

But the country, which is one of the world's biggest producers of vaccines, does not yet have the stocks for an estimated 600 million people becoming eligible, on top of ongoing effort to inoculate the elderly and people with other medical conditions. People who tried to register said they failed.

"Tried registering and blocking a slot for vaccination," said Shourya Agarwal on Twitter. Failed multiple times.

Even those already eligible were struggling to find doses, reports Reuters.

"They are telling us that injections are not available, as vaccines have not arrived," said Mumbai resident Pushpa Goswami at a vaccination centre. She said she registered three days ago.

## Vaccines must be distributed with equity

FROM PAGE 1  
agreed to closely follow the development of the pandemic in India, which recently turned severe with about 350,000 new Covid-19 cases being detected daily. They expressed willingness to provide the necessary support through respective channels in consultation with India.

Chinese State Councillor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi, Afghanistan acting Foreign Minister Mirwais Nab, Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen, Nepal Foreign Minister Pradeep Kumar Gyawali, Pakistan Foreign Minister Makhdoom Shah Mahmood Qureshi and Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Dinesh Gunawardena participated in Tuesday's conference.

The conference is part of an initiative by China called "China-South Asia Platform for Covid-19 Consultation, Cooperation, and Post-pandemic Economic Recovery".

The initiative was first taken in November last year and meetings were subsequently held at directors general and foreign secretaries levels before Tuesday foreign minister-level conference.

In the spirit of openness, inclusiveness and win-win cooperation, the six countries welcomed active participation of

other countries in the region.

At the conference, China announced its decision to establish a "China-South Asian Countries Emergency Supplies Reserve", "China-South Asian Countries Poverty Alleviation and Cooperative Development Center" and hold a "China-South Asian Countries E-commerce Cooperation Forum on Poverty Alleviation in Rural Areas" in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic.

The foreign ministers said "vaccine nationalism" will hinder the global efforts to defeat Covid-19 and spoke for strengthening cooperation to track Covid-19 mutation closely. They stressed that countries should step up solidarity and cooperation to win final victory over Covid-19.

They expressed firm support for WHO's due role in the global cooperation against Covid-19 and acknowledged that tracing the origin of the virus is a matter of science and a global mission.

China said it would work on making the vaccines a global public good, and carry out continued vaccine cooperation with the participating countries in a flexible manner, including co-production of vaccines.

The foreign ministers agreed to deepen cooperation in the Belt and

Road Initiative; open borders, closed under the premise of pandemic prevention and control, for smooth trade; keep the industrial and supply chains stable and secure; and give a stronger boost to economic recovery.

The foreign ministers stressed upon the importance of strengthening cooperation in poverty reduction, food security, and other non-traditional security fields to protect the livelihood of people with special focus on the most vulnerable groups.

## Hong Kong passes immigration bill with 'exit ban' powers

AFP, Hong Kong

Hong Kong yesterday passed a new immigration law that includes powers to stop people entering or leaving the city, raising fears Chinese mainland-style "exit bans" could be deployed in the international business hub.

The legislation sailed through a legislature now devoid of opposition as Beijing seeks to quash dissent and make the semi-autonomous city more like the authoritarian mainland following huge and often violent democracy protests.



The Sri Lanka camp (Inset) was in a relaxed mood in training yesterday ahead of the second Test against Bangladesh which starts in Pallekele today. Following the draw in the first Test, visitors Bangladesh will look to wrap up the series with a positive result. PHOTO: SLC

## 'We have to play to win and not be happy with draws'

SPORTS REPORTER



There were questions over Bangladesh's approach and attitude towards Test cricket over the years with the fear of losing always forcing the team management to go for a rather defensive mindset.

Since coming from a series of defeats in recent past, including the 2-0 whitewash to a rather inexperienced West Indies side at home earlier this year, the drawn first Test against Sri Lanka in Pallekele did come as a huge relief to the Bangladesh camp.

But according to head coach Russell Domingo, the time has come for the Bangladesh team for a mental shift. According to the South African, a win should now be the priority in order to help the side become a serious Test side.

"It is disappointing when a drawn Test is seen as a massive success. I am not here for drawn Tests. We don't want to lose

Tests but we should have a mental shift. We have to play to win, and not merely be happy with the draws. I have had six or seven Tests with the team now; I think I understand our team and culture. I know the areas we need to improve on, particularly on the mental side regarding [approaching] Tests. There's a long way to go. There's a fear of losing Tests, and that's something that we have to come away from. We have to play to win," Domingo said at a virtual pre-match press conference yesterday.

"At the moment I feel we are playing not to lose. It is a mental shift that we need to make. Until we change that mindset, we will always be okay with mediocrity. It is not something I want to be part of," the coach added.

With the second and final Test of the series against Sri Lanka set to begin today, according to Domingo, the visitors will be aiming for a series win, which will be a great achievement.

Much like in the first Test, the team management is keen to continue with five bowlers and six batters in the line-up for the second Test.

"When you have Shakib Al Hasan in the team, it allows you to play seven batters. When you don't have that all-rounder, you have to be brave and have five bowlers who can get us 20 wickets. If it was solely up to me, it would be the way to go, but there's a panel of selectors that need to be consulted with," he said.

The pitch at Pallekele in the first Test, but Domingo is still considering the same pace trio of Taskin Ahmed, Ebadot Hossain and Abu Jayed for the second Test. However, a lot will depend on how the seamers recover after bowling 70 overs in the first Test in hot and humid conditions.

The 46-year-old is also willing to give opener Saif Hassan another opportunity despite the right-hander scoring 0 and 1 in the first match.



## Will pitch be any different from the one used in first Test?

SPORTS REPORTER



After the Pallekele pitch offered very little help to the bowlers in the first Test which ended in a draw, hosts Sri Lanka will be looking for a different approach when they take on Bangladesh in the second and final Test at the same venue from today.

The Pallekele International Cricket Stadium pitch in which the first Test between Sri Lanka and Bangladesh was played received a below-average rating by the match referee. And the hosts will surely want to come up with a better surface and a different strategy for the second Test.

The pitch remained batting-friendly throughout the first Test,

resulting in a total of 1289 runs being scored in the match for the loss of 17 wickets at an average of 75.82 runs per wicket, and, therefore, received one demerit point under the ICC Pitch and Outfield Monitoring Process.

Sri Lanka included left-arm wrist-spinner Lakshan Sandakan and fast bowler Chamika Karunaratne for the second Test, indicating the hosts may opt for a spin strategy against the visitors after the green top at Pallekele hardly offered any assistance to the seamers in the opener.

Bangladesh, on the other hand, have retained the same 15 from the first Test squad for today's game with head coach Russell Domingo hinting that the Tigers might go with the same strategy of having five bowlers and six batsmen in the

line-up.

Pacers Taskin Ahmed and Abu Jayed are the two pacers who are expected to play the second Test. However, it is uncertain if the team management would replace Ebadot Hossain to include uncapped young left-arm seamer Shoriful Islam.

But, unlike the first Test where spinners struggled to get turn off the surface and were unable to trouble the batters, the spin duo of Taijul Islam and Mehedi Hasan Miraz will surely play a huge role in the second Test with the pitch touted to be different than the first Test.

From batting's point of view, the visitors will once again bank on the top order, especially on experienced Tamim Iqbal, who was flawless and struck fifties in

both the innings of the first Test.

According to Domingo, the team management would want to give opener Saif Hassan another chance despite the right-hander managing to score 0 and 1 in the first Test.

Batting will once again hold the key for the Tigers where the likes of Najmul Hossain Shanto, who struck his maiden Test hundred in the opener, alongside skipper Mominul Haque, who also registered his maiden ton away from home, will have to play a vital role.

Bangladesh's confident approach of fielding six batters would also mean that experienced Mushfiqur Rahim and wicket-keeper batsman Liton Das would also have a big responsibility in the middle order.

## New hope for HOCKEY LEAGUE

SPORTS REPORTER



There is a new hope regarding staging of Premier Division Hockey League as Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has promised to donate Tk 1 crore to Bangladesh Hockey Federation (BHF).

The game's local governing body could not hold the top-flight league for nearly three years as most of the lower-table clubs showed their inability to form squads due to financial constraints, which deepened due to the pandemic.

In the last meeting of the league committee, most of the clubs sought financial help from the BHF to take part in the league. BHF president Air Chief Marshal Masihuzzaman Serniabat sought financial help from the Prime Minister to organise the league, BHF's acting general secretary Mohammad Yousuf informed yesterday.

"We are in the process of getting the promised money from the Prime Minister's Office but don't know when we will receive it," Yousuf said. "After getting the money, we will try to sit with the clubs' high-ups in presence of the BHF president because we want to hold the league this year."

The participating clubs took the news positively even though there is uncertainty among some officials.

"Actually we don't know anything about it officially. If the federation provides financial help, it becomes easy for the

small clubs to take part in the league. We also want the players to be benefited from the league but the covid-19 situation is a crucial factor at the moment," said Victoria SC's sports secretary Nuruzzaman.

Dhaka Mariner Youngs Club's hockey secretary Badrul Islam said, "I heard it unofficially. If the federation meets at least 50 percent demand of the clubs, there is no reason for us not to play the league. No doubt, the donation will brighten the chance of starting the league but there are also some issues to settle as some clubs are still closed since the casino scandal and those clubs need to get their tents open to run camp for the league."

Abahani's hockey secretary and BHF vice-president Jaki Ahmed Ripon is, however, not sure about the nature of the donation as he believes the fund the Prime Minister promised to provide is for other purposes including arrangement of international competitions such as Junior Asia Cup and Asian Champions Trophy in Dhaka.

"No discussion regarding the Tk 1 crore fund has taken place yet and the federation will decide in which sectors they will spend this fund," Ripon said, adding that Abahani is always in favour of playing.

He also added that the current situation of coronavirus is not suitable for the league to be held and that clubs like Victoria SC, Wanderers Club and Dilkusha SC need to get the tents opened to run camps.



(L-R) Pakistan pacers Shaheen Shah Afridi, Haris Rauf and Shahnawaz Dhani share some words yesterday, ahead of the first Test against Zimbabwe which starts in Harare today. The visitors will be looking to make it a clean sweep in the two-match series after winning the T20 series 2-1. PHOTO: PCB

## CHAMPIONS LEAGUE



Real Madrid striker Karim Benzema scored a spectacular volley to salvage a 1-1 draw against Chelsea in their first leg match of the Champions League semifinal in Madrid on Tuesday. PHOTO: REAL MADRID FC

## Tuchel rues missed chances

REUTERS, Madrid

Chelsea coach Thomas Tuchel said his side should have wrapped up their Champions League semi-final first leg with Real Madrid in the first half on Tuesday and rued missed chances in the 1-1 draw that could have put the game beyond their opponents.

U.S. forward Christian Pulisic fired Chelsea in front in the 14th minute in the Alfredo Di Stefano Stadium, and the visitors created plenty more opportunities in the first half as 13-times winners Real struggled to make any inroads at the other end.

Yet Chelsea's inability to score a second away goal proved costly as Karim Benzema's fine effort levelled things up before the break with his side's only shot on target in the opening period.

"I have a feeling we should have won the first half and we could have perhaps decided this game in the first half an hour when we were playing so strong," Tuchel told the BBC.

"The second half was a tactical game and you could feel we only had two days in between two away games which made it physically and mentally demanding and you could feel it in the decision making.

"We suffered a bit and an extra day would have been nice."

Having scored the away goal, Chelsea are in the driving seat to reach a first Champions League final since 2012 ahead of next week's return leg at Stamford Bridge.

"It is just the first half (of the tie), we knew against Real Madrid it would be tough," Chelsea's Cesar Azpilicueta told BT Sport.

"We started with courage, we had to perform at our best level. The semi-final of a Champions League asks you to play your best. We missed that last pass where we could choose the best option."

## Zidane glad Real still alive

REUTERS, Madrid

Real Madrid coach Zinedine Zidane admitted he was relieved to finish Tuesday's Champions League semi-final first leg against Chelsea with his side still in the tie following a 1-1 draw after being outplayed for large parts of the game.

"I'm so happy with the players because we're still alive," Zidane told reporters.

"We struggled a bit for the first 25-30 minutes but then we improved and were much better in the second half and had control. We're happy what we did in the game overall."

Real had breezed past Liverpool and Atalanta in their last two home knockout games but were really put to the test by Chelsea's intense pressing game and Zidane credited Thomas Tuchel's side for keeping his team at bay.

"We are good at pressing teams high up the pitch but our opponents were very good, very competitive. They've had 21 games and not conceded in 16 of them (before Tuesday's game) and they proved why. They are in the semi-finals for a reason," he added.

Real keeper Thibaut Courtois, who made a vital early save to deny Chelsea forward Timo Werner, agreed that the Premier League outfit had been the more impressive side but warned that his team would put them under pressure in the second leg in London.

"They were more aggressive and more intense, we wanted to start the game like they did, they gave everything. The first goal came at a difficult time for us but we were able to lift ourselves up and the second half was less crazy," he said.

"The 1-1 score means next week's game is like a final. I don't think it will end 0-0 and if Chelsea sit and wait for us they could be making a big mistake."

"The character of the pitch hardly changed over the course of five days. There was no shift in balance between bat and ball as the game progressed. The pitch remained batting friendly throughout, resulting in a total of 1289 runs scored in the match for the loss of 17 wickets at an average of 75.82 runs per wicket, which is very high. Therefore, in keeping with the ICC guidelines I rate this pitch as below average."

Match referee Ranjan Madugalle on first Test pitch

## BPL resumes at BNS on Friday

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) yesterday confirmed resumption of the Bangladesh Premier League on Friday according to its previous decision despite the extension of the ongoing lockdown by another week.

Instead of holding the matches in four venues -- Dhaka, Gazipur, Cumilla and Munsiganj, the game's local governing body decided to use only one venue, that of Bangabandhu National



Stadium in Dhaka, during the lockdown to maintain Covid-19 protocols while adhering to government restrictions.

BFF's senior vice-president Abdus Salam Murschedy informed that they would hold two to three matches per day to complete three to four rounds before the Eid-ul-Fitr vacation. Besides, the AFC Cup fixture of Abahani has also forced them to matches more frequently.

Replying to a query, Murschedy said, "Health is our first priority and we have made it mandatory for everyone involved with the matches to have Covid-19 tests. The teams will have to submit Covid-19 test reports 72 hours before the start of respect matches."

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## INCOMING PASSENGERS' QUARANTINE Govt makes it must for all

Bans entry from India; crowds on streets, malls continue to swell

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Considering the global situation and following the advice of public health experts, the government has made quarantine mandatory for all passengers from abroad.

The quarantine procedure would be different depending on the countries they come from.

The Cabinet Division yesterday issued a notification extending the ongoing restrictions until May 5, explaining the quarantine procedures, mentioning the time shops and malls could stay open, and banning entry into Bangladesh from India.

According to the directives, passengers from the Middle East, Singapore, Malaysia and China, who have tested negative for Covid-19 prior to departure and have vaccination certificates, would have to quarantine for 14 days in their homes. They would need to notify their local police stations about their arrival and the quarantine period.

Those who tested negative for Covid prior to departure but do not have vaccination certificates would have to stay in institutional quarantine. After tests (within 3-5 days), they could go for a 14-day home quarantine if doctors allow them to do so.

People from other countries would have to stay at government-designated hotels for their 14-day institutional quarantine. They would have to pay for their stay.

India has been witnessing about 3.5 lakh infections and

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



Pigeons flock over leftovers spread across a farm land after farmers gather and harvest ripe paddy from the fields in Kagashura village of Barishal sadar upazila yesterday afternoon. The government started procurement of paddy directly from farmers yesterday. Story on page 10.

PHOTO: TITU DAS



## Erfan Salim walks out of jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Erfan Salim, son of Awami League lawmaker Haji Md Salim, walked out of jail yesterday after around six months.

He left Dhaka Central Jail in Keraniganj around 4:50pm, Mohiuddin Mahmud Belal, personal secretary to Haji Md Salim, told The Daily Star.

Subhash Kumar Ghosh, senior jail superintendent of Dhaka Central Jail, said they released Erfan upon receiving the court's order and after completing formalities.

The development came after Supreme Court on April 25 upheld a High Court bail of Erfan in a case filed over attacking a navy

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

## Third gender family 'forced' to leave home

Two arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

A third gender family filed a case against a group of village arbitrators who they claimed forced them to leave their inherited house at Charchatna village in Sirajganj's Ullapara upazila.

The family filed the case against 11 local arbitrators with Ullapara Police Station yesterday.

Police arrested two arbitrators - Montu Alom and Meser Ali - in connection with the incident.

One of the complainants, Monirul Islam, 27, said, "Villagers dislike me. I often do not approach the locals. I always try to live within my [third gender] community."

"But the arbitrators got united and called a village arbitration on April 13, and they asked us to leave the village - giving us an ultimatum of one month," Monirul said.

"They also beat up my brother Moznu Miah a couple of days ago," Monirul claimed.

Asked, Dipak Kumar, officer-in-charge of Ullapara Police Station, said that they were trying to arrest the other accused.

Ullapara Upazila  
SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

## India's virus toll tops 200,000

Patients flock to makeshift tents for oxygen as WHO says Indian variant found in at least 17 countries

AGENCIES

Indians struggled to register online for a mass vaccination drive set to begin next month as the country's toll from the coronavirus surged past 200,000 yesterday, worsened by shortages of hospital beds and medical oxygen.

The second wave of infections has seen at least 300,000 people test positive each day for the past week, overwhelming health facilities and crematoriums and fuelling an increasingly urgent response from allies overseas sending equipment.

The last 24 hours brought 360,960 new cases for the world's largest single-day total, taking India's tally of infections to nearly 18 million. It was also the deadliest day so far, with 3,293 fatalities carrying the toll to 201,187.

Experts believe the official tally vastly underestimates the actual toll in a nation of 1.35 billion, however.

"The situation is horrific, absolutely terrible, according to what I see. Everyone is afraid, every single person. People are afraid that if I am talking to a person, maybe I won't get to talk to them tomorrow

or in the near future," New Delhi resident Manoj Garg said.

As record infections spark severe shortages of the gas in hospitals, desperate patients are flocking to tents outside a Gurdwara -- a Sikh place of worship -- in Ghaziabad city, arriving in cars, rickshaws and even ambulances.

"We needed treatment but we couldn't find any beds in Delhi's hospitals," Verma, 32, told AFP as his mother, 58-year-old Poonam, was connected to an oxygen concentrator.

The World Health Organization said in its weekly epidemiological update that India accounted for 38% of the 5.7 million cases reported worldwide to it last week.

Early modelling showed that the B.1.617 variant of the virus detected in India had a higher growth rate than other variants in the country, suggesting increased transmissibility, it said.

The variants make for a perilous cocktail coursing through the world's second most populous country where people live in close proximity, often six to a room.

The UN health agency also said the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

## Apollo 11's Mike Collins passes away

AFP, Washington

American astronaut Michael Collins, who flew the Apollo 11 command module while his crewmates became the first people to land on the Moon on July 20, 1969, died yesterday after battling cancer, his family said.

"Mike always faced the challenges of life with grace and humility, and faced this, his final challenge, in the same way," Collins' family posted on his official Twitter account.

"Please join us in fondly and joyfully remembering his sharp wit, his quiet sense of purpose, and his wise perspective, gained both from looking back at Earth from the vantage of space and gazing across calm waters from the deck of his fishing boat."

Details about the service would be forthcoming, they added.

Born in Rome in 1930 to a US army officer serving as military attache there, Collins went on to become a fighter pilot with the air force and retired with the

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6



ROAD TO FREEDOM  
THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

## Heavier inflow of refugees feared

APRIL 29, 1971

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

BRITISH MPS URGE UK TO ENSURE RELIEF WORK

A delegation headed by Labour MP John Stonehouse and top officials of War on Want, Christian Aid and Oxfam, called on Sir Alec Douglas Home, British foreign secretary, and told him that Britain should do something so that international relief work could be started in Bangladesh.

The former minister for development Reg Prentice MP also led a deputation to the present minister Richard Wood, and told him not to give British aid to Pakistan until the Bangladesh situation was politically settled.

Another British MP, Bruce Douglas-Mann, who had been in India to assess the situation, informed that he was carrying a special message from Bangladesh Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmad for the British government.

INDIA'S REFUGEE CONCERN

The heavy spate of refugee influx from Bangladesh was causing a grave concern to the Government of India. Till yesterday, the Indian government's estimate was that about 700,000 had crossed the border and entered West Bengal, Assam, Meghalaya and Tripura. The Government of India proposed to accommodate the refugees in camps as near the border as possible instead of dispersing them to other states.

YAHYA GETS LETTER FROM KOSYGIN

Pakistan foreign office spokesman said today that President Yahya Khan had received a message from the Soviet Prime Minister

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Due to the sweltering heat of the summer sun, children were seen taking a dip of relief in the pond situated inside the Suhrawardy Udyan. The photo was taken yesterday afternoon.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## 8TH PHASE WEST BENGAL POLLS 3-way battle amid Covid cases surge

PARTHA PRATIM BHATACHARJEE

It is expected to be a three-way battle as the 8th and final phase of the West Bengal assembly polls takes place today amid a massive surge of Covid-19 cases in India.

A total 35 assembly seats covering four districts -- Malda, Birbhum, Murshidabad and Kolkata -- will be up for grabs.

The biggest concern for the Election Commission, however, is to maintain health guidelines in the polls as the eastern state of India has logged 17,207 fresh covid cases -- the highest-single day spike -- and the death toll climbed to 11,159 with 77 more deaths yesterday.

The EC has already banned roadshows and vehicle rallies in the state following the surge in Covid-19 cases, leaving the leaders of political parties to either campaign virtually or hold small rallies with a maximum of 500 participants before the eighth phase of the election.

Of the 35 seats, six assembly seats are in Malda, 11 in Murshidabad, seven in Kolkata and 11 in Birbhum.

In this phase, WB ruler Trinamool Congress, eyeing a third consecutive term, will be up against Sanjukta Morcha, comprising the National the Congress, the Communist Party of India (Marxist) and the Indian Secular Front and India ruler BJP.

The Left alliance is fighting to regain its strength in the Muslim dominated Malda and Murshidabad, considered the traditional stronghold of the alliance.

On the other hand, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) will be hoping to make its mark in the fourth-most-populous state of India to come to power for the first time.

In the last 2016 assembly polls, both TMC and the Left-Congress alliance got 17 seats each, while the BJP won a single seat out of 35 seats.

In that election, the TMC got 38.74 percent votes, which

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### PRAYER TIMING APRIL 29

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
4:06	12:45	4:45	6:30	8:00
JAMAAT	4:16	1:15	5:00	6:40
			8:30	

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



### SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN APRIL	SEHRI	IFTAR
16	29	6:30
17	30	4:00
18	MAY 1	3:59
		6:31