

POST-COUP CRISIS IN MYANMAR
A leading Myanmar ethnic rebel army said it had shot down a military helicopter
SEE PAGE 6

The Daily Star
SECOND EDITION



www.thedailystar.net
Your Right to Know

REGD. NO. DA 781 | Vol. XXXI No. 108 | BAISHAH 21, 1428 BS | RAMADAN 21, 1442 HIJRI | 16 PAGES PLUS LIFESTYLE PRICE: Tk12.00



MASSIVE LAND ACQUISITION FORGERY
Tk 29cr goes to 15 fake owners
Public money embezzled using false papers for 80 decimals acquired to build PBI office in Cox's Bazar

MOSTAFA YOUSUF, back from Cox's Bazar



Nizam Uddin, a 55-year-old Cox's Bazar resident, was attending a relative's wedding at a hotel in the tourist town on December 23, 2019 when he received a phone call informing him that a powerful syndicate had sold his land to a government project posing as its owner.

A perplexed Nizam appeared at the district land acquisition office the next day to submit his hastily gathered land documents with the hope of receiving compensation as the rightful owner of his two-decimal land.

Since then, he has visited the land acquisition office numerous times -- a hundred visits, in his estimation -- but his pleas were met with indifference and neglect with no cooperation to provide him any compensation.

He claimed that he is now living under threat from the people who sold off his property to the government.

"It is unbelievable. I have got all the legal documents against my land, yet the syndicate robbed the money in collaboration with land acquisition officials, surveyors, and top brass of Cox's Bazar district administration," Nizam told The Daily Star on March 14.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



Locals carry a body in Bangla Bazar Ferry Ghat area of Madaripur's Shibchar upazila after a speedboat crashed into a sand-laden bulk carrier in the Padma around 7:00am yesterday, leaving 26 people on board the motorboat dead. Inset, a relative of one of the victims cries at a local primary school where the bodies were kept.

PHOTO: SUZIT KUMAR DAS



Khaleda in CCU with breathing difficulties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, now undergoing treatment for Covid-19, was moved to the coronary care unit of Evercare Hospital in the city yesterday with breathing difficulties.

Her personal physician AZM Zahid Hossain said the former premier was moved to CCU from the cabin around 4:00pm after she developed breathing difficulties in the morning.

Khaleda's condition was stable and her breathing problems later eased a little, Zahid told The Daily Star.

The BNP chief was admitted to the hospital on April 27 night for some medical tests after she received second positive

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

BEXIMCO-SERUM Talks on to make Oxford vaccines here

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Serum Institute of India has been in talks with Beximco about producing the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine in Bangladesh.

Serum's discussion with its Bangladeshi agent Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd is part of an effort to ramp up production as the former struggles to meet the demand in India and the global supply commitments.

Beximco has asked Serum about the amount of doses that can be produced here and where the doses would be supplied to, Beximco Managing Director Nazmul Hassan Papon said.

"Local production requires a large investment. Before making the investment, we need to study its feasibility. It won't be viable if we produce only for the local market... We are waiting for a formal proposal [from Serum]," Papon told The Daily Star yesterday.

It will be a milestone in the pharmaceuticals sector of Bangladesh, if Beximco produces the vaccine here, he added.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

No homegoing for Eid this time

Govt decides to keep all inter-district services suspended; 'lockdown' stretched till May 16; no extra Eid leave in addition to three days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government has decided to extend the ongoing lockdown till May 16 to contain the spread of Covid-19, keeping suspended inter-district bus, launch and train services during the period.

However, public transport will be allowed to operate within the cities and districts from May 6.

Besides, there will be a three-day holiday for the Eid-ul-Fitr. No extra holidays will be given.

The decisions were made yesterday at a cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. She joined the meeting at the Secretariat via video conferencing.

The government has put restrictions on operation of public transport since April 5 amid a spike in Covid-19 cases.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam said no inter-district buses, launches or trains will operate during the period.

In normal times, 80 lakh to 1.2 crore people leave Dhaka, Narayanganj and Gazipur for village homes to celebrate the Eid with their loved ones, according to passenger welfare organisations.

Anwarul also said the government will be tougher to make people wear masks to curb the spread of the virus.

The local administration will conduct drives in markets and shopping malls across the country and monitor whether the market authorities are following the health safety guidelines properly, he mentioned.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

PRESS FREEDOM DAY 'Never thought I'd be forcefully disappeared'

Says journo Kajol

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"I still don't have the courage to say whether I was forcefully disappeared or I was lost," said photojournalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol at a webinar yesterday.

Kajol was "found" in Benapole near the India border in the middle of the night on May 3 last year, 53 days after he went missing.

"I was assaulted for doing my job. But I never thought I'd be forcefully disappeared," he said at a webinar, hosted by citizen's platform "Nagorik", marking the World Press Freedom Day yesterday.

"I cannot describe how my family and I went through the cruel times."

He said he never thought he would be able to return among his acquaintances and talk. "I did not have any power or any political backing to help me return."

Moderating the event, Supreme Court lawyer Jyotirmoy Barua said, "Kajol has

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

26 die as speedboat overturns in Padma

It hit a sand-laden bulkhead in Madaripur

SUZIT KUMAR DAS and SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Twenty-six people were killed as a speedboat capsized after it crashed into a sand-laden bulk carrier in the Padma river in Madaripur yesterday.

All the deceased -- three women, two children and 21 men -- were passengers of the speedboat.

Bodies of 22 victims were handed over to family members till 6:00pm yesterday, said Ashiqur Rahman, inspector of Banglabazar ferry terminal traffic police in Madaripur.

Five persons, including the driver of the speedboat, were rescued alive. They were undergoing treatment at different hospitals, he added.

The accident took place around 7:00am near the old terminal at Kathalbari, around one kilometre away from Banglabazar terminal in Shibchar upazila of Madaripur.

The speedboat, which was carrying 30 passengers, had started from Shimulia terminal of Munshiganj and was heading towards Banglabazar terminal, said Abdur Razzak, in-charge of naval police's Char Janajati outpost.

When it arrived near Kathalbari, the motorboat collided with the bulk carrier, causing it to capsiz, he added.

Ahuri Begum, 35, a passenger of the speedboat who survived the accident but lost her husband and one-and-a-half-year-old son, said, "Since the beginning, the driver was operating the speedboat haphazardly. It was clear to all of us that the driver was not skilled. We were all anxious. Finally, our speedboat hit the bulk carrier and I saw everyone going under water."

"I became unconscious and when I regained my senses, I found myself in a hospital bed," she told The Daily Star near the site of the accident, where she had returned to receive the bodies of her husband and son.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

BUSINESS MFS industry swells riding on low-income groups

Mobile financial services have gained immense popularity in Bangladesh, particularly among lower-income groups, but the charge to withdraw funds has remained almost unchanged since the inception of the digital platform.

As a result, most clients have to fork out Tk 18.50 to withdraw Tk 1,000 from their accounts. It was the same in 2011 when the service was rolled out.

Some MFS providers have recently slashed the charge to Tk 14, but users and analysts say the rate is still high, and a further reduction will benefit the poor, who use the service most.

STORY ON B1



Without maintaining physical distancing, people travel on a pickup in the capital's Shanir Akhra area on the Dhaka-Chattogram highway. As public transport remains suspended due to the Covid-19 restrictions, many city dwellers are heading home this way every day ahead of Eid, ignoring the risks involved. The photo was taken around 1:00pm yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Mamata relegates Left to footnote

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE and PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

The landslide victory of Mamata Banerjee has not only thwarted the Modi wave that has swept over India but also relegated the Left and Congress to a footnote in West Bengal polls.

Trinamool Congress, which is all set for a third consecutive term in West Bengal, also brought hope for major regional political parties to check Modi's populist sway and posed a challenge to the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party ahead of the next general elections due in 2024.

Samyukta Morcha, the alliance of the Congress, Communist Party of India (Marxist) and Indian Secular Front (ISF), managed to get only 8.61 percent of the votes and most of the candidates of Left parties and Congress lost their security deposits.

The only success for the Morcha came through the ISF, formed only months before the elections, which won just one seat in South 24 Parganas district.

On the other hand, the BJP has made a big leap by winning 77 seats, especially since it won three in the last assembly polls in 2016.

According to analysts, Modi's saffron party failed to produce a credible chief ministerial face of its own to match Mamata's charisma. Besides, the party had set an ambitious target of 200-plus seats in West Bengal. Besides, the conflict between the old and new comers in West Bengal BJP came to a head before the election on the issue of choosing nominees.

Many BJP nominees were defectors from other parties -- 36 from the TMC alone -- but only five of them, including Suvendu Adhikari, could win.

Polls result showed that the West Bengal people mostly preferred Mamata's welfare schemes like duare sarkar (government at the doorstep), Kanyashree, Rupashree, Khadya Sathi, Krishak Bandhu and Swasthya Sathi over the central government sponsored PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi and Ayushman Bharat medical insurance scheme.

On the other hand, an unprecedented consolidation of Muslim votes in most of the 141 assembly constituencies

ANOTHER STORY ON PAGE 6

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



People in one of the affected areas in Bagerhat place pitchers and all sorts of containers to collect purified water from a mobile water purification truck, set up by the district administration in collaboration with Department of Public Health Engineering.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Water purification capacity low, inadequate

Say people in Mongla, Morrelganj and Sharankhola upazilas where five mobile water purification plants are dispensing purified water

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

The district administration of Bagerhat, in collaboration with the Department of Public Health Engineering (DPHE), has started emergency supply of water from five mobile water purification plants in Mongla, Morrelganj and Sharankhola -- three of the upazilas that are facing severe drought and water scarcity.

However, since a large number of people are waiting in queues for hours every day in front of the water dispensing trucks, it is apparent that the amount of water being distributed from each unit is inadequate, said residents of the affected areas.

Bagerhat is a coastal district where tube wells are not installed due to high salinity in groundwater. Hence, locals have to rely on harvested rainwater or filtered freshwater from ponds for consumption and everyday use.

Recently, waterborne diseases such as diarrhoea broke out in a number of upazilas in the district after residents were compelled to consume saline water, as the freshwater sources dried up in months of drought.

Despite the ongoing heat wave, people in the affected areas are now seen scouring nearby villages in search of potable water.

Jannati Khatun, a homemaker in Khuriakhali

village of Sharankhola upazila, said, "Tube wells are of no use in our area due to salinity. We have to depend on ponds and rainwater."

"But this year, extreme heat dried up water in the ponds. Water in the canals also has high salinity. So, we have no choice but consume the saline water and use it for bathing."

Many of them are having stomach aches while many others are falling sick due to the consumption of saline water, she also said.

Ruma, from Panirghat area in the upazila, said she was going home after collecting a pitcher of water from a pond in a neighbouring village.

Two members in her family had to be hospitalised for several days after they contracted diarrhoea, she added.

In Morrelganj, Saleha Begum was returning home carrying a jar filled with purified water that she got from a DPHE dispenser truck. She said she had not been able to find potable water in the area over the past 25 days and survival this way was getting quite difficult.

Hasibul from Rayenda Bazar area in Sharankhola upazila said he had to wait two hours before he got his turn to get water from a water purification unit in the area.

He also said that it is unimaginable how hundreds of people have to wait eagerly in

lines every day in the scorching sun, for some drinking water.

Rayenda Union Parishad Chairman Asaduzzaman Milon said about 1.5 lakh residents of the union depend on harvested rainwater as well as on water preserved in ponds.

Although water is being dispensed from mobile water purifying units in the area, the dispensing capacity is below the local demand, he observed.

DPHE Executive Engineer FM Ismail Hossain said that following visits in the severely affected areas, the DPHE, in collaboration with the district administration, set up two mobile water purification units in Mongla, one in Morrelganj and two in Sharankhola upazilas.

Each unit is capable of dispensing 600 litres of purified water every hour, he said, adding that they would continue the service until the water scarcity in the areas is resolved.

Bagerhat Deputy Commissioner ANM Faizul Haque said that with the help of the DPHE, they were working on to meet local demands for purified water in the affected areas.

In the meantime, people in those areas should only consume water that is either boiled or purified with water purifying tablets, he advised.

Mysterious fires worrying villagers in Thakurgaon

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Thakurgaon

Dwellers of Choto Singia Munshipara village in Baliadangi upazila of Thakurgaon are passing days in great worries over recurrent fire incidents.

However, the cause of the origin of the fires which have been occurring for about one month is yet to be determined.

Even amidst vigilance the fire breaks out suddenly engulfing rooms, furniture, clothes, straw heaps or sacks of food grains.

For this, the villagers cannot sleep without fear.

To douse the fire, villagers have set up pumps at different points, they are also reserving water in pots with their reach.

Police and firefighters are yet to determine the actual cause of fire incidents after visiting the village.

During a recent visit, this correspondent observed that there are about 80 households in the village. Signs of anxiety could be seen on the people's faces especially among the women and children.

They have kept their belongings including clothes, bags, and books in their courtyard to save those from the fire.

Talking to this correspondent, the villagers said, the fire originated at the house of one Muslim Uddin about a month ago, which was doused by the firefighters. Soon after extinguishing the fire, it (fire) also broke out at Sirajuddin's straw heap. Fire service also doused the fire.

After these incidents, the fire originated at the houses of Babul Hossain, Abdus Salam, Delwar Hossain, Moksedul, Merina Begum and Saifullah at the same village.

It broke out at different places including

straw heaps, bedcover, clothes, fences, sacks but the villagers are yet to find the source of the fire.

Moksedul Islam the fire broke out over fifty times at different houses during the period. The number of incidents is increasing for a week in comparison to the previous couple of weeks.

Amena Begum said they cannot keep clothes on the racks. Their clothes including Sharee, Lungi, and dresses were burnt.

Villagers have set up pumps at different points, they are also reserving water in pots with their reach to douse the fire.

Now, they keep the clothes on the floor instead of racks to save them.

Station Officer of Baliadangi Fire Service and Civil Defense Delwar Hossain said, "We cannot say the exact reason of the fires on the houses." However, he has ruled out any supernatural connection of the fire as some villagers are saying.

Superintendent of Police in Thakurgaon Mohammad Jahangir Hossain said officials of Baliadangi Police Station have been asked for strengthening police patrol there.

Twelve persons in the village were detained in connection with the incident early yesterday, said DB police in the district.



A panicky situation is prevailing among the villagers at Choto Singia Munshipara in Thakurgaon's Baliadangi upazila over recurrent fire incidents. Some villagers were trying to douse the blaze in a straw heap in the area. The photo was taken last week.

PHOTO: STAR



A 10-bed Intensive Care Unit (ICU) ward for Covid-19 infected critical patients was inaugurated at Tangail General Hospital. Lawmaker from Tangail Sadar constituency Sanowar Hossain inaugurated the ward on Sunday. Among others, Tangail Deputy Commissioner (DC) Dr Ataul Gani was present during the inauguration.

PHOTO: STAR

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Govt. Sundarban Adarsha College
231, Khan Jahan Ali Road, Khulna
Website: www.gsac.edu.bd

Memo No. GSAC/Goods/CEDP/G-8/2020-2021/05/84 Date: 03/05/2021

e-Tender Notice 02/2020-2021

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following package:

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Name of works	Last date and time of tender security submission	Tender closing date & time
1.	575594	Procurement of Laboratory Equipment's for Science Lab of Govt. Sundarban Adarsha College, Khulna	20-May-2021 1:00pm	20-May-2021 2:00pm

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks' branches up to 19-May-2021 5.00pm. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Professor Dr. Md. Mizanur Rahman
Principal (In Charge)
Govt. Sundarban Adarsha College
Phone: 02477721915
E-mail: govt.sundarban.ac@gmail.com

GD-881

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Bangladesh Police
Central Police Hospital
Rajarbag, Dhaka.

Invitation for Tender

Sealed tender are hereby invited from the Suppliers/Local Agents Vehicles in their official pad for the purchase of the following items for the Project of "Modernization of Existing Police Hospital's" for the year 2020-21.

1.	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Home Affairs.		
2.	Agency	Central Police Hospital, Rajarbag, Dhaka		
3.	Procuring Entity Name	Project Director, Bangladesh Police, Central Police Hospital, Dhaka.		
4.	Invitation for	Ambulance.		
5.	Invitation Ref No	MEPH/Tender-Vehicle/20-21/1460		
6.	Date	29/04/2021		
KEY INFORMATION				
7.	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)		
FUNDING INFORMATION				
8.	Budget and Source of Funds	ADP Budget		
PARTICULAR INFORMATION				
9.	Tender Publication Date	03/05/2021 & 04/05/2021.		
10.	Tender Last Selling Date	16/05/2021.		
11.	Tender Closing Date and Time	At 12.00 Noon on 17/05/21.		
12.	Tender Opening Date and Time	12.30 pm on 17/05/2021.		
13.	Name & Address of the office(s)			
	Selling Tender Document	Office of the Project Director, Central Police Hospital, Rajarbag, Dhaka		
	Receiving Tender Document	Office of the Project Director, Central Police Hospital, Rajarbag, Dhaka		
	Opening Tender Document	Office of the Project Director, Central Police Hospital, Rajarbag, Dhaka		
14.	Place / Date / Time of Pre-Tender Meeting (Bidder must present for avoiding any future hassle of ensure quality Product).	Office of the Project Director Central Police Hospital, Rajarbag, Dhaka	Date 09/05/2021	Time 11.00
INFORMATION FOR TENDERER				
15.	Eligibility of Tenderer	(1) Up-to-date Trade license (2) Up to date Income tax certificate (3) VAT Registration Certificate and (4) Other documents described in tender document.		
16.	Brief Description of Goods			
	Sl. No	Name	Price of Tender Document	Tender Security in Taka
	1.	Ambulance	Tk. 1000.00	13,00,000/-
				90 Days Form the date of work order
PROCUREMENT DETAILS				
17.	Name of Official Inviting Tender	Dr. Md. Emdadul Haque		
18.	Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Superintendent of Police & Deputy Project Director		
19.	Address of Official Inviting Tender	Central Police Hospital, Rajarbag, Dhaka		
20.	Contract details of official inviting the tender	Tel 88-02-8312075 Fax 88-02-9342297		
21.	Special Instructions-			
	a) No Tender will be received after the deadline for submission.			
	b) The Procuring Entity reserves the right to reject all tenders or annul the tender proceeding.			
	c) Bangladesh police will establish framework agreement wish the successful tenderer for supply of goods.			

29.04.21
(Dr. Md. Emdadul Haque)
Superintendent of Police & Deputy Project Director
For- Project Director
"Modernization of Existing Police Hospitals"
Central Police Hospital
Bangladesh Police, Rajarbag, Dhaka
Phone-8312075 Fax-9342297

GD-873

LAW OPINION

The Book about Bangladesh

RUMANA ISLAM

When everything surrounding is so grey and gloomy due to the pandemic, publication of the book, 'Bangladesh and International Law' (Routledge 2021) edited by Professor Mohammad Shahabuddin, brought some colors of joy, pride, and excitement among the Bangladeshi law scholars who take some sort of interest in international law. The book also came at the time when Bangladesh is celebrating its 50th anniversary of its independence, the very birth of which in 1971 had challenged, disrupted, and reshaped many conventional doctrines of international law in a Cold War era, making the publication of this book

The book came at the time when Bangladesh is celebrating its 50th anniversary of its independence, the very birth of which in 1971 had challenged, disrupted, and reshaped many conventional doctrines of international law in a Cold War era, making the publication of this book with what we call 'a perfect timing'!

with what we call 'a perfect timing'! The editor passionately tweeted about the book as, "A collection of international law stories of suffering, solidarity, resilience, resistance, and success from the Global South"—fascinating enough for a reader to grab the book to know more about those stories!

The book is a comprehensive analysis of international law from Global South perspectives, wherein 29 Bangladeshi legal scholars representing four generations have contributed to this grand project making it as the editor claims, the 'first ever of such kind'. Professor Shahabuddin in the introduction to the book, titled captivantly as "Introduction or a prelude to the stories of an ambivalent relationship," describes how the dominance of "eurocentrism" in mainstream international law narrative is problematic and in reaction to such Westphalian legal scholarship the

rise of Third World Approaches to International Law (TWAIL) tracing the heterogeneity of the development of international law. He highlights the fact that, the international law scholars from the Global South despite their colonial past and ongoing imperialism have come up with some innovative ways to interpret international law from the lenses of the Global South. In tune with that intellectual tradition, the book project aimed to offer 'stories of an ambivalent relationship between international law and post-colonial states, seen through the optic of Bangladesh'. With that pledge this intellectual tapestry is divided into seven parts comprising of nicely weaved 27 chapters encompassing from classical international law concepts to contemporary concerns.

Part I of the book starts with general issues involving Bangladesh's unique relationship with international law. Part II is allocated for sources of international law focusing on two main sources namely customary international law and the law of treaties and reservations. As the book advances, it goes on to address more complicated issue of international law, namely statehood in international law in Part III. Part V touches upon another very important issue, international economic law and their implications for Bangladesh. Part VI focuses on a very important aspect of international law where Bangladesh has significantly contributed in recent times — the international criminal law. Part VII, the final segment of the book, focuses on 'the State and Its Others', addressing the 'others' in post-colonial states. Collectively these well-crafted 27 chapters of the book offer the readers the reminder of the duality of international law's relationship with post-colonial states like that of Bangladesh, as Professor Shahabuddin as put, "as a problem-solving tool and also as a part of the problem".

However, here I did not intend to write an 'academic review' of the book because it is beyond the scope of this short piece; and I am pretty sure there will be many competent enthusiastic international law scholars who can take up the charge of proper 'intellectual grilling' of the book. Rather as a Bangladeshi academician who takes an interest in teaching and researching international law, I would like to point out some significance of the book for the legal academia of this country.

Firstly, as the editor has claimed the book is 'first ever of such kind'—

well certainly it is not meant to say that no Bangladeshi legal scholar published any scholarly manuscript on international law before. There are good number of Bangladeshi law scholars who have pursued their higher studies on international law and have published books on different issues of international law (some focusing on Bangladesh and developing countries perspectives), majority of which came as an outcome of their doctoral research. Some Bangladeshi scholars also have engaged in researching on different topics of international law and have published scholastic journal articles in internationally reputed law journals or have contributed chapters to edited books. Very few have gone beyond the doctoral research and conducted comprehensive study on Bangladesh's perspective with a focus on international law, of course with a notable exception of Professor M Rafiqul Islam's authoritative book 'National Trials of International Crimes in Bangladesh' (UPL 2019). But all these ventures were done on individual account. Therefore, when a book project has brought together 29 Bangladeshi law scholars representing four generations of scholars teaching and researching international law at home and abroad under one umbrella and produced such a colossal compendium — that is truly 'the first ever of such kind'!

Secondly, I see that, six female scholars have contributed to the book. Certainly, the number is not good enough to claim 'equal representation' of half of the population. But what I find significant here is that they are now making intellectual contribution to different fields of international law, going beyond the stereotyped 'research fields' (women's rights, violence against women, family law) supposedly reserved for the female legal scholars in this country. However, to avoid any misunderstandings, I do strongly recognise the need for female legal scholars in this country

to take the lead when it comes to the foregoing issues. But at the same time, I also feel the need that, they must also take a different route, venture other avenues of law, and claim their authority with their male counterparts, particularly in different segments of international law given the importance of the discourse for Bangladesh and the world. The female scholars in this country still need to go a long way to claim an authority in international law discourse, but surely the book is a good step in the right direction.

Thirdly, I see that the majority of the contributors represent the fourth generation of Bangladeshi law scholars, whom we fondly call the 'millennials'. For many this might be their very first international publication. In Bangladesh, we all know the pain and challenges of teaching and researching in a resource constrained academic environment and the lack of state-of-the-art databases. Getting a proper guidance and a platform to conduct a quality research and sharing it with an international audience is crucial for a researcher's intellectual growth. Again, a note of appreciation must go to Professor Shahabuddin for his mentorship, for giving this platform and the opportunity to this dynamic young cohort, integrating them as a group into the global intellectual system and presenting their work before an international audience. Surely the experience that this bunch of young scholars have gathered from this book project at their early stage of career, will encourage and inspire them and give them the much-needed confidence to conduct quality research on international law in future. The previous three generations of Bangladeshi legal scholars did not get such opportunities in their early days of career and I think it is fair if they envy the 'millennial scholars' for that!

Fourthly, the significance of publication of this book, which in my opinion the most important one is — I see it as 'branding of Bangladesh' in international law discourse at global intellectual system. The book has added a new voice (the Bangladeshi voice) to

the TWAIL and Global South discourse, an area of international law which in this part of the region for a long time is dominated by scholars from our next-door neighbor. By doing so, it also pushes that idea of 'soft power' in international law discourse of the Bangladeshi legal scholarship at global intellectual system. An enthusiast might even call it a 'defining moment' for Bangladeshi legal academia. I hope and believe this book might be the 'first ever of such kind' but it will certainly not be the last one.

The foreword of the book is written by another eminent Bangladeshi international law scholar Professor A.F.M Maniruzzaman. Therefore, I think I do not wrongly profess when I call it "The Book about Bangladesh".

Before I conclude something must be said for the protagonist of this project — Professor Shahabuddin, an internationally acclaimed international law scholar from Bangladesh and a foremost TWAIL-er in his own right. It must also be acknowledged that he is not the only one, there are few other Bangladeshi scholars who have attained such accomplishments in different disciplines at international level. But I would like to point out something else here. Those of us who have lived abroad at some point of our life either for our higher studies or as part of our profession, we have interacted with the Bangladeshi community living there and have witnessed their multiple belongings and their profound love and care for the motherland. It is quite visible how the Bangladeshi émigré somehow always carries 'Bangladesh' — either in their accents, food habits, social conventions, cultural norms; or their tensions over a political crisis in the country; their excitement when our cricket team wins or their frustration when they lose; or their desperation to inject the 'deshi' values into their next generations — 'Bangladesh' always matters for them. Professor Shahabuddin is one of those rare Bangladeshi émigré scholars who went the extra mile to make sure that 'he' matters for Bangladesh.

In this short piece, I have not gone into intellectual investigation of the stories that the book promises in its pamphlet nor did I mention any names of the contributors. To know more about those stories about the storytellers — my dear readers, please read the book.

THE WRITER IS PROFESSOR OF LAW, UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA.

RIGHTS ADVOCACY

Mainstreaming human rights in business to protect workers' rights

MOHAMMAD GOLAM SARWAR

A study led by the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD) revealed that more than 3,50,000 workers in the RMG sector have lost their jobs during Covid-19 pandemic while most of the workers have been laid off without proper compensation. A staggering official record is of 56372 workers being laid off. The report also finds that the high rate of retrenchment was occurred in small factories amounting to over 10% of total work force. However, the actual number of laid off and terminated workers is much bigger than officially reported. The discrepancy in data indicates the vulnerability and exploitation of workers while leaving the voices of a large number of workers lost and unheard.

Right of laid-off workers to compensation

The Labour Act 2006 guarantees compensation for the laid off workers. Section 16 of the Labour Act states that the amount of compensation shall be equal to half of the total amount of the basic wages and dearness allowance and ad-hoc or interim wages, if any, and equal to the full amount of housing allowance. However, in order to avail compensation, the worker has to work continuously for one year under the employer and such compensation shall be paid for 45 days unless there is an agreement to the contrary between the worker and the employer.

The labour Act allows the employer to terminate a worker under the ground of retrenchment by giving one month's notice in writing indicating the reason of retrenchment. However, the requirement of giving notice can be waived by paying wages in lieu of such notice. It is noted that though the Act requires to indicate the reason of retrenchment, such requirement is mostly dependent on the subjective satisfaction of the employer which entertains no say of the workers against unjust as well as discriminatory termination. In addition, the optional nature of the requirement of giving notice leaves room for instant and unjustified termination.

It is mentionable that as per the aforementioned CPD study, majority of factories did not follow the lay-off and termination rules while terminating the workers during the pandemic. The study reveals that only 3.6% complied with the compensation principle in case of laid off workers while non-compliance as the norm, was rampant among the employers. In addition, the research report of the



Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) reveals that due to the rigid requirement of working continuously for one year for getting compensation for lay off under the Labour Act, 20% of the laid off workers are being left without any kind of compensation.

Legal responses to workers' rights

It is worthy to note that ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work 1998 identifies four core labour rights that include freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of forced or compulsory labour, the abolition of child labour and the elimination of discrimination in respect of employment and occupation. The Constitution of Bangladesh envisages an array of welfare measures for and rights of the workers including just wages, reasonable rest, recreation and leisure (Article 15), rights of forming union (Article 38), protection from all forms of forced labour as of right (Article 34) and protection from all forms of

exploitation (Article 14). It is mentionable that Bangladesh has ratified seven of the eight core conventions and several other conventions of the ILO. Despite such constitutional and international commitment and obligations, human rights of the workers are being constantly violated.

The Labour Act 2006, being the core enabling law, attempts to provide a detailed framework to guarantee the entitlements of workers. However, the Act has failed to integrate human rights perspectives comprehensively within its approach. The Act provides, in many cases, unfettered power to the employers while making the workers immensely vulnerable and dependent. The monitoring mechanism under the Act is not clearly delineated which makes the responsible stakeholders unaccountable. Trade unions fail to function effectively and to make things worse, workers face challenges to freely form or join independent unions. The Labour Act also fails to address the

concerns and needs of informal workers who suffers most during the pandemic. The most important fact is that implementation of the law undergoes little to no enforcement. Though the Act in its latest amendments prohibits child labour, however, the number of child workers are alarmingly increasing due to the Covid-19 induced economic crisis and nationwide closure of educational institutions including schools.

Human Rights based action plan
Considering the aforesaid discussion, a human rights-based assessment regarding the impact of the ongoing pandemic on worker's rights needs to be undertaken. In this regard, the UN Guiding Principles for Business and Human Rights (UNGPs), while advocating 'Protect, Respect and Remedy' framework for transnational corporations and other business enterprises in terms of adopting a human rights-based approach, provides comprehensive guidelines to integrate human rights perspectives into business policies

and practices. In addition to recognising the responsibilities of the States under international human rights law, the UNGPs imposes specific responsibilities on the business enterprises. The UNGPs recognises the fundamental right of individuals to access effective remedy when their rights get adversely impacted by business activities. The UNGPs also requires States to establish effective grievance mechanisms including administrative and judicial means to guarantee remedies for business-related human rights abuses. It will not be out of place to note that the overburdened judicial system of Bangladesh fails to ensure access to remedy of the workers. Awareness and proper understanding of these mechanisms is important to ensure access to remedy.

While preventing and mitigating adverse human rights impact, business enterprises should adopt the parameters for human rights due diligence defined in UNGPs. In order to assess whether the human rights policies are being implemented optimally, business enterprises are required to track, and review their performance and modify their practices accordingly. It is noted that such monitoring mechanism should be incorporated into our labour laws and other business laws, in order to review the activities of the industries and corporations and to prevent the adverse impacts of business practices as well.

The most significant feature of UNGPs is that they not only identify the needs of the rights holders but also categorise the responsibilities of the duty bearers. In the present case, workers are the rights holders while suppliers, brands and the government are the duty bearers to guarantee rights and welfare measures for the workers. While making this human rights framework a reality, workers should be informed, made aware and empowered about their entitlements in order to hold the employers, brands and the government accountable in the context of Bangladesh.

As we have observed International Workers' Day 2021 recently during the pandemic, it is the demand of the hour to mainstream and implement UNGPs in order to formulate laws, policies, and action plans to tackle the impact of the pandemic while guaranteeing the human rights, justice, and dignity for the workers.

THE WRITER IS AN ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF LAW, UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA.

Food insecurity increases amidst the latest Covid-19 spike



AN OPEN DIALOGUE
ABDULLAH SHIBLI

FOOD insecurity in Bangladesh during the pandemic is rising. Even in the best of times, millions of people in the country go hungry. The Global Food Security Index 2020 ranked Bangladesh 84th out of 113 countries globally, which was worse than many of its neighbouring countries, such as India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Myanmar. Bangladesh's position among these 113 nations ranked by EIU varies from year to year, but each of the last five years has revealed that there is more food insecurity in Bangladesh compared with its neighbouring countries. So, it is not important if over the years we ranked at 82 or 84—or, even if we improved our position from the previous year—what appears to be true is that, even in normal years, there is a prevalence of moderate to severe food insecurity in many segments of our population.

Undoubtedly, we have made progress on several fronts of the economy, including income, employment, and nutrition intake. However, it is a fair estimate to say that 20 percent of our households live below the poverty level and 25 to 30 percent of the people are hungry and face constant food insecurity. A cataclysmic external shock such as the Covid-19 pandemic and the on-and-off lockdown measures are likely to disrupt the daily balance in food intake that might be expected under normal circumstances. As one study observes, "Despite substantial progress in attaining food self-sufficiency at the aggregate level, a large number of people remain food insecure and hungry in the face of periodic shocks". And, since hunger, starvation, and malnutrition make up the flip side of economic disruption, the role of the government and NGOs is important, and the national government must take proactive measures to stave off long-term damages that a pandemic might leave on the health and physical condition of the poor.

Has the pandemic increased the number of poor?

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) indicated that among populations who are

already malnourished, weak, and vulnerable to disease, a "crisis within a crisis" could emerge, in which the current health crisis will be compounded by a hunger crisis. According to an assessment done by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the number of people with severe food insecurity has been rising globally since 2014 and the Covid-19 pandemic will likely reduce food security even further. The current pandemic crisis has been long-lasting, and it is also affecting the food security of households that were not poor prior to the pandemic due to debt, temporary or permanent job loss, or catastrophic illness.

The *Daily Star* reported last week that a sample survey concluded that the pandemic has created 24.5 million new poor, increasing the country's rate of poverty to around 42 percent. The survey was carried out by the Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) and the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) before the second wave hit the country. The study found that the majority experienced "significant depletion of household income and fragile recovery from last year's shock". In a nutshell, the recovery from the pandemic, after a year of its onset, has been conditional and weak.

The reaction from our Finance Minister was swift and dismissive, labeling the study as "a distortion of the real position." He played down the significance of the findings, and declared that "the government would accept the data on the number of new poor only from the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS), not from any private company." Incidentally, earlier in January, another study released by SANEM showed that "the people living below the poverty line (upper poverty line) almost doubled to 42 percent in 2020 from 21.6 percent in 2018."

One can only hope that the BBS is in the process of collecting data on the incidence of poverty and hunger triggered by the pandemic and will provide the appropriate foundation for government policy and post-pandemic economic measures without much delay.

Coming back to the latest surge of the pandemic, it has been met aggressively by the government with new rounds of lockdown. One can see from the newspaper stories that the new lockdown will most affect the population who are on the extreme end of the hunger spectrum: weak and less well-equipped to fend off the viral infection. For our poor, the



Food insecurity falls relatively more in the moderate to severe category for households that are primarily farmers and wage labourers.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

lockdown feels like salt to their wounds.

Mohammed Hossain, a small-scale vendor from the capital's Farmgate area, vented his frustrations to a journalist, "It is very easy to declare a lockdown. But it is people like us who have to face the difficulties that come with the lockdown. Provide us with food first, and then enforce the lockdown."

What is food insecurity?

Food insecurity, a condition defined by limited or uncertain access to sufficient, nutritious food for an active, healthy life, disproportionately affects low-income communities and the urban poor. Food insecurity is associated with numerous poor health outcomes in both the short and long term. The unprecedented Covid-19 pandemic, and the associated social and economic response (school closures, stay-at-home orders, business closures and job losses) have the potential to dramatically increase food insecurity and its related health disparities among already at-risk populations. According to a study published in *Nutrients*, a journal affiliated with the US National Institutes of Health, "Households already struggling with food insecurity may find their current situations exacerbated by Covid-19 with fewer resources to comply with social distancing recommendations. Food insecure individuals also may have less flexibility in their jobs to

allow them to earn income while staying home, or may be at higher risk of losing their jobs completely, thereby decreasing (or eliminating) their incomes."

Income loss and food insecurity are strongly correlated across households. According to a study done by researchers affiliated with Monash University of Australia on food insecurity during Covid-19 in rural Bangladesh, households with no changes in income are mostly food-secure, and food insecurity appears to increase with income loss. In terms of occupation, food insecurity falls relatively more in the moderate to severe category for households that are primarily farmers and wage labourers than among households with more stable occupations, such as having public sector jobs or owning businesses.

The primary risks to food security in the aftermath of the pandemic are already manifest and come from higher retail prices, combined with reduced incomes. Many have reduced their purchase of fresh food and vegetables, the reasons including poor availability, higher prices, reduced store trips, and concerns of contamination. These factors mean more and more households are having to cut down on the quantity and quality of their food consumption. Reduced calorie intake and compromised nutrition threaten gains in poverty reduction

and health, and could have lasting impacts on the cognitive development of young children. While levels of extreme poverty are in decline, nearly 32 percent of Bangladeshis still live below the national poverty line, according to the UN World Food Programme (WFP). Approximately 25 percent of the population in Bangladesh remains food-insecure and 36 percent of children younger than five years of age suffer from stunting (a common measure of chronic malnutrition), WFP reports.

According to a World Bank brief published on April 13, 2021, the impacts triggered by the pandemic "have led to severe and widespread increases in global food insecurity, affecting vulnerable households in almost every country, with impacts expected to continue through 2021 and into 2022". This is corroborated by a study published in *Lancet* based on a randomised control study in rural Bangladesh. The authors conclude that the immediate effects of eight weeks of stay-at-home orders are visible on family economic outcomes and food security, and on women's mental health and experiences of intimate partner violence. One survey found 31 percent of the female respondents have lost their jobs in the last one year—"Covid-19 lockdowns present significant economic, psychosocial, and physical risks to the wellbeing of women and their families across economic strata in rural Bangladesh. Beyond supporting only the most socioeconomically deprived, support is needed for all affected families."

Policy implications

The policy implications are clear and apply to all aspects of the government. There is a need for adequate food assistance during the Covid-19 pandemic and in any future pandemics, as well as public health messages that promote healthy eating. Our national budgets must reflect the desire to promote inclusive economic growth, with attention to the segments of the population that struggle most with poverty, hunger, and undernutrition. We ought to develop a comprehensive national strategy on nutrition advocacy and communication by aligning advocacy, social mobilisation, and behaviour change in communication interventions.

Dr Abdullah Shibli is an economist and has been working in higher education and information technology for 35 years in the USA and Bangladesh. He is also Senior Research Fellow, International Sustainable Development Institute (ISDI), a think tank in Boston, USA.

Will Mars ever be habitable?

PROTITI RASNAHA KAMAL

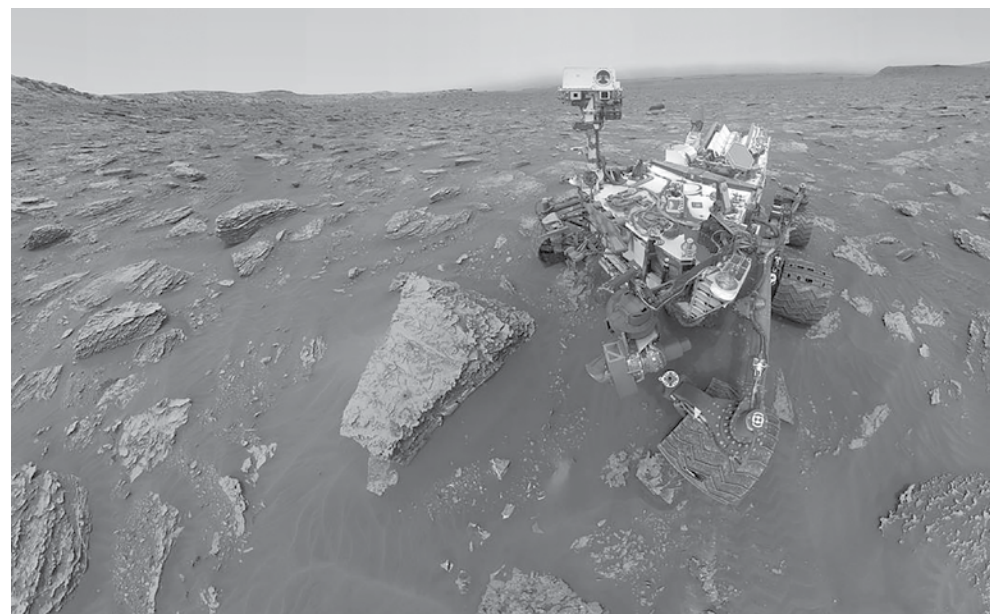
ELON Musk's mission to populate Mars seems to be always on trend, even when nobody is particularly talking about it. It's been several years since the announcement of such an endeavour, and in 2020 we've seen some stories about the first space crew for this grand mission (even though nothing has been finalised). Once they will set foot on Mars, there's no turning back—other crews in batches will likely join them, and then colonies, cities and civilisations will be formed on the Red Planet, and it will cease to be one of the lonely occupants of our universe, hanging around through the passage of time.

At least, that's the plan, but as we all might have guessed, landing humans on Mars isn't the only difficult part of the mission. *Living* there is a greater challenge. Mars is not Earth, it has its own identity—the arid world doesn't compare to the bearer of about 75 percent water on its surface. So, the real mission is making Mars habitable for humans.

The first colonisers will be given the task of turning Mars into an environment which can sustain life. Simply put, they need to "terraform" Mars, which means the Martian atmospheric conditions need to be manipulated to make them more like that of Earth, so that humans can live, breathe and reproduce freely.

Surely, that is not going to be an easy undertaking. However, Robert Zubrin, in his celebrated book *The Case for Mars*, is able to put the subject in an optimistic light. His argument is that if Earth could be made into a self-sustainable planet, the same can be done to Mars.

In its infancy, Earth did not have any oxygen and was barren, much like Mars is now.



A selfie taken on Mars by NASA's Curiosity Mars Rover on Martian Sol 2082 (June 15, 2018 Earth time). The 26 rock samples and six soil samples collected by Curiosity revealed that ancient Mars was indeed suitable for life.

PHOTO: NASA/JPL-CALTECH

Only due to the presence of photosynthetic organisms, which used carbon dioxide up and gave out oxygen, the composition of Earth's atmosphere had evolved, leading to the evolution of human beings. So, if the atmosphere of Mars can be manipulated to make it denser and warmer, theoretically it could also support life.

We understand what needs to be done, but how exactly can we go about making Mars hospitable to humans? The answer may lie in the reservoir of carbon dioxide present in the ice caps or under the soil surface on

Mars. Carbon dioxide, among other things, is infamous for being a greenhouse gas and contributing to global warming on Earth. We may not want Earth to heat up as a result of global warming more than it has already, but frankly, Mars could use some greenhouse gases. Zubrin points out that the release of carbon dioxide, methane and the production of chlorofluorocarbons or CFCs could lead to a thicker Martian atmosphere, which will be able to trap heat and make Mars warmer.

To accomplish such a feat, Zubrin proposes some innovative solutions. The first, is using

orbiting mirrors to direct heat towards specific areas in Mars' south pole. A temperature rise of five degrees (in Kelvins) would be able to cause the dry ice to evaporate, releasing carbon dioxide. The mirrors could also be used to melt the ice to form liquid water, which can be used in biological reactions. Another far-fetched idea is to build factories which can release halocarbons into the Martian atmosphere. However, setting up factories that can generate a substantial volume of the gases requires a substantial amount of money as well, which is why such a project does not seem feasible to the layman. The third solution is to contaminate Mars with photosynthetic microorganisms such as bacteria. This would lead to the release of ammonia and methane as waste products, which would contribute to the greenhouse effect.

If any of these ideas or even a combination of them can be realised on Mars, it could become less hostile for humans. However, if people dream of walking around Mars without special suits and masks, they need to come up with a plan for oxygenating the atmosphere. For this, simple organisms will not be enough—large volumes of oxygen are required to support advanced life forms. Genetically engineered plants that can carry out photosynthesis in harsh Martian conditions can provide a solution. The idea is to increase the volume of gases in the atmosphere bit by bit, and as it warms up it can support more advanced plant life. This goes on in a cycle that can be continued until the conditions are suitable for humans.

However, this process would take centuries if the plan is to terraform Mars completely. Instead, "Paraterraforming" can provide a solution for the moment. Here, domes can be built to form an enclosed space that humans

can live in. Microbial reactions with the carbon rich Martian soil that can give off oxygen will occur in that restricted region, but out of that enclosed sphere, life would not be supported. The advantage here is that less time and resources will be used. Carrying such a project out is not impossible; in fact, a few years ago, scientists at a company called Techshot had successfully used microbes to create a self-sustaining ecosystem within a localised region that mimics Mars' harsh atmospheric conditions.

Theoretically, everything seems possible, and recent news about the conversion of carbon dioxide on Mars to oxygen by NASA's Perseverance rover is giving us hope that theories can be put to practice. At this point, landing a spacecraft on Mars with humans is a challenge, judging by the sheer amount of time it takes to complete the journey. The first humans to land on Mars will have to build the "biodomes" where further experiments can be carried out and crops can be grown under controlled conditions. Also, resources that are not readily available on Mars need to be made on Earth and imported to Mars. Are we going to be able to devote vast amounts of resources and time to such an endeavour? Will the money required for such a venture be better spent if we were to spend it on Earth? These are some of the questions that could be asked before we take on the challenge of turning Mars into another Earth. We need to keep in mind that the first step a human takes on Mars will be just that—the first step. There is a long way to go from there, and it will be interesting to see how that story unfolds in the near future.

Protti Rasnaha Kamal holds a BA in Neuroscience from Mount Holyoke college, USA. She can be reached at prottirasnaha@gmail.com.

QUOTABLE Quote

SAINT TERESA OF AVILA
 (1515-1582)
 Saint

What peace can we hope to find elsewhere if we have none with us?

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Dances jazzily
- 5 Unassuming
- 11 Neighbor
- 12 Slow movement
- 13 Rum mixer
- 14 Signify
- 15 Tech's place
- 17 Quarter-back Manning
- 18 Flower part
- 22 Did some programming
- 24 Curaçao's neighbor
- 25 Clumsy one
- 26 Crafty
- 27 Squall
- 30 Grill waste
- 32 First odd prime

DOWN

- 1 "St. John Passion" composer
- 2 Clarinet cousin
- 3 Encouraged to succeed
- 4 Paper fastener
- 5 Put together
- 6 Black Sea port
- 7 More moist
- 8 Sense of self
- 9 Take a load off
- 10 Low digit
- 16 Performed
- 19 Advocated
- 20 Skilled
- 21 Puts down
- 22 Price tag info
- 23 Solemn promise
- 28 Cookbook entry
- 29 Scant
- 30 Wisdom bringer
- 31 Capitol group
- 35 Red-ink amount
- 36 Jason's ship
- 37 Flag creator
- 38 Tea cooler
- 39 Signal of approval
- 40 Really liked

WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinion@gmail.com.

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

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

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

BUILD YOUR HOME FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS WITH THE TOUGHEST STEEL

BSRM treme B500 DWR the tough steel

Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant

Work in progress using Shah Cement

SHAH CEMENT

SUPER SPECIALISED HOSPITAL Project staring at long delays

Due to finish at BSMMU in December 2019, now likely to end in mid-2022

REJAUU KARIM BYRON and MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

The government will again extend the period of a project taken to set up a modern healthcare facility at the capital Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) after the project authorities failed to complete the work on schedule mainly due to the pandemic.

The project authorities are now seeking an extension of one and a half years and an additional Tk 195 crore for the job.

A proposal in this regard is likely to be placed for approval before the meeting of the Executive Committee of National Economic Council (Ecne) scheduled today, with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

Under the project, called Super Specialised Hospital, the authorities are developing land and constructing a nine-storey building with a floor area of 45,000 square metres. The building will have 12,643 medical and surgical equipment, 2,256 computer accessories and six vehicles. Doctors and officials will also receive training at home and abroad under the project.

Originally, the project tenure was from January 2016 to December 2019, which was extended to December last year without increasing the fund, according to the revised proposal.

This time, the project duration has been proposed to be

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



A view of the capital's largest bamboo market on the Shitalakkhya river near Kanchpur Bridge in Narayanganj. Shipments of bamboo are brought on boats from all over the country, and the building material is taken from here to various parts of the capital. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh waits for US response on vaccines

PORIMOL PALMA

Bangladesh is eagerly waiting for US response to its request for Covid-19 vaccines as the country's stock of AstraZenca vaccine purchased from India will run out soon.

"We have written to the US State Department. We are in touch with the office of US President Joe Biden and the US Chamber of Commerce," an official at Bangladesh Embassy in Washington told this correspondent yesterday.

"If the US donates the vaccine jabs, it will be great. But if it doesn't, we are ready to buy those," the official said.

Dhaka sought from Washington Covid-19 vaccines manufactured by British-Swedish firm AstraZenca and also by US company Moderna.

The US on April 26 said it would start sharing up to 60 million doses of AstraZenca vaccine with other countries in the next

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

MEDIA FREEDOM IN BD Concerned, rights bodies write to UN

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Eight global and regional human rights bodies yesterday wrote a letter to the UN human rights chief, expressing concerns over the state of media freedom in Bangladesh and urging authorities to protect and respect freedom of expression.

"On the occasion of World Press Freedom Day, we write to draw your attention to the escalating human rights violations perpetrated by the Bangladesh government, exemplified in part by the increasing crackdown on press freedom and the freedom of expression of journalists, activists and dissidents," says the letter.

The rights bodies that wrote to Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in Geneva, are Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearances, Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development, Asian Human Rights Commission, Asian Network for Free Elections, Committee to Protect Journalists, Human Rights Watch, International Federation for Human

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Longest suspension foot bridge opens in Portugal



REUTERS, Arouca

Hugo Xavier became one of the first people to cross the world's longest pedestrian suspension bridge when it opened on Thursday near his tiny hometown of Arouca in northern Portugal.

"Oh...here we go!," the 42-year-old said anxiously as he gathered enough courage to step onto the see-through metal grid pathway of the 516-metre-long (1693-ft) bridge alongside his equally jittery partner and a tour guide.

Hidden between rock-strewn mountains covered with lush greenery and yellow flowers

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3

Four Hefajat leaders on police remand

STAR REPORT

Four Hefajat-e-Islam leaders were placed on remand yesterday in seven cases filed with police stations in the capital and Chattogram over the 2013 mayhem and the recent violence in Dhaka and Chattogram.

The leaders are: Azizul Haque Islamabadi, organising secretary of Hefajat's now dissolved committee; Maulana Jubair Ahmed, former vice-president of its Dhaka city unit, and Maulana Jalaluddin Ahmed, former assistant general secretary, and Mufti Harun Izhari, education and cultural affairs secretary of the dissolved central committee.

Azizul was put on remand for seven days in two cases filed with the capital's Paltan Police Station over March 26 violence centring the visit of Indian Prime Minister

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3

ROAD TO FREEDOM THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

Genocide issue will be referred to UN body

MAY 4, 1971

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

BANGLADESH GOVT AMASSES EVIDENCE OF GENOCIDE

The Bangladesh government decided to refer to the Human Rights Commission of the United Nations the question of genocide in the newborn republic. A spokesman of the Bangladesh mission in Kolkata said documentary evidence of the genocide was being collected for submission to the Commission. These evidence would include photographs and eyewitness accounts brought by refugees to India.

SPECIAL TRIBUNAL TO TRY BANGABANDHU FOR HIGH TREASON

The Pakistan government decided to set up a three-member special tribunal to try Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman for high treason, reported a Karachi daily. The tribunal would consist of a senior judge of the Supreme Court, a judge of the Punjab High Court and a senior military officer of the rank of a major general. The paper said the trial would be held in Rawalpindi.

US WILL JOIN RELIEF MISSION IF UN ORGANISES IT

The US was willing to join the framework of international assistance organised by the United Nations in providing relief to Bangladesh refugees flowing into India, according to state department spokesman Charles Bray. He hoped that such help could quickly be organised. About the food situation in

SEE PAGE 10 COL 4



UGC mulls online exams for public universities

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

The University Grants Commission is considering allowing public universities to hold exams online keeping in mind that it would benefit students and also reduce session jams.

Vice chancellors of all public universities will sit in a meeting with the UGC on Thursday to discuss the process of holding online exams.

"UGC is considering that all public universities will complete student assessments online. We will sit in a meeting with VCs to discuss the assessment system of public universities. We cannot sit idle as the pandemic situation is uncertain," UGC Member Prof Muhammed Alamgir told The Daily Star.

But taking exams online also depends on the universities as their academic councils or other bodies concerned will have the final say in this regard, he added.

Public universities were holding online classes as they could not take in-person classes since March 17 last year when the government closed all educational institutions due to the pandemic.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3

India's Covid peak seen nearing

Experts urge nat'l stay-at-home order as over 300,000 new cases reported for 12th straight day

AGENCIES

India reported more than 300,000 new coronavirus infections for a 12th straight day yesterday to take its overall number of cases to shy of 20 million, as scientists predicted a peak in the pandemic in the coming days.

With 368,147 new cases over the past 24 hours, India's total infections stand at 19.93 million, while total fatalities rose by 3,417 to 218,959, according to health ministry data.

Medical experts say actual numbers across the country of 1.35 billion may be five to 10 times higher than the official tally.

The health ministry offered a glimmer of hope, reporting that positive cases relative to the number of tests conducted fell yesterday for the first time since at least April 15.

India's coronavirus cases may peak between May 3-5, according to a mathematical model from a team of scientists advising the government, a few days earlier than a previous estimate as the virus has spread faster than expected.

Hospitals have filled to capacity, medical oxygen supplies have run short and morgues and crematoriums have been swamped as the country deals with the surge in cases.

At least 24 patients died in Chamarajanagar district, about 175km from Bengaluru, in the last 24 hours due to alleged oxygen shortage in the district hospital.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



A tailor etching out a design on a garment using a sewing machine in the capital's Gausia market yesterday. As Edi approaches, tailors like him are in high demand as customers get the designs of their choice on their clothes ahead of the festivities. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



PRAYER TIMING MAY 4

Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4:00	12:45	4:45	6:32	8:00
JAMAAT 4:10	1:15	5:00	6:42	8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN MAY SEHRI IFTAR			
21	4	6:32	
22	5	3:54	6:33
23	6	3:53	6:33