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"If the entire world doesn't do more, the world won't be vaccinated until 2024."
US TOP DIPLOMAT ANTONY BLINKEN
ON COVID VACCINATION



"Government of India's failures have made another devastating national lockdown almost inevitable."
INDIA'S OPPOSITION LEADER RAHUL GANDHI
ON COVID-19 CRISIS



"I think that's really because we have been focusing, as a government, on our priorities, the people's priorities, and bouncing back from the pandemic as much as we can."

LUK PRIME MINISTER BORIS JOHNSON AFTER WINNING OPPOSITION STRONGHOLD

Mad rush home as curbs eased

With vehicles plying inside districts, thousands flock to villages ahead of Eid despite govt order not to leave their places

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and MUNTAKIM SAAD

"Where will you go? Up to the [Paturia ferry] ghat or further?" "Do you need a car or a microbus?" "You can go alone or share it with other passengers." Transport workers and car rental service providers hurled such queries and "offers" at Eid holidaymakers who poured into Gabtoli bus terminal to leave the city yesterday, the last weekend before the festival.

The government suspended inter-district public transport and asked all to stay at their present location to check the spread of Covid-19, but the move hardly stopped desperate home-goers from taking the journey. They left the capital by any means, oblivious to maintaining physical distancing.

The ferry terminals at Shimulia and Paturia continued to see heavy rush of passengers. In fact, the rush got so big that some ferries even had to carry only people, leaving vehicles behind.

All these fueled the fear of experts who warned that the Covid-19 situation in the country, which is battling the second wave of the pandemic, could worsen if the health safety rules were not followed properly. Eid will be celebrated in around a week.

Yesterday, homebound people thronged the capital's inter-district bus terminals in Gabtoli and Sayedabad. Those who could afford left the city by renting cars and microbuses. Others changed vehicles at multiple places and advanced towards their destinations.

Buses are running only inside districts

Buses are running only inside districts.

Low-income people boarded local transport like human haulier and CNG-run three wheelers to reach the ferry ghats after leaving the exit points of the city.

This cost them more money and time.

Shihab Uddin, 20, along with four other construction workers, came to the capital from Chattogram's Patenga by renting a car for Tk 5,000. At Gabtoli, they were looking for a ride to go home in Jashore.

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HEADING HOME IGNORING SAFETY RULES

Crammed with homebound passengers, a ferry leaves Shimulia ferry terminal in Munshiganj yesterday morning. Only a few vehicles could board the ferry due to a rush of Eid holidaymakers who did not bother about maintaining health safety rules. Bottom left, people from Savar and adjacent areas walk to Gabtoli bus terminal in the capital to catch vehicles to Jatrabari and other exit points of the capital. Bottom right, passengers walk towards Paturia ferry terminal in Manikganj.

> PHOTO: STAR

Russia offers Sputnik V jabs for \$9.95 each

Dhaka seeks price cut thru' negotiation

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Russia has offered Bangladesh the Sputnik V vaccine at a rate of \$9.95 for each dose.

Although a procurement agreement is yet to be signed between the two countries, the Bangladesh government wrote to the Russian authority asking them to reduce the price as it seemed to be high, said officials.

The Russian government sent a proposal early last week. After analysing the proposal, the Bangladesh government replied saying the price should be negotiated further.

negotiated further.

"We have proposed for price negotiations. But the price of the double dose of Sputnik V is less than the single dose of Pfizer and Moderna vaccines," a top

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Khaleda improving

Family hopes for sending her abroad once she is more stable and legal issues are settled

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's doctors said she can be taken abroad once she becomes consistently stable.

With oxygen support, her oxygen saturation level remains 100 percent and she needs one litre of oxygen an hour, said a doctor involved with Khaleda's treatment.

The doctor, who is in a 10-member medical board, said the former prime minister's oxygen level fluctuates without oxygen support, but the dependency has decreased. "We advised the family members to take madam [Khaleda]

abroad once she gains more stability," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Her blood pressure was 120/80 at 5:00 pm yesterday when

Her blood pressure was 120/80 at 5:00 pm yesterday when her respiratory rate was 15-20 per minute.

Doctors said the improvement should continue in order

for her to be able to fly.

Family sources said Khaleda's aide Fatema, her brother

Shamim Iskandar and his wife will accompany her if the government clears the hurdles to her flight abroad.

She will be taken either to London, the UAE, Singapore or

Thailand.

"Once we get the passport, we will apply for a UK visa.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

COVID PANDEMIC

One in every 10 samples tests positive in 24 hours

Shows DGHS data
Staff Correspondent

One in every 10 samples tested Covid-19 positive in the country in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday. Another 1,682 positive

Another 1,682 positive cases were recorded during the period.

Of each 100 patients,

1.54 people died from the deadly virus and 91.37 recovered, said a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services.

The country reported its first coronavirus cases on March 8 last year. In the last 14 months, the total number of positive cases reached 770,842.

The current positivity rate is 9.89 percent, while the total positivity rate stands at 13.77 percent.

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Ex-RU VC's Tenure

Recruitment rules violated freely

Financial activities got more importance than improving quality of education

Anwar Ali with Arafat Rahaman

Thursday's chaos on Rajshahi University campus can be attributable to the lack of effective steps after a government report mentioned that bribery, questionable recruitment and financial irregularities were rampant in the administration when Prof Abdus Sobhan was the vice chancellor.

The University Grants Commission (UGC) sent the report containing the observations to the Ministry of Education, the Anti-Corruption Commission and the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) in October last year, but the only notable step taken was an embargo on new recruitment.

However, on Thursday, his last work day, Prof Sobhan recruited at least 137 teachers and employees that created disappointment in two pro-government student groups who then clashed over the recruitment.

The education ministry termed Thursday's recruitments illegal.

According to records, 52 teachers and 191 other employees were recruited in the four-year tenure of Prof Sobhan.

According to records, 52 teachers and 191 other employees were recruited in the four-year tenure of Prof Sobhan.

Several senior teachers of the university said the situation was created that to great violation of the Beishahi University Act 1972, which makes it

due to gross violation of the Rajshahi University Act 1973, which makes it mandatory to appoint the VC from a panel of three individuals nominated by the Senate.

"Instead of following the rules, VCs are being appointed through executive

orders," Prof Abu Naser Md Wahid told The Daily Star.
"Such orders are the result of serious lobbies by individuals affiliated

"Such orders are the result of serious lobbies by individuals affiliated to SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

ed to infectious disease.

India's Covid surge to peak in coming days

Predict Modi's advisers; WHO gives approval to Sinopharm vaccine

AGENCIES

A mathematical model prepared by advisers to Prime Minister Narendra Modi suggests India's coronavirus outbreak could peak in the coming days, but the group's projections have been changing and were wrong last month.

The projection comes as the World Health Organization yesterday approved China's state-owned drugmaker Sinopharm's vaccine for emergency use, a boost to Beijing's push for a big role in inoculating the world.

The vaccine, one of two main Chinese coronavirus vaccines that collectively have already been given to hundreds of millions of people in China and elsewhere, is the first developed by a non-Western country to win WHO backing. It is also the first time the WHO has given emergency use approval to a Chinese vaccine for any

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



Choked by encroachment, this channel of the Buriganga near Fatulla launch terminal in Narayanganj has become very risky for navigation of vessels. Dozens of lives were lost in riverine accidents in the area. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Narrow Buriganga bend turns deadly

Crucial waterway near Dhaka increasingly accident-prone as channel narrowed amid riverbank grabbing, unregulated anchoring of vessels

Tarun Sarkar

A narrow V-shaped bend in the Buriganga river, one of the major channels of the country's inland waterways communications, has increasingly become an accident-prone zone in recent years.

Frequent riverine accidents of passenger and cargo vessels in this zone, near Narayanganj's Fatullah area, have claimed dozens of lives over the last couple of years.

Passengers and water transport operators

said the bend has narrowed over the years due to rampant grabbing of the riverbanks.

At the same time, the number of water

transport is increasing day by day and almost all vessels from the capital bound for the southern districts have to pass through the bend.

Moreover, many vessels are kept anchored

at the channel and hundreds of sand-laden cargo vessels ply the channel round the clock. These factors have made the river's bend an accident-prone zone, said Nurul Haque, general secretary of the Bangladesh Cargo

Vessel Owners Association.

Environmentalists and vessel operators have demanded widening of the bend by excavating the river banks, after evicting

illegal structures.

This narrow point borders Dhaka and

Narayanganj districts with Fatullah area of Narayanganj Sadar upazila on the eastern side of the river and Dhaka's Keraniganj upazila to the west.

The Buriganga river from Dhaka's Kamrangirchar area goes straight via Sadarghat and the Postogola area. As the river approaches Fatullah, it takes a V-shaped bend and flows in the south-western direction, eventually connecting with the Dhaleshwari river.

This turning point is the narrowest portion of the waterways between Dhaka and Narayanganj -- as a result, accidents have become commonplace and sometimes even fatal.

MULTIPLE ACCIDENTS IN LAST THREE YEARS

A collision between passenger vessels Kirtonkhola-10 and MV Farhan-10 in January this year, and two accidents involving launches and sand-laden vessels in March last year took place at this point.

Also, at least three passengers died when a sand-carrying vessel sank after collision with a passenger vessel on January 3 last year.

Similar collisions between passenger vessels and sand-laden cargo vessels took place on April 19 and March 10 in 2019 and on January 12, 2018.

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City











CONSUMPTION PROTECTION, EMPLOYMENT PROMOTION

Govt should focus on them in next budget

Says Debapriya Bhattacharya

Unb, Dhaka

Consumption protection and employment promotion should be the priorities of the upcoming national budget during the pandemic, said renowned economist and public policy analyst Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya.

To this end, the government has to give direct and substantive fiscal support to the traditionally disadvantaged communities as well as to the "new poor", he said in an interview with UNB about the national

Debapriya said the new budget also needs to promote domestic marketoriented industrial diversification and introduce a universal social protection

said the expansionary fiscal policy should focus not on maximising the public expenditures for health exigencies, but on putting more disposable income into the hands of disadvantaged households and investable resources into the hands of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs).

The economist said the new budget should neither increase tax rate nor apply new taxes, but should focus on improving efficiency of the tax administration to prevent tax leakages and evasion, stop undue exemptions and definitely discontinue favouring launderers of black money.

dealing with the protracted impact of the pandemic, Debapriya said the last budget was done under the incorrect assumption that the pandemic would vanish within 3-4 months and then normalcy would be restored

in the economy.

"At that time, we pointed out that even if health emergencies subside, socio-economic impact of pandemic will be felt much longer. Now 12 months later, we are in the midst of another Covid peak."

The basic point is that, under the circumstances, public expenditure choices and other fiscal decisions within one-year time-frame is not appropriate from policy perspectives,

"So, a 'core budget' focused on defeating the pandemic and recovering from the fallout demand a time policy frame of at least two-three years. This has to be aligned with the current Five Year Plan [2021-25], SDG delivery schedule and climate action commitments," Debapriya added.

He observed that the development variable needs to be reprioritised from the point of view of employment retention and generation and no less important will be protection of consumption

Favouring an expansionary fiscal policy, he emphasised the need for accelerating public expenditures and improving supply of liquidity to boost domestic demand for goods and services.

Ctg Hefajat leader sued over rape

5 more activists held over recent mayhem

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN

A rape case has been filed against Jakaria Noman Fayezi, publicity secretary of the recently dissolved Hefajat-e-Islam

Masum, additional superintendent of Chattogram police.

According to the case statement, the plaintiff became acquainted with Fayezi through social media in September of

officer said, quoting the case statement. "Favezi raped the victim many times over the next year," the statement

Narendra Modi's visit on March

superintendent of the district police. The total number of arrestees over the violence now stands at 439 and a total of 57 cases have been lodged over the violence against some 414 named and 39,000 unnamed people, read a

Hefajat leaders were sent to jail yesterday after they were produced before a Dhaka court in a case filed

Dhaka City unit vice-president of

Hefajat's now-dissolved committee, and Maulana Jalaluddin Ahmed, its assistant general secretary.

Metropolitan Magistrate Begum Yeasmin Ara passed the order after Sub-Inspector Énamul Haque of Paltan Police Station produced them before the court on completion of their threeday remand in the case.

In the forwarding report, the SI, who is also the investigation officer of the case, said the two leaders, while on remand, gave important information.

Also, the accused did not submit any petition seeking bail in the case. ter the hearing the magistrate sent the duo to Dhaka Central Jail in

Jubair was arrested from Lalbagh on April 16 while Jalal was arrested from Mohammadpur on April 17.

In Narayanganj, an activist of Chhatra Dal gave his confessional statement before a court in a case filed over the violence during the strike observed by Hefajat.

SP Monirul Islam of the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) in Narayanganj, in a press release, said the Chhatra Dal activist Rakib Hossain, 19, gave the confessional statement involving his role before a senior udicial magistrate.

Rakib, along with three leaders of Jubo Dal and Chhatra Dal, was held by police during the violence on March 28.

Later, Rakib was taken into remand in a case filed over subversive activities.

FM Mizan from Chattogram, Masuk Hridov from Brahmanbaria, and Sunny Shaha from Narayangaj contributed to

Recovered from Covid-19, Sakila Khatun waits with her luggage to board an ambulance at Dhaka Medical

College Hospital yesterday. A staffer of the hospital is seeing her off. The 33-year-old woman travelled to her home in Savar's Nabinagar after undergoing treatment at the DMCH for 16 days. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Mad rush home as curbs eased

There, transport workers gave them two options: either hire a car for Tk 10,000

or pay Tk 1,500 per person.

"We have only Tk 3,000 left with
us. So we have to go to the ferry ghat
somehow and cross the Padma river. From there, we will go to our destination by changing buses," Shihab told The Daily Star yesterday.

Like them, people in their hundreds were seen waiting for transport to reach the country's northern and southwestern districts.

Transport workers negotiating the fares with them.

Talking to this newspaper, many passengers said they were being charged almost double the usual bus fare.

For Jashore or Magura, transport workers were asking for Tk 1,500-2,000 from each person. A car bound to Paturia ferry ghat was asking for Tk 500 from each passenger.

Inside the vehicle, maintaining physical distance was a far cry. People sat in close proximity.

"My family lives in Satkhira and it will be extremely difficult for me to stay here alone during the Eid. So I along with two of my friends rented a car and we are going to my home via the Mawa ghat," said Sirajul Alam, a private firm employee, at Gabtoli.

Many passengers were found sharing CNG auto-rickshaw and riding motorbikes from Gabtoli. CNG drivers said that they were charging Tk 300 from each passenger to take them to the Paturia ghat while the bikers said that they would go up to Chandra, Paturia ghat or Mawa.

Some passengers went to Amin Bazar and Hemayetpur by these vehicles and then took buses in phases to go to the Paturia ghat via Shingair and Manikganj.

Police set up check posts on key highways to enforce the Covid-19 restrictions, but failed to stop the rush of home-goers. To dodge the law enforcers, many even opted to start their journey just after taking Sehri early in

Some transport workers alleged that they bribe police Tk 200 for each car. Whoever does not pay is caught and fined by the law enforcers. This newspaper, however, could not verify it.

Not maintaining physical distancing, people were seen leaving in microbuses and pickups on the Dhaka-Chattogram and the Dhaka-Sylhet highways, our correspondents reported.

Visiting the Signboard Shimrail intersections in Narayanganj Sadar upazila from 10:00am to 1:00pm yesterday, our Narayanganj correspondent found that some transport workers set up illegal ticket counters under the sheds of different bus services and took passengers one by one into microbuses.

At least 10 to 12 passengers in each microbus were seen leaving for their destinations in Chattogram, Cumilla and Chandpur. Policemen in the nearby traffic police box took no action at that time.

The fare for Chattogram was Tk 1,000, for Comilla Tk 500 and for Chandpur Tk 800-1,000 per person.

Jalal Mia, who boarded a microbus for Chattogram, said, "Despite all the fear over the Covid-19 and the transport ban on long-haul buses, I have to go to my family. I could not be with them during the last two Eid due to the coronavirus.

He said he paid Tk 1,000, whereas the bus fare would be Tk 400.

Meanwhile, sources said traffic police at Signboard and Shimrail fined at least 25 cars and microbuses from 8:00am to 1:00pm yesterday for violating the health safety rules.

RENTAL SÉRVICE PEAKED

Since the government imposed restrictions on public buses, demand for rental cars and microbuses has risen sharply. The vehicles are being operated on rent day and night.

Many rental car service providers are posting ads on Facebook to draw the attention of homebound people. Some were even giving "Eid discounts".

"AC Private Car Service from Dhaka

to any district, contact us. We will also

manage the movement pass," reads a Facebook post by one Razia Rent-a-Car. Another one, Pacific Rent-a-Car, posted on social media that they would give a special discount ahead of Eid-ul-

Many passengers, however, said they were paying extra.

Four students of a public university at Dhaka, who went to Gaibandha yesterday from the capital, told The Daily Star that they hired a four-seater for Tk 10,000 for a one-way journey. Previously, the rent was Tk 7,000

RUSH AT FERRY TERMINALS Ferry services at the Shimulia-Kathalbari

and the Paturia-Dauladia routes experienced huge pressure of passengers and it is likely to increase even more in the coming days.

terminal in Manikganj, the gateway to 21 districts in the southern part of the

Transport Authority's (BIWTA) Aricha office said out of 16 ferries, three were plying the Paturia-Daulatdia route.

small and big, are waiting to cross the river, the official added, while talking to this newspaper yesterday evening.

But the crowd of people was even higher on the Munshiganj's

and speedboats were not allowed to BIWTC officials.

got stuck, reported our correspondent.

(commerce) of BIWTC at Shimulia ferry terminal, told The Daily Star that three of the 16 ferries on the Shimulia-Banglabazar route were out of work, so it has been difficult to cope with the

Due to the holiday yesterday, the rush increased manifold at the Paturia ferry

Zillur Rahman, deputy general manager of Bangladesh Inland Water

Some 300 hundred vehicles, both

Shimulia ferry terminal as launches operate after the speedboat accident in Madaripur's Shibchar recently, said

Unable to cope with the huge rush, some ferries departed without taking a single vehicle on board. As a result, over a thousand freight and private vehicles

Safayat Ahmed, managei crowds with only 13 ferries running.

Russia offers Sputnik V jabs for \$9.95 each

health ministry official told The Daily

Star yesterday.

The Bangladesh government also proposed that the Russian authority will have to take the responsibility if it fails to supply the vaccine in due time.

between gap administrations of the two shots and that is why the supply of the second dose should reach Bangladesh on time, the official said. The proposal also mentioned that

50 percent of the price of the vaccine should be paid in advance, said the Health Minister Zahid

Maleque told The Daily Star that they got the agreement document from the foreign ministry on Monday.

Sputnik V has been priced at about \$10 per shot in other countries, according to media reports. We are trying to sign the agreement

at the earliest," the minister said. The government also approved in principle the local coproduction

Russia's Sputnik V involving Bangladeshi drug makers. On April 27, the government authorised emergency use of Sputnik V

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

Due to vaccine shortage, the government suspended administering the first doses from April 26.

the emergency use However, authorisation of Sputnik V means there is no bar to importing and administering that vaccine. Health officials said they can resume the first dose of vaccination once the the Russian vaccine arrives. Sputnik V is the second vaccine

the Directorate General of Drug Administration (DGDA) approved after giving the go ahead to Covishield, the AstraZeneca vaccine, on January 4. The Russian vaccine has been

registered in around 60 countries and is currently in use in some of those countries. approved the Sputnik V Russia

vaccine for domestic use in August last year. The country claimed that its efficacy is around 91 percent.

Recruitment rules violated freely

in the country.

political leaders. Once appointed, the

prefers London

VCs remain loyal to the leaders who lobbied for them. This is how the corruption starts," Prof Wahid said. Prof Bokhtiar Ahmed of the

university's Department of Anthropology said, "This has been the most frustrating situation in my two decades of teaching. can see the death of a public university. He said the senate had been ineffective since 2016 and there has been no students'

representative in the Senate. "When a vice-chancellor is appointed solely on political consideration, it is difficult for him or her to work without corruption.

Prof Selim Reza Newton said it was astounding that Prof Sobhan was not removed even after the UGC reported his corruption. The government that could not rely

on him to recruit people trusted him to run the university," he said.

Law teachers explained that the RU Act also stresses on education and research, not financial activities. The law says that the VC would be "a whole-time principal academic" and an executive The VC shall have the power to recruit,

on a purely temporary basis for a period of not more than six months, by reporting to the syndicate, the law says. But the UGC report reveals that Prof

Sobhan flouted all the laws. **UGC REPORT** The UGC investigated 17 allegations

made by the RU teachers and job seekers and found them to be true.

irregularities and nepotism proved moral turpitude beyond doubt," the report reads. Prof Sobhan ended his first term as the VC in 2013 amid allegations of recruiting

"Each of the allegations of corruption,

posts and 344 other employees. At the beginning of his second term in May 2017, Prof Sobhan relaxed the Standard Policies of 2015 for educational

some 330 teachers against 204 advertised

qualifications of job seekers. "Relaxing of policies opened the door for lowering the quality of the university's education and research," the UGC report says.

At least 34 teachers, including Prof Sobhan's daughter and son-in-law, were appointed through relaxing the rule. The probe found several examples of recruitment of people who are not

eligible to apply, and of rejecting job seekers with more qualifications than the ones who got hired. The UGC probe documented incidents of seeking and receiving bribes

from the job seekers by Prof Sobhan and several top officials of the administration. The illegal recruitments are likely to

be a burden on the national exchequer while the under-qualified teachers and officers would become barriers to achieving sustainable development goals for education, it said. The report also said the RU authorities

didn't cooperate with the investigation

which in itself is a punishable offence. The people facing the allegations claimed to be innocent, but failed to provide documents to support their claim.

Based on the report, the Ministry of Education in December last year issued the embargo on recruitment. But in January, the RU administration

received a humanitarian request from the Prime Minister's Office to hire a physically challenged person as an officer. The Daily Star has a copy of the request. According to newspaper reports citing

audio clips, Prof Sobhan took it as an opportunity and asked job seekers to demonstrate against him demanding recruitment. Then he began a process of

recruitment, but his attempts were unsuccessful until Thursday. Besides hiring some 50 ruling party

men, most of the 137 new recruits got the job by paying bribes and having political leaders lobby for them.

The Daily Star tried all day long to reach Prof Sobhan yesterday, but he did not respond. However, Bangla Tribune quoted him claiming his innocence. "I was forced to give appointments on my last work day. No one cooperated with me to follow the due process. That's why took it as a challenge," he said.

About the ministry order terming the recruitment illegal, he said, "No one has the authority to declare the recruitments illegal. I did it following the rules. I have legal power to appoint teachers and staffers on an ad hoc basis.'

India's Covid

India yesterday reported another record daily rise in coronavirus cases, 414,188, bringing total new cases for the week to 1.57 million. Deaths from Covid-19 rose by 3,915 to 234,083.

Experts said the reported figures likely underplay the real toll because the nation's crematoriums and hospitals have been overwhelmed. That makes the assessment of any peak particularly complicated.

Still, estimates may become crucial because PM Modi has been avoiding a national lockdown, choosing instead to allow states to implement their own restrictions to curb the spread.

"Our predictions are that the peak will come within a few days," Mathukumalli Vidyasagar, professor at the Indian Institute of Technology in Hyderabad, said by email Thursday, referring to a model prepared with Manindra Agrawal, a professor from IIT

"As per current projections, we should hit 20,000 cases per day by the end of June. We will revise this as needed.

In April, Vidyasagar's team wrongly predicted that the wave would peak by the middle of last month. That was due to incorrect parameters as "the pandemic was changing rapidly, even wildly, until about a week ago," he wrote on Twitter at the time.

More recently, Vidyasagar, also head of a government-appointed group of of a government-appointed group of scientists modelling the trajectory of infections, told Reuters that the peak would be between May 3-5, and then the India Today publication that it would come on May 7.

Scientists are largely agreed that the coming few weeks will be difficult for India. A train at the Indian Institute

India. A team at the Indian Institute of Science in Bangalore used a mathematical model to predict about 404,000 deaths will occur by June 11 if current trends continue. India's death toll from the pandemic has already crossed 200,000. Meanwhile, K Vijay Raghavan,

principal scientific advisor to centre, said vesterday, "If we take strong measures, he third wave may not happen in all the places or indeed anywhere at all. It depends much on how effectively the guidance is implemented at the local evel, in the states, in districts and in the cities everywhere. However, India's main opposition

leader Rahul Gandhi yesterday warned that unless the deadly second wave sweeping the country was brought under control it would decimate India as well as threaten the rest of the world.

Meanwhile tonnes of medical equipment from abroad has starting to arrive in Delhi hospitals, in what could ease the pressure on an overburdened

NEPAL'S CASES SKYROCKET

In neighbouring Nepal, health workers and authorities are struggling to contain a massive surge of Covid-19 cases as infections spill over from India's deadly second wave.

In last three weeks, Nepal's daily case trajectory has shot up with two out of five people tested now returning positive. On Thursday, Nepal reported 8,970 cases, the highest single day increase.

More than 3,500 people have died since the pandemic began, 400 of them in the last two weeks alone, according to official figures. "Health facilities have been flooded

with symptomatic cases... The situation could become worse in the coming days," Hemanta Chandra Ojha at Nepal's Epidemiology and Disease Control Division told AFP. British health officials yesterday

labelled a coronavirus variant first found in India a "variant of concern" due to evidence it spreads more easily, with Prime Minister Boris Johnson saying the situation needed careful handling.
Public Health England (PHE)
designated variant B.1.617.2, one

of three variants identified in India that has spread to Britain, a variant of concern. Surge testing was being carried out in areas where evidence indicates community spread.

Australia will lift a ban on its citizens returning from Covid-ravaged India next week, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison said yesterday, as state officials reported that an outbreak in Sydney appeared to be contained.

One in every 10

FROM PAGE 1

Yesterday, 37 more people died from Covid-19, according to the DGHS. The total number of deaths is 11,833.

Some 17,013 samples were tested cross the country in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday. At least 2,178 coronavirus patients have recovered during the period. The

at 704,341 and the recovery rate now is 1.37 percent. Of the 37 deceased, 23 were men and 14 women. Of them, one was aged between 31 and 40, five were within 41-50, 11 within 51-60, and 20 were above

total number of recoveries now stands

60 years old, added the release. Dhaka division has the highest number of death toll -- 6,879, while Mymensingh division has seen the

owest number of deaths -- 245 Out of each one million people of the country, about 4,526 have so far been infected with coronavirus since March 8 last year.

During this period, nearly 70 people out of each one million died of Covid-19, added the DGHS. Across the country, there are 12,048

general beds for Covid patients. Yesterday, 2,650 of the beds were occupied by patients. Out of the 1,072 ICU beds, 443 were occupied. Till Thursday noon, 72.48 lakh

people registered for vaccine shots and 58.19 lakh received their first doses

and 33.13 lakh completed their second

budget for fiscal year 2021-22. system.

Noting that one of the fundamental issues for the next budget would be

central committee, in Chattogram, said A woman filed the case with Hathazari Police Station early yesterday, confirmed Abdullah Al

In November, the same year, she came to Hathazari upazila where Fayezi rented a house for her to stay, the police

Meanwhile, five Hefazat men were arrested in Brahmanbaria over the mayhem in the district following 26, said Roish Uddin, additional

police press release. In another development, two

with Paltan Police Station. They are Maulana Jubair Ahmed,

Khaleda improving

We may also seek visas for Singapore

and Thailand," said a top BNP leader. BNP sources said Khaleda's family members received "a positive signal" from the UK government regarding

her treatment in a London hospital.

government approval remained the

main challenge as she was released

from jail through an executive order

leaders said getting the

of the government on the condition that she does not leave the country. That is why Khaleda's brother Shamim Iskandar wrote to the home ministry seeking approval on

Wednesday night. The BNP chairperson can be flown abroad if the law ministry amends the order, BNP sources added

Singapore before her imprisonment,

and if the government of the city-state

If they fail to take her to Singapore,

allows, she might be flown there.

Khaleda did a medical checkup in

her family members will consider taking her to Thailand. younger son Arafat Khaleda's Rahman Koko's in-laws live in Thailand, and when Koko was released from jail after the army-backed caretaker government assumed office in 2007, Koko went to Thailand and stayed there for five years.

Khaleda's family members are also considering taking her to the UAE and get her treated there for a few days before leaving for London. That travel time can be divided that way.

because her son Tarique Rahman has

been living there since September

2008. But everything depends on

"The family

the government's approval and her physical condition," said a party Khaleda was admitted to Evercare Hospital on April 27, three days after she tested positive for coronavirus for a second time. She first tested positive on April 11. She also has arthritis,

She was taken to the hospital's Coronary Care Unit with breathing difficulties Monday afternoon.

diabetes and eye problems.

The government released Khaleda from jail on March 25 last year, suspending her sentence as per section 401 (1) of the Criminal Code of Procedure. The suspension was later extended twice. The BNP chairperson

in jail on February 8, 2018, after a special court sentenced her to five years in prison in the Zia Orphanage Trust corruption case. On October 30, 2018, the High Court raised her punishment to 10 years.

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Circumnavigating Ubehebe Crater, Death Valley, 1983.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Death Valley

hen friends suggested going to Death Valley for Christmas I was startled. It was not exactly a warm and fuzzy name. But in the end I agreed to join them for a camping trip in this desert wilderness in south-eastern California.

I was about to discover just how wonderful a desert could be.

It was late afternoon when we arrived following a long drive from Los Angeles. After setting up camp, we started exploring. Within minutes of the campsite we found Zabriskie Point where, over the aeons, the elements had chiselled rocks into dramatic angular formations. With the deep blue desert sky as backdrop, the many hued rocks looked splendid as the sun Nearby, a canyon called Artist's

Palette let us walk among rocks coloured by minerals. Further south, a steep uphill drive led us to a panoramic view over Badwater, a long shallow water basin between mountains whose snow-clad peaks reflected on the still water. At 282 feet below sea level, Badwater is the lowest point in the Northern Hemisphere. Its undrinkable brackish water supports snails and the endemic Death Valley

Two volcanic craters, Ubehebe and Little Hebe, sat a longer drive away. I circumnavigated Ubehebe's crater on a circular trail. At one point both sides of the narrow trail fell sharply and I froze, eventually crawling through that part. Later I saw others face trouble at the same spot. The bowl-shaped crater, covered with grey volcanic soil, descended several hundred feet.

The sand dunes in Mesquite Flats were continuously moulded by shifting winds. The sand made three-dimensional forms with soft edges that curved and twisted creating dramatic photographic opportunities. Nocturnal wildlife, including

sidewinder snakes, birds and lizards left their tracks in the sand.

We could stop virtually anywhere in the desert and start hiking. The terrain challenged but never stopped us. The air was so clear that it created telescopic vision making distant points appear closer. One morning I started walking towards a hill that looked ten minutes away. It took me an hour to reach it; along the way I encountered a friendly burro, the wild donkey that roams the desert.

I learned that a desert is not just sand. It is also mountains, rocks, canyons, caverns and even small bodies of water. Life here has adapted to the extreme conditions. For example, seeds of wildflowers stay dormant for decades until it rains. Then, for a short week, the desert becomes awash in colours. Once upon a time Shoshone Indians lived a nomadic life in this valley and the surrounding mountains but today park rangers and staff are the only

But the best part of Death Valley was mental. Exposed to the elements in the wide open desert with few distractions, I was forced to look inward, marvelling at the passage of time, pondering my place in Creation and ultimately sensing an inner peace. I began to see how spiritual a desert could be.

Death Valley is in the Mojave Desert in South-eastern California, famous for being the hottest place on earth. Its name comes from a group of settlers who perished here in 1849 while trying to reach the California gold mines. A National Park was established here by President Clinton.

Since that trip in 1983 I returned to Death Valley many times in winter. It always rejuvenated me.

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

TREE FELLING AT SUHRAWARDY UDYAN

Protests against cutting down trees at the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan for the implementation of a mega project at the historic site continued throughout the day

Demanding an immediate stop to the tree felling, the protesters said 10,000 trees at the park have to be planted there instead. Throughout the day, people from all walks of life including writers, poets, artistes, activists and members of various student organisations held rallies at the Udyan.

In the morning, youth organisation -- Green Voice -demonstrated at the entrance to the park near TSC of

They also placed a five-point demand, which included ensuring environment-friendly development at the park and stopping construction of concrete structures at the expense of greenery.

In the afternoon, Anchor Bangladesh, Swadhinata Udyan Cultural Alliance, and Green Planet performed a street play, highlighting various harmful aspects of deforestation. A group of artist-activists displayed paintings depicting their interpretation of the situation.

Environmentalists and educationists also lambasted the government for destroying the environment of the Suhrawardy Udyan.

Meanwhile, activists of Bangladesh Students Federation planted saplings -- as a form of protest -at the same places where trees are being felled for the project.

In a protest rally, Zakir Hossain, joint convener of Mass Cultural Front, said, "Hills are being razed to make buildings and trees are being cut down for constructing restaurants. It's very unfortunate."

The Tk 265.44 crore project, titled "Shawdhinata Stambha Construction Project in Dhaka", began its third phase in January 2018 at the park.

Organisations tasked with the implementation of the project include the Liberation War affairs ministry, the Department of Public Works and Dhaka South City

Under the project, public toilets, walkways, food courts, artificial ponds, underground parking lots, underpasses and mosques will be constructed.

The project was undertaken to develop the Udyan and make it greener. However, green activists said the authorities concerned are seemingly contradicting one of their own goals, as under the same project, they are felling old trees to construct buildings.

Protests rage on Cutting trees in name of dev must stop: experts

We cannot support an

initiative that fells trees.

This will set an example,

encouraging people to cut

down trees in the name

of development wherever

they want.

PROFESSOR EMERITUS

SERAJUL ISLAM CHOWDHURY

Cutting trees has a long-

term adverse effect. When

concrete structures replace

greenery, surface water

cannot go underground. So

water level under Dhaka is

decreasing every day.

ARCHITECT

MUBASSHAR HUSSEIN

Abdullah Al-Amin

Udyan, Suhrawardy located adjacent to Dhaka University, has a long history as a public park. From political rallies to public fairs, the grounds of this historic site have always been used for varied purposes throughout the years.

But today, park has come to the limelight due to an unseemly decision to cut down trees to implement a "mega project".

The Daily Star spoke to eminent academics intellectuals explore reasons behind, and consequences of such a decision.

Professor Emeritus Serajul Islam Chowdhury is outspoken about his lack of support for such

"It is very much unfair. The number of trees in the city is already insufficient. We cannot support an initiative that fells trees. This will set an example, encouraging people to cut down trees in the name of development wherever they want," said Prof Serajul.

Professor of physics at Dhaka University, Dr Md Kamrul Hassan, said, "This move to cut trees must be stopped immediately. Trees must be replanted wherever trees have already been felled. This development project must be revised."

expressed his shock at the idea of cutting trees for "development"

"At mega cities in developed countries, every citizen has access to a park within a 30-minute walking distance. Moreover, we need more greenery because our population density is higher," he

"Instead, trees are being felled here. We cannot understand why restaurants would have to be constructed inside Suhrawardy Udyan,' said Prof Kamrul.

"If this malpractice cannot be stopped, it will encourage further destruction of greenery. Trees would be cut for constructing car parking, shopping mall and other concrete structures," he said, adding that trees are particularly needed due

to the park's proximity to Dhaka University. "Trees are also being felled to make

room for other constructions at DU. But trees are very necessary for the nearly 35,000 students of the university," said Prof Kamrul, "Now, the country is controlled by businesspersons who are taking advantage of the university's closure."

"If the university was open, students would surely protest. The university should protest this move," Prof Kamrul further

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5







Throughout the day, students and activists gathered at Suhrawardy Udyan to hold rallies, stage street plays, plant saplings and display pro-environment paintings, condemning the ongoing tree felling at the park.

UNDER-TRIAL PRISONERS

Over 1 lakh released on bail in two phases

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 1,03,432 under-trial prisoners including 1,291 accused children have got released from jails on bail from virtual courts across the country in two phases over 76 working days.

The first phase of virtual court proceedings started on May 11 last year and continued till August 4 last year and the second phase started on April 12 this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

A total of 422 children accused in criminal cases were released from jail after they were granted bail by virtual courts

concerned in last 18 working days.

With the 422 accused children, a total of 31,208 under-trial prisoners have got released across the country during the 18 working days, said Supreme Court Spokesman Md Saifur Rahman in a statement yesterday.

He said in the statement that a total of 1,917 under-trial prisoners got released from jail on bail on Thursday.

The courts and tribunals concerned granted them bail after virtually hearing and disposing of bail petitions in connection with 3,636 criminal cases filed against the

Mamata thanks Momen, highlights stronger ties

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has thanked Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen for his recent

congratulatory message to her. Mamata hoped that the love and affection between the people of Bangladesh and West Bengal will further be strengthened in the days to come.

The Trinamool Congress chief was sworn in as West Bengal chief minister for the third straight term on Wednesday after she spearheaded her party to a victory in the assembly polls.

On May 5, Momen congratulated Mamata. "We believe, with your cooperation and commitment, our relations will be strengthened further and help resolve outstanding issues," he mentioned in his congratulatory message



Shopping for Eid is hitting the peaks at the capital's New Market. Though customers are bringing relief for traders, their overflow is a cause for concern during the pandemic, as enforcement of health guidelines has completely broken down. This photo was taken yesterday afternoon.

Filing complaints now easier than ever

DNCC's Sobar Dhaka app allows residents to post issues for authorities to solve

Mathews Chiran

It was quite a pleasant surprise for Kawser Alam when he found Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) workers clearing the dumped waste in front of his house, a day after he lodged a complaint through an app called "Sobar Dhaka".

A resident of Mirpur (ward-6) for 20 years, Kawser had previously complained about problems regarding bad condition of roads, street lights and other civic amenities. But he would have to write down the complaints, go to DNCC's zonal office and then wait for a week for the problem to be addressed.

With the introduction of the app, however, lodging complaints is now easier than ever.

"I found the app while browsing YouTube. At first, I didn't take it seriously, but then I downloaded and tried it. I filed the complaint a week ago and uploaded pictures. The next day, waste collectors came and cleaned the place," said Kawser.

On January 10, DNCC launched the app to provide civic facilities for its residents. It allows residents to file complaints on eight matters: mosquitoes, roads, street lights, garbage, waterlogging, public toilets, drainage and illegal structures.

Four months into its launch, DNCC received 2,257 complaints till April 5, and solved 1,935. The remaining 322 are now pending, said officials. Overall, the app has created a positive vibe among city dwellers. However, the initiative is not perfect and residents expressed apprehension whether the service will be available in the long run.



Private job-holder Md Oliullah has been living at Mohammadpur (ward-33) for 5 years. He complained about a bad road in his locality two weeks back.

He said the problem was solved immediately, but claimed that his next complaint about a waste disposal problem was yet to be addressed entirely.

Furthermore, Oliullah was unhappy with the lack of communication from DNCC. "They didn't even bother to know whether I was satisfied with their work. They didn't call me back to know if the problem was really solved," he said.

Contacted, Zonal Executive (Zone-3) Abdullah Al Baki said, "We

sort complaints into two categories -- long and short term. Complaints related to street lights and waste are solvable within 24 hours. But road repairing takes time, and we let the complainant know about the matter if it takes a long period.'

He said due to the pandemic, eviction of illegal structures is not being conducted properly now.

During the app's launch, DNCC Mayor Atiqul Islam said it would help improve accountability of government services, and users would also be able to advise the city corporation through the app. The process involves a user posting a comment with a relevant picture. This will in turn reach relevant DNCC authorities, he said.

The app also includes two emergency helplines -- 999 and 333. There is a special feature for children named "Emergency Alert", and emergency numbers of different government agencies are also included.

Witness to the killing of Italian priest

of cars and commercial vehicles to replace the Bangla number plates by those in English or face punitive action. The action was taken for the convenience of Pakistani law enforcement agencies who were not familiar with the Bangla script and numerical.

APP also reported that famed Sindi poet Sheikh Ayuz was placed under house arrest under Martial Law regulations. He was described as having "leanings towards the Awami

SITUATION REPORT: JESSORE, KHULNA

Pakistan military government allowed six foreign newspapers, including the New York Times, into occupied Bangladesh this week for a tour with official escorts.

The New York Times correspondent provided an account of the killing of Italian priest Father Veronesi in, Jessore which occurred on April 4: "In four persons, including two women.

smashed and burned city [Jessore] is the fresh grave of an Italian priest. The grave is that of the Rev. Mario Veronesi, 58 years old, who worked at the Roman Catholic mission here for 18 years. Father Veronesi was one of four Italian priests at the Fatima Catholic Hospital here. All were members of the Xaverian order.

"At the Catholic hospital, according to witnesses, two soldiers arrived late in the afternoon as a doctor priest was about to operate on a girl. Witnesses said the soldiers began firing into the house and Father Veronesi walked out with his hands up, They said he was wearing no cassock, but his shirt carried a Red Cross badge. The grounds are clearly marked as a Catholic hospital, At this point, a soldier is said to have opened fire at the priest with a sten gun, killing him instantly.

"The witnesses said that troops then entered the church and shot

the Catholic hospital grounds of this Troops on a truck reportedly opened the offensive in Jessore by 'firing a machine gun at all buildings as it passed along the street near the hospital."

Two days ago, Gen Tikka Khan, military governor of East Pakistan, told foreign newsmen that the army had not desecrated or damaged any religious shrines. Asked by a reporter whether an Italian priest had been killed, he paused and said that an Italian journalist had been wounded. When the Italian ambassador to Pakistan reportedly visited the mission, military authorities informed him that Father Veronesi had been killed by the rebels, not the army.

It was reported that Jessore and Khulna were among the most heavily damaged towns in East Pakistan. Many market areas and buildings are burned out, the streets deserted.

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

US may consider taking a good number

He also expressed optimism that the US, as the largest donor for humanitarian operations for the Rohingyas in Bangladesh, would providing continue necessary assistance to them, including those now settled in Bhasan Char.

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Earl R Miller met the foreign minister at his ministry office on Thursday and discussed the issues.

The US envoy informed the minister that during the upcoming launch of the annual Joint Response Plan (JRP) on May 18 in Geneva, the US is expected to pledge again to make a large contribution to the humanitarian operation for Rohingyas.

Momen also assured the US side of Bangladesh's cooperation on the

against Rohingyas in Myanmar, as re- million doses of vaccine, the US initiated by the Biden administration.

The minister urged Miller to address the difficulties being faced by a large number of Bangladeshi students to obtain visa interview dates at the US embassy in Dhaka, as many of them may lose admission and scholarships due to delay caused by the pandemic.

The US envoy informed that many interview slots had to be cancelled due to the "lockdown".

He assured Momen of doing the best to make sure all student visa applicants get interview slots on a priority basis once the "lockdown" is over

The main point of the discussion was the process of acquiring AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine from the US to meet the growing needs in Bangladesh.

Momen said while the immediate ongoing investigation into genocide need of Bangladesh is around 4

government may consider providing 20 million AstraZeneca vaccine to Bangladesh from its stock.

The US ambassador said his government was sincerely working on the proposal, though it was difficult to

predict a time frame at this moment. He also informed that the United States is yet to provide any AstraZeneca vaccine doses to India, and hopefully Bangladesh will get the vaccine at the same time.

The foreign minister emphasised an early decision in this regard.

He also welcomed Biden's declaration to support intellectual property waiver for vaccines in World Trade Organistion, and expressed optimism that this would enable developing countries, including Bangladesh, to produce US

Rabindranath's 160th birth

nation is digitally celebrating the birth anniversary of Rabindranath, who reshaped Bengali literature, music as well as art of Indian subcontinent with contextual modernism.

On the occasion of the poet's birth anniversary, President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina issued separate messages yesterday, paying rich tributes to him.

Due to the pandemic, there is no official event on the occasion in the

Nobody influenced the minds of so many Bengali-speaking people before or after Rabindranath. His influence has been compared, by many, to that of Shakespeare in the English-speaking world.

The youngest of 13 surviving of Bengal", Rabindranath's poetic

children of Debendranath Tagore and Sarada Devi, Rabindranath, nicknamed Rabi, was born on 25th of Baishakh in 1268 (May 7, 1861) in Kolkata's Jorasanko Mansion.

His novels, short stories, songs, dance-dramas and essays always speak about the political and personal life of people.

(Song Offerings), Gora Gitanjali (Fair-Faced) and Ghare-Baire (The Home and the World) are his bestknown works and his verse, short stories and novels were acclaimed for their lyricism, colloquialism, naturalism and unnatural contemplation.

Rabindranath became the first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913.

Sometimes referred to as "the Bard

songs were viewed as spiritual and

His compositions were chosen by two nations as national anthems: Bangladesh's "Amar Sonar Bangla" and India's "Jana Gana Mana". The Sri Lankan national anthem was inspired by his work.

The legendary poet breathed his last at his paternal home in Kolkata on Sraban 22 of 1348 (August 7, 1941).

State-run Bangladesh Television, private television channels and Bangladesh Betar are airing special programmes, highlighting the life and orks of Tagore.

Chayanat will organise programmme titled "Dhar Nirvar Gaan". The show will be broadcast on Chayanat's Facebook group and YouTube channel at 9:00pm today.

4 city areas at risk of dengue

FROM PAGE 12 occasions in the city, which is favourable for the Aedes mosquito's

breeding. However, he said the ongoing restrictions to curb the spread of Covid-19 also creates obstacles for

spreading dengue. Schools and colleges are major sites for spreading the virus as the young generation are the main victims.

Similarly, the restrictions on people's movement throughout the country can be a positive.

But still there is risk of dengue and authorities will have to take necessary steps to stop its spread, Manzur said.

"It will be a very big burden for us if dengue cases start to spread as the coronavirus pandemic is going on. "Authorities will have to take

necessary steps to raise awareness so people destroy all breeding sources like abandoned pots and tyres and clean flower pots, cement tanks and drums once every week," he said.

Attention should also be paid to cleaning bus stops, hospitals, vehicles seized by police, etc. in anti-mosquito drives, he added.

Educational institutions have been closed for more than a year due to the pandemic and cleaning operations have to be done in those

places to eliminate breeding sources, he suggested.

Entomologist Kabirul Bashar of Jahangirnagar University said there were no alarming findings in the DGHS survey, but there is still a risk of dengue infection.

If the two city corporations and people are conscious of destroying breeding sources, the number of Aedes mosquitoes will not be high even after rainfall, he said.

But if proper measures are not taken from now, the number of Aedes mosquitoes will increase, Bashar

warned. Awareness building will have to start from now. If it is a public place, authorities concerned will have to take

steps to destroy the breeding grounds and if it is a residence, then the house owner will have to take steps to clean it, he said. DNCC Mayor Md Atiqul Islam

said they were conducting drives at different places to check Aedes mosquito larvae.

"We are also sending text messages to owners of houses identified during our combing operation last year to take necessary steps against Aedes mosquitoes," said Atique.

He said they are also taking actions to identify hotspots of Aedes

mosquitoes.

Atique said there was a shortage of mosquito control supervisors and they have already managed 54 supervisors for 54 wards of DNCC, given them necessary training and they are now working at field level.

"There are two entomologists in the DNCC. We have also sought 10 entomologists from the government to conduct their operation as they play a vital role to control [the spread of Aedes mosquito," the mayor said.

said awareness is very He important, and although they were unable to conduct awareness campaigns this year amid the pandemic they are taking steps to raise awareness through social media

and other platforms. Health official of the DSCC Mir Mustafizur Rahman said they are currently conducting an anti-Aedes mosquito drive through three mobile

They were also working at the zone and ward levels to control it even during the "lockdown", he said.

DSCC Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh held a meeting with officials concerned on Monday and gave directives to take necessary steps to control Aedes mosquitoes, the health official said.

'Extremely low' risk of damage from

Memo No. 35.01.2690.007.07.001.21-1957 e-Tender Notice: CORRIGENDUM-01 This is to notify all concern that the following tender have published through e-GP Portal.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Office of the Additional Chief Engineer, RHD

> Dhaka Zone, Allenbari, Tejgaon, Dhaka-1215 Tel: 880-2-9136138, Fax: 880-2-9138075

E-mail: acedha@rhd.gov.bd, dhakazone2020@gmail.com

Tender ID, Package Name of work Replace with (last To be replaced (last No. & date publishing selling and closing selling and closing date & time) ID: 567012 Reconstruction of Flexible Pavement, 11- May-2021 17- May-2021 No. DZ(e-GP)-Earthwork, Surfacing, RCC Box Culvert 17:00 21/Dev/2020-2021 and Protective Work Etc. of Panchdona-Publishing: 11/04/2021 Danga-Ghorashal Road 12-May-2021 18-May-2021 (Z-2047)(Danga Bazar to Islampur Kheaghat) at

Road Division during the year of 2020-2021 (WP-2) The interested persons/firms may visit the website www.eprocure.gov.bd to get the details of the tender. 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 Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)

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

Sub-Assistant Engineer, RHD Dhaka Zone, Dhaka

Md. Maminul Islam Assistant Engineer (c.c), RHD Dhaka Zone, Dhaka

Ch. 2+700 to 8+100 and Dhanga-Islampur-Kheaghat Road (Z-2048) at

Ch. 0+000 to 3+500 under Narsingdi

Md. Sabuj Uddin Khan Additional Chief Engineer (c.c), RHD Dhaka Zone, Dhaka

Dated: 06/05/2021

rocket debris

Says China AFP, Beijing

China said yesterday the risk of damage from a rocket falling back to Earth was "extremely low", after the United States warned it could crash down on to an inhabited area.

Military experts in the US expect the body of the Long March 5B rocket, which separated from Beijing's space station, to come down some time around today or tomorrow, but warned it was difficult to predict where it will land and when

5 doctors sued

of Investigation (PBI) to investigate

the incident. The court also asked the PBI to submit the report by August 12, court sources said

Quoting the case statement, plaintiff's lawyer Abdul Baki Miah told The Daily Star that Mahbub took his daughter Kamrun Nahar Rini to the hospital on January 31 and she gave birth to a male child there after her Cesarean operation.

The doctors stitched her abdomen keeping a surgical gauze inside.

She started feeling pain the next day. The doctors, however, treated her at the hospital for the next 22 days with medicines for gastric problems, he said.

As her condition was deteriorating, Rini was taken to a hospital in the capital on February 27. While checking, something abnormal was seen inside her abdomen. Later, doctors at the hospital conducted an operation and found a one foot-sized gauze inside the abdomen.

The lawyer added that an organ of Rini was damaged as the gauze was there for many days, leaving her on the verge of death. Her treatment is going on, he said.

"The victim's father filed the case as he wants justice for his daughter. So, he wants trial of the doctors for their negligence," he added.

Contacted, Dr Khandakar Sadigur Rahman, assistant director of the 250-bed Tangail General Hospital, told this correspondent that a four-member body, formed by the hospital authorities to probe the incident, found that the allegation of the patient's relatives was true.

The probe report also mentioned that the incident was unintentional and such an incident did not happen in the hospital before, he said

"However, we will seek explanations from the accused medical officers and also write to the higher authorities for deciding the next course of action in this regard," he added.

Malaysia FROM PAGE 12

According to the notice, foreign nationals who embark on their journey from Bangladesh, either by direct flight to Malaysia or transiting in Malaysia, will not be allowed to enter the country.

Vessels with a 14-day history of travelling from certain countries, including Bangladesh, will not be allowed to undergo sign-on and signoff procedures in Malaysia.

However, Malaysian crews will be allowed entry but will require to undergo a 14-day mandatory quarantine at gazetted quarantine

Malaysian citizens from Bangladesh are allowed to enter the country, but must undergo a 14-day mandatory quarantine at gazetted quarantine stations, the notice read. According to the notice, Malaysian

citizens will be barred from traveling to certain countries, including Bangladesh.

Entry and exit approval that has been obtained earlier, either through MyTravelPass, MyEntry, or any other mechanism will be VOID and no longer valid.

Following the implementation of the above entry restriction, visa services by the Malaysian High Commission in Dhaka will be temporarily suspended until further

Cutting trees in name

DHAKA **SATURDAY MAY 8, 2021, BAISHAKH 25, 1428 BS**

Architect Mubasshar Hussein said, "I was a member of the committee that oversaw the glass tower construction at Suhrawardy Udyan. At one stage, the government allowed marble constructions around the tower without our consent. This was done to facilitate a company that supplied marble stones.'

"And what is the result of that? Now people cannot go near the tower during daytime because the stones get too heated up when the sun shines,' he explained.

He also chalked out a solution to keep the trees unharmed despite construction of restaurants

"The trees can guide the seating arrangement and design of the area. Eco-friendly material like straw can be used to set up stalls. People would welcome it," he said.

"I think more trees are being felled "Those trees needed around 50 years Mubasshar Hussein.

to reach today's stage. And they were felled in one night."

The authorities concerned should have arranged a public hearing over this issue, he said.

"Whenever such projects are initiated, the government forms a committee headed by a bureaucrat. Though efficient in running administration, they are not engineering or architecture experts. This culture needs to go," said the architect.

"Cutting trees has a long-term adverse effect. When concrete structures replace greenery, surface water cannot go underground. So water level under Dhaka is decreasing every day," said Mubasshar.

"The masterminds behind this project should be punished. Even, I have requested the prime minister to punish those who provide such than was necessary," said Mubasshar, evil suggestions to her," concluded

Narrow Buriganga bend

A vessel carrying 29 cattle sank after collision with a passenger vessel on August 18, 2018, according to media

"The turning point is very dangerous. When we approach the turning point, we cannot see any vessel coming from the opposite direction. That is why we have to maintain maximum caution as we cross it," said Altaf Hossain, in-charge master of passenger vessel Sundarban-14.

"We have to keep honking while crossing the zone. The channel is so narrow that we often face difficulties in operating our vessel through that point," he told The Daily Star.

Mohammad Ruhul assistant master of MV Sundarban-10 launch, echoed this, saying the major danger is the narrow turning point, compounded by the fact that many cargo vessels are kept anchored there.

Nurul Haque said, in most cases, owners of sand-laden vessels appoint unskilled drivers who don't have any training to operate these vessels. That is why accidents are occurring

frequently, he added. RIVERBANK GRABBING

Where previously, the Dhaka-Narayanganj highway could be seen easily from the bank of the Buriganga, it now appears distant because most of the land between the river and the highway has been grabbed and illegal structures set up. On a recent visit, this writer

observed a market constructed on the grabbed river land between the highway and Fatullah launch terminal by the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA), a government body.

of the river adjacent to Postogola-Narayanganj highway to the north of Fatullah launch terminal. It, however, has no permanent structure. Locals said the government

structures there. But no step has been taken to re-excavate the riverbank, they added. The western side of the Buriganga's narrow bend is visibly worse off as

authorities have evicted all the illegal

occupying the riverbank, where vessels are being constructed and others are anchored.

Konda Union Parishad Chairman Muhammad Saidur Chowdhury, under whose jurisdiction this area lies in Keraniganj's Konda union, said BIWTA set up pillars demarcating the river boundaries and evicted illegal structures.

"But the government authorities are yet to take any measure to excavate the river bank. If the river banks on both sides are excavated, the river channel would be wider and safer," he added.

Contacted. BIWTA Executive Engineer Md Motiul Islam, also Dhaka's Circular Waterway Project's deputy chief director, referred this writer to Md Gulzar Ali, joint director (port and transport) of BIWTA. Gulzar Ali then referred this writer

to BIWTA's joint director (river safety and traffic management) Md Jainal Abedin, who did not respond to multiple calls or text messages. **HC DIRECTIVES IGNORED** Poribesh Bachao Andolon Chairman Abu Naser Khan said the problems

if the High Court directives on river boundaries' demarcation are followed properly. The river channel can be widened if

of the waterway can be solved

the river bank is excavated on the basis of CS land survey records, he said. In 2009, the HC's landmark judgement on saving four rivers surrounding Dhaka included directives to demarcate the rivers based on CS records, set boundary pillars, evict grabbers, and dredge the

rivers, among others. When these were ignored and earth and sand filling continued unabatedly, the HC gave another judgement in 2019 which declared all A weekly cattle market sits every rivers flowing through the country to Tuesday on the filled-up portion be living beings and accordingly, legal

rights in case of harm. The HC also directed the government to remove sand and earth if any river land is illegally filled up and that this cost be realised from the occupying party by

the government. "Keeping the river banks unexcavated is similar to living with cancer. There is no alternative to excavating the river bank to ensure a

safe river route," said Naser.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

multiple dockyards have been set up

Bangladesh Marine Academy, Barishal

Invitation for Tender (Corrigendum Notice)



It is to inform all concerned that the Invitation for Tender No. OTM-01/2020-21, invited vide this office dated 29.04.2021 is hereby amended as follows:

29.04.2021 is nereby amended as follows;							
Name of work	Notice & SI. No.	Description	Published in tender	Amended			
Supply of Boson Store Goods- Lot: 1	Sl. No. 10	Procurement nature	-	Goods			
Supply of cookeries and cutleries for cadet mess-Lot: 2	SL. No. 18	Tender last selling date	17-05-2021 (1700 hours)	23.05.2021 (1700 hours)			
Supply of sports and misc. items-Lot: 3	SL. No. 19	Tender closing date and time	18.05.2021 on 12.00 Noon	24.05.2021 on 12.00 Noon			
Supply of stationery items for cadet and office-Lot: 4	SL. No. 20.	Tender opening date and time	18-05-2021 on or after 12.30pm	24.05.2021 on or after 12.30 Noon			
Supply of materials for demonstration hall (For practical classes of cadet – Lot: 5	SL. No. 28	Tender document price	Taka 2000.00 (two thousand) non-refundable DD/PO in favour of the Commandant, Bangladesh Marine Academy, Barishal (Drawable Sonali Bank, Barishal University Branch), Barishal Sadar, Barishal is to be submitted.	Taka 1000.00 (one thousand) Per Lot non-refundable DD/PO in favour of the Commandant, Bangladesh Marine Academy, Barishal (Drawable Sonali Bank, Barishal University Branch), Barishal Sadar, Barishal is to be submitted.			

All other terms and conditions of the tender will remain unchanged. This corrigendum notice will be part and parcel of the tender.

> Capt. SM Atiqur Rahman BN Commandant

Bangladesh Marine Academy, Barishal

GD-924

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel 'not a country, but a terrorist base': Khamenei

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei yesterday called Israel "not a country, but a terrorist base" and urged Muslim nations to fight it, as they mark an annual day of pro-Palestinian rallies. "Israel is not a country, but a terrorist base against the nation of Palestine and other Muslim nations," Khamenei said in live televised remarks marking Al-Quds

(Jerusalem) Day. "Fighting this despotic regime is fighting oppression and terrorism, and (doing so) is everyone's duty," he added. His remarks came as fourth round of talks between world powers on Iran's nuclear programme opened in Vienna yesterday, with diplomats voicing hope an agreement can be reached before the Islamic republic's June presidential election.

UK advises under-40s get alternative to AstraZeneca jab

The scientific committee overseeing Britain's coronavirus vaccination programme yesterday recommended that under-40s are offered an alternative to the Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid jab. The Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) said it was taking the

"precautionary approach" for adults aged 30-39, after assessment of blood clot risks. The UK -- which launched its mass vaccination drive in December last year with the Pfizer-BioNTech shot -- is still on track to give all adults a first vaccine dose by the end of July.

Girl shoots 3 at US school

A girl opened fire at a school in the northwestern US state of Idaho on Thursday, injuring three people before being disarmed by a teacher, police said. The unnamed student at Rigby Middle School near Idaho Falls was in the sixth grade, meaning she would likely be aged 11 or 12. She "retrieved a handgun from her backpack, fired multiple rounds inside of the school and out," said Jefferson County sheriff Steve Anderson. Injuries suffered by two students and one staff member are not thought to be life-threatening, he said. The shooting is being investigated by the FBI as well as local law enforcement. There were more than 43,000 gun-related deaths in the United States last year, including suicides, according to the Gun Violence Archive.

Pakistan PM due in Saudi for talks on improving ties



Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan was due in Saudi Arabia yesterday for a visit aimed at enhancing ties after months of strained relations over the disputed region of Kashmir. Saudi Arabia was the first foreign country Khan visited after his election in 2018 and he has visited the kingdom five times since, most recently in December 2019. But Saudi Arabia appeared frustrated with Pakistan last year after it came under pressure from its longstanding ally to take a firm stand on the Kashmir dispute with India. Khan is due to meet Saudi leaders in the Red Sea city of Jeddah (west) during his three-day visit, which Islamabad said was at the invitation of de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

party in an opposition

The "Super Thursday"

local and regional contests

pro-independence forces in

Scotland, where voting for the devolved parliament

was also held, bid to break

in England yesterday, the Conservatives were performing strongly in

parliamentary seat of

Keir Starmer

But in the initial returns

various regions and won by a landslide in the northeast

Hartlepool, in a bitter blow

for Labour and its leader

The rust-belt town

deep in traditional Labour

voted Conservative since its

creation in 1974, saw a 16

percent swing to the Tories.

set of results so far,"

Johnson told reporters.

"What this election

shows is that people want

a party and a government

The result will ratchet

up the pressure on Starmer,

elected leader a year ago

promising to rebuild the

party and reconnect with

traditional voters.

that is focused on them,

focused on delivering

change," he added on

a celebratory visit to

Hartlepool.

"It's a very encouraging

heartlands and has never

constituency, which is

could reshape the UK as

Labour stronghold.



People hold Hamas flags as Palestinians gather after performing the last Friday of Ramadan to protest over the possible eviction of several Palestinian families from homes on land claimed by Jewish settlers in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood, in Jerusalem's Old City, yesterday.

European powers tell

Israel to stop settlement

expansion

Israel says 'two gunmen'

killed in West Bank

PHOTO: REUTERS

GLOBAL EMISSIONS IN 2019

China produced 27pc of the total

China's annual greenhouse gas emissions stood at 27% of the world total in 2019, exceeding combined OECD emissions for the first time, according to research published

The Rhodium Group, a US-based think tank, said China's emissions in 2019 reached more than 14 gigatonnes of CO2 equivalent, more than triple its level in 1990.

Final data for 2020 is not available, the group said, but it estimated China's emissions rose by 1.7% last year, as those from the rest of the world declined due to Covid-19.

China does not issue regular data about how much it emits. Its most recent carbon "inventory" submitted to the United Nations in 2019 showed annual emissions had grown to 12.3 gigatonnes by 2014, up 53% in a decade.

China has vowed to bring total emissions to a peak before 2030 and to become "carbon neutral" by 2060, although it has continued to rely on carbon-intensive heavy industry and infrastructure to drive growth.

While China is now the source of more than a quarter of annual global greenhouse gases, its cumulative emissions are still far below those of other developed countries. Since the start of the industrial revolution, its emissions for fossil fuel combustion and cement production alone are about a quarter of an estimated OECD total of 900 gigatonnes.

China's per capita emissions also reached 10.1 tonnes in 2019, close to the OECD average of 10.5 tonnes, and are expected to have overtaken the OECD last year, the Rhodium Group said.

The United States in 2019 produced a per capita average of 17.6 tonnes, the world's highest.

UN ON EAST JERUSALEM LAND RIGHT CASE

Forced eviction may amount to war crimes

AGENCIES

The United Nations yesterday urged Israel to call off any forced evictions in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem, warning that its actions could amount

"We call on Israel to immediately call off all forced evictions," UN rights office spokesman Rupert Colville told reporters in Geneva.

His comment came after 15 Palestinians were arrested in Israeliannexed east Jerusalem overnight in clashes with police over an eviction threat against four Palestinian families.

The second straight night of rioting in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood was fuelled by a years-long land dispute between Palestinian refugees and Jewish settlers in the strategic district near Jerusalem's Old City.

Tensions have been fuelled by a longrunning legal case over the homes of four Palestinian families on land claimed by Jews, which is due to go before the Supreme Court on Monday

"We wish to emphasise that East Jerusalem remains part of the occupied Palestinian territory, in which international humanitarian

law applies," Colville said. "The occupying power... cannot confiscate private property in occupied territory," he said, adding that transferring civilian populations into occupied territory was illegal under international law and "may amount to war crimes."

On Thursday, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Britain urged Israel to halt settlement-building in the occupied West Bank.

Israel seized east Jerusalem in 1967 and later annexed it, in a move not recognised by most of the international community.

Meanwhile, Israeli security forces killed two gunmen and critically wounded a third yesterday after they opened fire on a base in the occupied West Bank, Israeli police said. There was no immediate word on the identity of the attackers or any claim of responsibility.



ASSASSINATION BID **Maldives** ex-leader in 'critical' state

AFP, Malé

Former Maldives president Mohamed Nasheed was in a "critical" condition yesterday following an assassination attempt, doctors said.

Nasheed, 53, the Maldives' first democratically elected president and now the speaker of the parliament, was rushed to hospital after an explosion late Thursday.

Since then he has undergone 16 hours of lifesaving operations in the capital Male for injuries to his head, chest, abdomen and limbs. The private ADK hospital said earlier that shrapnel had been removed from one of his lungs and from his liver out that another piece was still in the same organ.

In a televised address to the nation, President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih announced that a team from the Australian Federal Police (AFP) would arrive today to help with the investigation into the blast.

Maldivian police said they were treating Thursday's bomb attack as a "deliberate act of terror".

Police said a device attached to a motorcycle was detonated as Nasheed got into a car in the capital.

There was no claim of responsibility for Thursday's bomb attack, but officials close to Nasheed's Maldivian Democratic Party (MDP) said they suspected vested political interests opposed to his anti-corruption drive.

STUDY ON COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Global toll more than double the estimates

REUTERS

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused nearly 6.9 million deaths across the world, more than double the number officially recorded, a new analysis from the University of Washington, DC's Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (IHME) estimated.

Deaths go unreported as most countries only record those that occur in hospitals or of patients with a confirmed infection, the report which came out on Thursday, revealed.

Current reported estimates showed more than 155 million infections worldwide with at least 3.25 million deaths, according to Johns Hopkins University data. The IHME is an independent health

research organisation that provides a comparable measurement of the world's health problems and has been cited in the past by the White House and its reports are watched closely by public health officials.

The reported Covid-19 mortality is strongly related to the levels of testing in a country, the IHME said.

IHME estimated total Covid-19 deaths by comparing anticipated deaths from all causes based on pre-pandemic trends with the actual number of all deaths caused during the pandemic.

In the United States, the analysis estimated Covid-19 related deaths of more than 905,000. Official figures from the US many times higher than the official count.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Wednesday estimated 575,491 deaths due to the novel coronavirus.

The report only includes deaths caused directly by the virus, not deaths caused by the pandemic's disruption to healthcare systems and communities.



Meanwhile, India reported on Thursday more than 400,000 coronavirus infections within a 24-hour period, while the number of dead from the virus rose to a record 3,980.

The South Asian nation's tally has surged past 21 million cases, boosted by a record 412,262 new infections. The number of people who have died due to COVID-19 now totals 230,168, health ministry data showed.

Interviews from medical doctors and village leaders who are involved in the counting the pandemic deaths, however, revealed that the real death toll could be

Johnson hails Conservatives' OLLING PLACE WAY IN win in Labour **WAY IN** stronghold AFP, London Prime Minister Boris Johnson yesterday welcomed early election results in Britain's first major vote since Brexit and the pandemic, including a stunning by-election victory for his Conservative

Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon meets voters at a polling station during Scotland's parliamentary election in Glasgow, Britain.

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT ELECTION

UK's unity on the line as SNP wins early seats

Scotland's main pro-independence party enjoyed early successes yesterday in crucial Scottish parliament election results which could determine the future of the United Kingdom, although its leader cautioned the result remained "on a knife edge".

The ruling Scottish National Party (SNP)

will seek to hold another

referendum on independence by 2023 if there is a promajority independence returned to the devolved 129seat parliament - setting up a potential legal showdown with Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who says he will refuse any such vote.

The SNP won 10 of the first 11 seats to be declared, although there was an increase

in support in some areas for opposition prounion parties, indicating the final outcome could be very close.

"A majority has always been a very, very long shot," said Nicola Sturgeon, Scotland's First Minister and SNP leader.

When asked what it would mean if the SNP did win a majority, Johnson said he would wait and see what happens in the next

"I don't think people want much more constitutional wrangling right now," he told

Union, a move opposed by an overwhelming majority in Scotland, a perception that the Scottish government has handled the Covid-19 crisis well, and antipathy

SNP wants to hold 2nd independence vote by 2023

UK PM Johnson says he won't allow another referendum

Britain's departure from the European

to Johnson's Conservative government in Westminster

have all bolstered support for the independence movement. If there was another

referendum and the Scots voted to leave, it would mark the biggest shock to the United Kingdom since Irish independence a century ago. The SNP need to gain at

least four more seats to win an overall majority of 65, but could rely on the backing of the pro-independence Green Party, which took five seats in 2016, to pursue a second referendum.

Results from about two-thirds of the 73 constituency seats are due later yesterday. The remainder and regional seats - allocated on a complicated proportional representation system based on a second vote - will be announced today.





Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change Bangladesh Secretariat, Dhaka

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for procurement of goods stated below under "The Capacity Development and Strengthening of Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change Project": SI. No Tender ID

SI. No	7	Гende	r ID	Name of work							
1.	55706	1		Procurement of Computers, Laptops and UPS.							
2.	55898	6		Procurement of Office Equipment and Furniture.							
This is an online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the e-GP Portal. No offline/hard copies will											
be ac	cepted.	To	submit	e-Tender,	registration	in	the	National	e-GP	System	Portal

(http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP Portal have to be deposited online through any branches of registered bank. Tender documents will be available on 12/05/2021 in e-GP

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP Portal and from e-GP help desk (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd). The tender notice will also be available on the website: www.moef.gov.bd.

Md. A. Razzaque Sarker Joint Secretary and Project Director Phone: 02-9551512

GD-913

Through the lenses of Adity Mohsin

Shah Alam Shazu

Adity Mohsin is considered to be one of the premiere Rabindra Sangeet exponents in the country, having earned immense popularity in her career spanning over two decades. Marking Rabindra Jayanti this year, the singer shares her journey and upcoming plans in a candid chat with *The Daily Star*.

Everyone has been in their houses for these past couple of weeks due to the lockdown. How are you spending your time?

It has been months since we have been in lockdowns and I have always tried my best to adjust to the 'new' normal. I teach music at the Anandadhara School online. Besides Bangladeshi students, I also have students from India and Dubai, among many other countries. I also have a YouTube channel where I am trying to upload as much digital content as possible. I have actually been quite active during this pandemic and I must say, through work has been a little difficult, I am enjoying every bit of it.

How are you planning to spend the day today?

I don't have any specific plans yet as we are all in lockdown. Nevertheless, since it is Rabindra Jayanti, I will definitely do something special online.

Why did you choose to pursue Rabindra Sangeet?

Tagore's philosophy is what had attracted me to take up Rabindra Sangeet. His songs are not always about happiness or practiced for the purpose of entertainment. Rabindra Sangeet makes us mature and sophisticated. Also, Rabindranath has always had a huge impact on the lives of Bengali people, and I am no different.

You have been a fan favourite in both parts of Bengal. How do you feel

Being born and brought up in Bangladesh, I love this country and the appreciation of my fans from here more than anything. I know I have earned a place in the cultural square of West Bengal, and I do enjoy their love as well. It seems like we are two sides of the same coin.

What advice would you like to give to the younger promising Rabindra Sangeet singers?

Anyone who wishes to have a career in music should first and foremost, aim to never give up on their dreams. With proper training, dedication, and love for the art, you will surely succeed, be it sooner or later.

The importance of art is inevitable, and it has always kept its place intact even in capitalistic societies. It helps a nation develop emotions and improve their understanding of social structures, among numerous other such factors.

I believe, we have the responsibility to guide the upcoming generations and lead the path of righteousness and that is what I have been doing to with my work—trying to inspire the upcoming generation to keep their traditions alive through art.



PHOTO: **STA**I



A statue of Rabindranath Tagore in Patasar, outside the museum

A letter that travelled through time

MD MIZANUR RAHMAN HIMADRI

"I had a letter to pen,
But the words have not come easy.
If there was news instead,
Words could rather keep me busy."
These four lines, quoted from the poem named 'Chithi' (letter), printed in the book named 'Kori O Komol' by the great Rabindranath
Tagore addressing his niece Indira Devi,
testifies to his passion for writing letters. Such a letter, penned by the Nobel Laureate, came to
the light in Patisar of Atrai Upazila in Naogaon
district in the school established by the poet
himself.

A museum in Patisar, Naogaon, laced with the poet's memory, preserves the letter, along with seven other letters penned by his son and daughter-in-law. There is also the scanned copy of another letter the intended recipient of which is still a mystery. Its original copy is preserved in Mahasthangarh Museum in Bogura district. The yellowed papers of the letter are evocative of the poet who is unanimously credited with taking the Bangla language to the global stage and living no chord of human emotion untouched.

"Rabindra Smriti Sangrahasala" (A museum on Tagore), was established to preserve his memory but was denied the spotlight rightfully deserved by the first Asian to win a Nobel Prize more than 100 years ago.

That is why for a long time, many memories of the poet including his words of blessings for the school, valuable letters written by him, his son and daughter-in-law Pratima Devi, books brought by the poet from Oxford University, remained out of the public eye

However, the last account of Tagore's zamindari is recorded in the valuable letters. When insects were eating up the invaluable letters, collectors focused on their preservation. To that end, M Matiar Rahman Mamun, a collector, and researcher of Rabindranath's memorabilia, has preserved some priceless memories of Tagore at Kaligram Rathindranath Institution on May 8, 2013.

The Sadar Kachari of Kaligram Pargana, a zamindari of the Jorasanko Tagore family, was at Patisar. The Patisar ME School was कारण कारकारण जाकराह जातार कि मा र मार्थ के किया कि कारकार कि कार कि कार कि कार कि कारकार के कारकार कि कारकार कि कारकार कि कारकार कि कारकार के कारकार के कारकार कारकार के कारकार कारकार के कारकार कारकार के कारकार कारकार कि कारकार कारकार के कारकार कारकार

A letter handwritten by Rabindranath Tagore, preserved in the museum

established in 1905 by Rabindranath Tagore. The journey of the school began in the tin-tiled tent of the earthen wall. By 1905, the number of schools and colleges in India was negligible. And the education of the rural people was not thought of in most areas.

However, Tagore always favored rural life. He started working from Patisar to educate them. In addition to establishing moral schools and high schools in about 200 villages, he established a library in Patisar in the name of his brother-in-law (Nagendranath Institute 1905).

Almost three decades later, on July 26, 1937, the ailing poet came to Patisar to bid farewell to his beloved subjects. On the same day, the poet renamed the ME school after his favorite pargana 'Kaligram' and his beloved son Rathindranath Tagore as 'Kaligram Rathindranath Institution'.

Naturally, many memorabilia of the poet's zamindari and the things used by the poet have

remained there. There are many books. Patisar, Shilaidaha, and Shahajatpur are enriched with Rabindranath's footprints, as well as the poet's life and literature. The poet has spent a significant part of his life on Padma to Nagar.

He himself plowed the field with a power tiller in Patisar to improve agriculture; he formed cooperatives of agriculture, weaving and pottery. He also gave Tk 1 lakh of his Nobel Prize to Patisar Agricultural Bank, which was never returned.

"When the archeological department did not take any initiative even after informing them that the poet's memorabilia have started decaying," says collector and researcher M Matiar Rahman Mamun. "Local lawmaker and an ardent follower of the poet Md Israfil Alam and I established 'Rabindrasmriti Sangrahasala' on the very school set up by the poet himself.

The letters were found in envelopes at the school. They were discovered among other items. After the death of the poet and the abolition of the zamindari system in the 1950s, the dominance of this family in the region came to an end. Due to the lack of preservation of Rabindranath's handwritten letters, personal belongings, educational institutions, and other facilities, some things were gradually lost and many things were taken over.

The words some more memories of the poet were at the risk of perishing. The earthen houses created by the poet were demolished in the nineties, and modern houses were built to preserve the memories in their stead.

At the request of the people, Rabindranath Tagore visited Patisar for the last time in 1937 on the occasion of 'Punyah'.

At the entrance of the museum, there is a bust of the poet, a two-storied house, several houses. The museum has also carefully arranged the pictures of the poet taken with Rabindranath, Mahatma Gandhi, Helen Killer, Einstein, and other famous people by bringing some pictures from Shantiniketan.

Every day, researchers and visitors from different parts of the country and abroad come to visit this place, which is one of the more overlooked museums dedicated to the Nobel laureate.

Actors on their challenges with shooting

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR

Eid is one of the most awaited occasions for new television and film releases. However, the second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic has given way to different challenges for the entertainment arena. In light of the current scenario, television and film actors shared their experiences of shooting during this pandemic, and spoke about their upcoming Eid-Ul-Fitr projects.

SABILA NUR

I stopped shooting from April 4 after talking to some of my peers, as Covid-19 cases were already on the rise during that time. However, I completed shooting for a few ventures which will be releasing this Fid

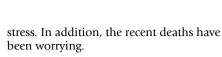
I am looking forward to Shihab Shaheen's "Pasher Bashar Cheleta" where I will appear alongside Ziaul Faruq Apurba. My other projects,



Bidya Sinha Mim

including Rakesh Bashu's "Physics Chemistry Math" and "Rokto", are also exciting.

I also finished shooting for a telefiction by Rubel Hasan but we have not finalised the name of the production yet. Shooting during this pandemic for the last two consecutive Eid seasons has been very stressful, especially for me as I am very particular about cleanliness and hygiene. Not being able to wear a mask during shots and always having to carry alcohol wipes and sanitisers only adds to the



MANOJ KUMAR PRAMANIK
I had stopped shooting for about 15
to 20 days during the initial days of
the lockdown this year. However, I am
currently shooting as per my usual
schedule, while maintaining safety
guidelines strictly.

I am looking forward to my tele-fiction, "Mon Boleche Jabo Jabo" by Chayanika Chowdhury and another one by Preeti Dutta. I am also working on two short



Siam Ahmed



films with Shafayet Mansoor and Raihan Rafi, respectively.

For safety purposes, we are avoiding intimate shots and trying to have fewer crew members on the sets.

NUSRAAT FARIA

I try to take a break during this time of the year as I am busy preparing for my exams, and this year is no different. Nevertheless, my cooking show named "Quick Recipe" has been on air throughout Ramadan. I am also waiting for "Operation Sundarbans" and "Pataal Ghor" to hit movie theatres soon, once the second wave passes. I am looking forward to having an amazing Eid-ul-Fitr with my family at home.

SIAM AHMED

We were hoping to release "Shaan", a film directed by M Raihan, during this Eid as the film is already in the post-production stage. However, owing to the lockdown, we have postponed its theatrical release. I stopped shooting last month.

I shot some advertisements while



Manoj Pramanik

the Covid cases were in control at the beginning of this year, and I also completed shooting for "Operation Sundarbans".

BIDYA SINHA MIM

I have been busy with my online talk show "The Box" and I finished shooting for a few advertisements, before the lockdown.

We are almost ready to wrap up the film, "Poran" except for its trailer song and promotions. I am also waiting to resume shooting for my upcoming film "Ittefak". Shooting during the pandemic has made me rather irritated than anxious.

Having to wear a mask before shots, taking it off during the shot, and at times, losing track of where I had kept it prior to the shot has been a day-to-day hassle for me. Amidst all that, I also had to remember my lines and make sure that I was maintaining safety and hygiene rules, which is difficult to do, especially when you are surrounded by a whole crew.



Nusraat Faria





THE BIG DIVORCE

Bill to open up to sympathetic Bangladeshi online media instead of Oprah



A badly, but rightfully, censored picture (our graphics guy is having a "family emergency") of the couple.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

OSAMA RAHMAN

"She forced me to take weeklong vacations with an ex-girlfriend. She forced me to spend days on the beach with my ex."

These are the first words we get from a snippet of an exclusive interview that a billionaire recluse gave to renowned Bangladeshi online media Awakening24bd.

The billionaire recluse, who invented computers and owns all the agricultural land in the world, decided to tell his part of the divorce story to Bangladeshi media only.

His decision came in the light of Bangladeshi online media's brilliant coverage of the lover suicide case which captured the imagination of the nation.

"The Bangladeshi online portals are very unbiased in their view. They don't see gender as an issue at all. They look for the truth even when those are inconvenient and more importantly inconsequential to the reality of a situation," the man we will only refer to as Bill said during a short conversation with

While the full interview is yet to be released, the trailers have already generated a lot of discourse on the matter with most viral

videos focused on the issue. "What did Melinda do? Why did she do it? Who are her accomplices? Let us investigate even though we have no qualifications or ability to do so properly," says a voiceover during the start of one such video.

It then dives deep into the secret marriage where Bill was emotionally-manipulated to rent out all the hotel rooms and helicopters to keep the ceremony shrouded in mystery. "She would not let anyone see us get married," Bill can be heard saying in his exclusive interview.

According to the Sexists Society of Sexists, the very fabric of their marriage steadily ripped apart starting from Event 201 - which simulated an outbreak of a novel zoonotic coronavirus transmitted from bats to pigs to people that eventually becomes efficiently transmissible from person to person, leading to a severe pandemic.

In that 2019 event, before the conspiracy theories on it would break out in the fallout of the Covid-19 pandemic which it was eerily similar to, is when Melinda really began to push his buttons.

"She kept insisting that he make more money soon, that Bezos had been beating him for years and that without richest man in the world tag, Bill needed a new thing for himself. Yes, he was the vaccine man, but what qualifications did he have for it?" a

source close to the couple said. According to him, that is when Bill began to buy farmland, accumulating 242,000 acres the largest holding of private farmland. "She was incredulous when she heard of this. She called him a farmer and said his next step would probably be buying a soccer team in

Another source close to the couple said Melinda wanted to cash out before the stock market crashed but doing so without a divorce would make her seem guilty. "If divorced, a judge could force Bill to sell his shares and thus he would not seem to have done any insider-trading. The timing for this had to be right," the source said.

the French league," he said.

Many others say that the Queen's new single status must have moved Bill to take drastic steps. "He wanted to take a book out of Megan's page and marry into royalty," said another source who managed to make Meghan a target where she was not even remotely involved. For now, the world waits with a bated breath to see what Bill really has to say. Until the final reveal, media personnel around the world have been asked to protect Bill's privacy and censor his name and identifying details in news reports. It's not about his money, but the principle of it,

Ultra woke teenager cancels herself and her clout-based services in new rant

STAR JALSHA CORRESPONDENT

An ultra-woke teenager, who spent most of her days virtue-signaling and offering clout-based services to her clients, yesterday cancelled herself in a sign of reaching good-person Nirvana.

Sitara, who later called the cancelling "organic", said it had to be done as she herself had crossed the line.

The resident of Mirpur district left her fives of fans shocked when her rant against something superficial devolved into bullying those who went against her newfound beliefs on something trivial. She initially tried to force feed her ideas to her followers, but when a few resisted, she resorted to personally attacking them.

Later, when public opinion began to sway against her, she quickly deactivated her social media account.

To her credit, Sitara did not once try to claim she was hacked. She also did not follow up with a movie that could have whitewashed her now-tainted stardom, nor did she post anything edgy.

Sitara would later make her comeback to social media with a template-fitted apology post. "I am such a terrible person for having such ill-informed opinions. I need to be cancelled for instigating others to make fun of those with a different belief system than mine. Actually, I had just seen a short video on my new belief and read a few curt quotes, so I did not even know what it was that I was representing," she

Sitara, who later called the cancelling "organic", said it had to be done as she herself had crossed the line.

Sitara wasn't the first to find herself in such self-inflicted hot waters. Lately many people have been calling themselves out for their half-baked opinions in viral tirades against themselves.

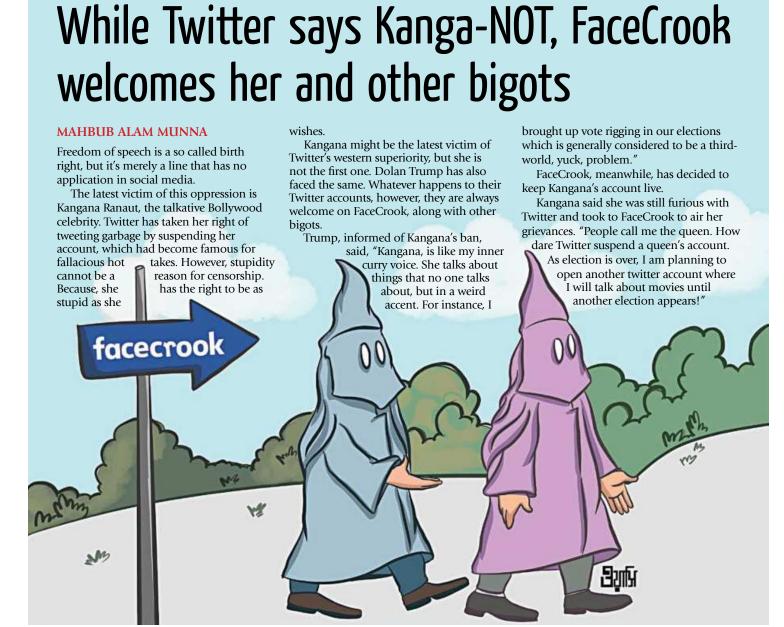
"Blaming yourself is the new viral sensation. It signifies that your virtue is on such a high pedestal that even you yourself can't reach it," Mehdi Hassan, a cloutchaser, told this correspondent.

Catching up with Sitara, she said such behaviour was only to be expected. "We don't really know what we are talking about. But remember, no publicity is bad publicity. Inflammatory opinions sometimes lead to discussions, shares and can help one go viral," she said.

"Plus, you can always announce you are deactivating social media and get more reactions to build clout. These are all part of our clout-based services," she said. She also pointed out the hypocrisy in this very article, saying this was also a not a verysubtle way of bullying her.







 $8 \mid ext{ The Baily Star}$



LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA SATURDAY MAY 8, 2021, BAISHAKH 25, 1428 BS

Drop in Covid-19 infection rates reassuring

But there's no scope for complacency, health guidelines must be followed

■ HAT the country yesterday saw the lowest number of Covid-19 deaths in a single day since March 28 is indeed good news. It is not difficult to come to the conclusion that the drop in Covid-19 cases and deaths can be attributed to the lockdown that has been enforced from April 14. Some experts suggest that when transmission slows down, the fall in infections/deaths follows suit in around two weeks. This is validated further when you look at the recent data on positivity rates: yesterday, the positivity rate was 9.89 percent (with 1,682 newly infected), whereas on March 28 (before lockdown), the positivity rate was a whopping 17.6 percent, with 3,908 new cases of

While the recent drop in cases is encouraging, we must be cautious about letting our guard down prematurely, especially since a relaxation of the lockdown rules and the opening of shops and malls have attracted huge crowds of shoppers since April 25. We are yet to see what consequences the gathering of crowds will have on transmission rates and Covid-19 data over the next month or so. Multiple reports in The Daily Star over the past week have detailed how health and safety rules are not being followed due to the sheer number of customers in most establishments. Although mobile courts have taken steps and sporadically handed out fines to ensure that shops and shoppers follow the rules, more needs to be done in an organised manner to ensure that we do not experience another spike in Covid-19. This vigilance is especially necessary now that public buses are being allowed to operate within

Almost every country of the world has faced the trade-off between livelihoods and lockdowns during the pandemic, and Bangladesh is no different. While we are worried about increasing transmission rates, we also understand that it is not possible to close down shops and restrict public transport indefinitely. However, the people have a duty to act responsibly and adhere to health and safety guidelines, and the authorities have a duty to ensure that these guidelines are being enforced. And most importantly, the government must ensure that the people are protected against the virus by collecting vaccines from alternative sources, since the fast-depleting stock of Oxford-AstraZeneca jabs has thrown the countrywide vaccination programme into uncertainty. While it is heartening to know that five lakh doses of the Chinese Sinopharm vaccines will arrive in Dhaka on May 12, and that the government is at the final stage of signing a deal for Russia's Sputnik V vaccine, it still does not make up for the current shortfall (over 14 lakh) of the second dose of the vaccine. We hope the government is working to provide a solution to this

Dhaka continues to be choked by plastic waste

How long before the authorities take their commitments seriously?

T a time when the planet is being choked by pollution and experts and leaders across the world are coming together to deal with what is being called the "climate emergency" before it turns into a full-blown crisis, it is extremely disheartening to learn that Dhaka city alone produces 646 tonnes of plastic waste every single day, which is 468 tonnes more than the amount 15 years ago. This unbridled production of plastic waste is continuing despite promises from the highest levels of government to reduce pollution and ensure sustainable, green growth.

One does not have to look too hard to find the costs of this pollution on our environment, particularly our rivers. Only in March, it was announced that the cost of dredging work in the Karnaphuli River had increased by Tk 49 crore (19 percent), as workers now have to remove a thick layer of plastic waste from the riverbed. A few months earlier, dredging operations to remove silt from Barishal River Port dragged on for months due to the huge amount of polythene, plastic and other trash dumped into the water. We have been writing for years on how the Buriganga river is being choked by pollution, which includes sacksful of plastic bottles that have not only choked the river, but killed the marine

Bangladesh has made a commitment to fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goals. If we are to meet the goals of responsible consumption and production, sustainable cities and communities, climate action and others, we cannot drag our feet in addressing plastic pollution. Recently, university students and youth participated in the Plastic Circularity Innovation Challenge, and came up with innovative solutions on collection, sorting and recycling of plastics, and the use of digital technology to cope with the plastic pollution. The government must create more platforms for such innovations, take the voices of the younger generations into account and commit to ending plastic pollution in Bangladesh for good.

However, although coming up with green technology and a proper waste management system is key, the authorities will not be able to combat pollution if they continue to fail to take strict actions against the polluting industries and individuals, who are rarely, if ever, held accountable for the damage they cause to the environment.

The Tortoise, the Hare and the UGC

BLOWIN' IN

of fresh **University Grants** Commission (UGC) has decided to allow public universities to hold online examinations. After a virtual meeting with the vice-chancellors

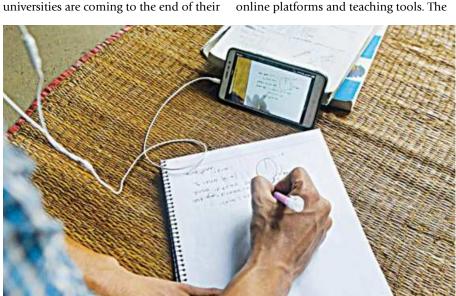
of 49 public universities, UGC Chairman Professor Kazi Shahidullah told the press on May 6, "We have taken the decision to allow public universities to hold their exams online, maintaining quality and international standards.

According to media reports, a draft proposal was presented before the vice-chancellors of the state-funded universities who agreed to hold online examinations. The proposal includes some suggestions and guidelines to recover from the loss caused due to the Covid-19 outbreak. These include using creative questions or assignments on shorter syllabus instead of traditional question patterns and conducting exams through electronic devices that have both audio and video features, such as computers, laptops, or smartphones. The guideline will be sent to the Ministry of Education for approval. Meanwhile, the universities have been asked to engage their academic councils to formalise the implementation of the guideline after May 24, when the universities reopen.

The meeting did not say anything about the hundred-plus private universities whose assessment process is stalled due to a UGC sanction. On March 9, the UGC "requested" all private universities not to hold any examination amid the closure of the universities till May 23. The universities were earlier permitted only to continue online classes, while suspending all examinations and laboratory activities. Exactly a year ago, on May 7, 2020, the UGC charted a list of dos and don'ts for the private universities for implementing online classes and assessments. The sudden embargo on the assessment process created considerable confusion as teachers were told to teach without any mechanism to assess what the students are learning. Students who are already in the middle of an academic semester need to have grades for their academic continuity and degree completion. Private universities take special efforts in maintaining academic

calendars and not allowing any session lag or jam to creep into their system. The toned-down requested ban on exams has now made session jam a possibility.

Conversely, the one-sided decision of the UGC, allowing one segment of higher education to resume examination with no hints of a decision about the other segment, has confused all stakeholders: educators, students, parents, and employers. Many of the private



'Is it possible that the UGC has just realised that the two sectors under its banner are moving at two different speed limits, and one system is leapfrogging the other?' STAR FILE PHOTO

academic semester. If we consider the Eid vacation, there is not much response time between now and May 23. One wonders, why would the UGC, with the mandate of overseeing both public and private universities, issue such a partial guideline?

The instruments for assessment mentioned in the UGC guideline have been followed by the private universities in the last 3-4 semesters since the closure of physical classes in March 2020. These are standard practices and tested protocols in any remote/distance learning platforms. The question is, why did the UGC delay in adopting this decision on online teaching and testing for public universities for such a long time? Why take so much time to reinvent the wheel? One can only assume that the bureaucratic engagement of the ministry and academic councils will delay the procedures even further for the public universities. By the time students of the public system will resume issues of accessibility and affordability loomed large. There have been some incentives given by the government with free education data packages for students and mobilisation of fund for digital devices, but their efficacy has relatively remained unfelt and unseen. The public system was particularly overwhelmed by the sheer number of students with which it had to deal.

their examinations, many of the private

university students will be market-ready

One reason as to why the public

teaching/testing soon after the closure was

because the universities needed to ensure

that all their teachers and students have

the digital devices or literacy to take full

advantage of the new mode of teaching.

Teachers had to be initiated to different

universities did not pursue online

for employment.

In contrast, the smaller class size and the flexibility of decision-making system made the private universities embrace new technology with relative ease. Besides, they had the urgency to stay afloat as they knew that without this adoption of new technology, the entire system would have drowned. In the absence of zero finance from the government, these universities solely depend on tuition fees of their students. Failure to provide services to the students would simply mean that they would have to let their teachers go and shut down the

campuses. Already, there are many private universities that have stopped paying full salaries or bonuses to their staff members. They are struggling as the number of students has dropped during the pandemic, affecting the financial health of these institutions. The state-funded universities, although autonomous as per the University Act 1973, do not have this added pressure of depending on the revenue from tuition fees for their survival. This allowed the public university teachers to be rather lacklustre in their approaches.

Is it possible that the UGC has just realised that the two sectors under its banner are moving at two different speed limits, and one system is leapfrogging the other? The public universities, especially the old ones, traditionally attract the pool of meritorious students as they are virtually free. The number of limited seats makes the competition in these institutions fierce, where each slot is coveted. Before the pandemic, these universities were enjoying prestige and social recognition. During the pandemic, however, the newer private universities have shown greater resolution and agility. These universities are hungry for success, because they know that they can attract better students only by being successful. They are willing to adopt technology to be global actors and partners. They are working hard to get international accreditation and rankings.

The UGC as a monitoring body is responsible for both public and private universities that are catering to 4 million students enrolled in higher education. It is the responsibility of the UGC to make sure that all these students receive the essential skill sets for a changed world where knowledge will be interdisciplinary with technology being its essence. Creating a rift within the two, or seeing them through two different lenses, will not benefit anyone. To pause one system while allowing the other to play is unfair.

One cannot help but think of the Aesop's fable "The Tortoise and the Hare". The overconfidence and the compliance of the public system allowed its counterpart to slowly find its way back in the race. The UGC, as the umpire, should ensure that the rules of the race are maintained. Circulars that are partial in nature will only create confusions, adding to the ones that we are already experiencing.

Shamsad Mortuza is Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the

Why is India struggling in its vaccination drive?

THERE is hardly anyone left in India, including yours truly, who has not lost a loved one to the devastation wrought by the second wave of the coronavirus. Although some states are doing a relatively decent job, like Kerala, states and areas such as Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra are in utter chaos. Patients are dying in homes because the healthcare infrastructure has collapsed. They are dying in hospitals because hospitals are not getting oxygen supply in time. Incinerators in crematoriums are melting down because of overuse. Parking areas and animal crematoriums are being converted to makeshift human crematoriums. The stories coming out of India are mindnumbing. As one newspaper sombrely put it: India has descended into "Covid hell".

In such an apocalyptic situation, the only weapon India has is vaccines. However, with each passing day, it becomes evidently clear that India's vaccination drive has floundered as well. As of the first week of May, India administered a total of 156 million doses of vaccines. In absolute terms, these numbers look impressive, but they amount to only 2.6 percent of the population fully vaccinated with both doses. This is a far cry from the 70-80 percent required for a country to achieve herd immunity. With its current vaccination policy and administrative ineptitude, India is unlikely to achieve that number anytime soon. This is an embarrassing situation for a country that has decades of experience in mass vaccination programmes.

When this unprecedented global pandemic began, India was blessed to be in a unique position. Dubbed as the "pharmacy of the world", India is the manufacturing hub for vaccines. For instance, the vaccine developed by AstraZeneca and Oxford University was licensed to the Serum Institute of India (SII), the largest producer of vaccines in the world. SII would then have exclusive rights to manufacture and sell these vaccines in India. Additionally, Indian scientists were also able to develop an indigenous vaccine. Bharat Biotech (BB), another pharmaceutical company in India with a stellar reputation, developed its own vaccine against the virus. Although questions still remain about the hastened approval process for the BB vaccine, and

lack of peer-reviewed efficacy data even till date, there is, by and large, a consensus in the scientific community that it is a vaccine that works and is safe to use. Thus, the Modi government had the most powerful weapon to fight the pandemic handed to him in a silver platter.

Despite being in such an advantageous position, India's vaccination policy has now become an unmitigated disaster. India should ideally be vaccinating at twice or thrice the speed of what it was doing before. Appallingly, the daily vaccination rate has dipped to about

> Severe supply constraints and uncertain delivery timelines, coupled with confusion over who should buy and who would pay (state governments or centre), have crippled India's vaccination drive.

half of what it was a few weeks ago. The question, of course, is why? There are two main reasons: supply constraints and vaccine pricing.

The main reason why India is falling behind in its vaccination drive is that there simply aren't enough vaccines. As of April, SII had a capacity to manufacture 60-70 million vaccine doses a month. BB, on the other hand, had a much lower manufacturing capacity of 12-15 million doses. To vaccinate everybody in India above the age of 18, India needs almost 2 billion doses of vaccines. It simply did not have the manufacturing capacity to produce enough vaccines to vaccinate everybody within a reasonable time frame. The Indian government knew this but did nothing to shore up production

For some inexplicable reason, the Modi

government did not see the urgency to vaccinate Indians. Even more shocking was how the government was treating other pharmaceutical companies such as Pfizer and Russia's Sputnik, who had applied for approval of their vaccines in India but were denied. The only explanation for such a hare-brained approach was that the government did not think they needed to vaccinate Indians at a mass scale. This false belief was bolstered by government-friendly "economists" and "experts" who had begun opining in leading newspapers that India had "achieved" herd immunity. Modi himself declared early this year that India had won the war against Covid. When a government begins to believe its own propaganda, the country is bound to be in trouble.

The second reason for the unravelling of India's vaccination drive was the policy with regards to vaccine pricing. Initially, the central government was the sole buyer of vaccines from both the manufacturers. When the central government first ordered vaccines, the price agreed was reasonable but at the same time allowed the vaccine manufacturers to make some profits. The central government then distributed these vaccines to the states, and some to private hospitals, who then began administering them to Indians aged 60 years and above (later reduced to 45 years) for free (or a token administration fee).

In mid-April, the central government was under pressure to appear to do something to stem the mayhem caused by the second wave. It hastily widened the vaccination drive and included anyone above the age of 18. However, there was a catch. The Centre was not going to purchase the vaccines to inoculate those below 45 years. The government allowed the two home-grown manufacturers to sell half of their manufactured products to state governments and private players at a price that the companies had the freedom to set.

The government's arguments were two-fold. First, they argued that this would give flexibility to states, as they can now directly engage with not just the two Indian vaccine producers but also foreign vaccine producers, and buy directly from them as per the state health policy. Secondly, the policy would open up the private market and engage the private healthcare infrastructure to deliver vaccines at higher prices to those who could afford to pay. This, they argued, would speed up the vaccination rate. So

far, the opposite has happened.

There are two problems with the government's approach. The first glitch in this model is that it operates under the assumption of no supply constraints that any buyer could buy without impacting the prospect of others buying vaccines as and when they need. As stated earlier, the manufacturing capacity of vaccines in India is severely limited (and buying from other foreign manufacturers is a distant reality). Such severely limited supply constraints provide unfettered profiteering opportunities to the two vaccine manufacturers. True to this cause, both SII and BB quickly seized the opportunity and set exorbitantly high prices for state governments and private players. States now have to shell out from their severely limited finances and buy vaccines from manufacturers, whose price had now jumped three-fold.

The second problem is that since the government has left it to the vaccine producers to set their price, the vaccine producers have set three different prices: one for central government, one for state government and one for private players. The vaccine producers now have incentives to shift as much of their supply to private players as possible to maximise their profits. This can potentially impact the public vaccination drive as manufacturers may prioritise delivering to private participants over states. The pricing also incentivises corruption as supplies delivered to state governments can be illegally diverted to the private market to make arbitrage profits from the price differential. This is bound to increase leakages in the public vaccination programmes. Not to mention, the high price of vaccines will increase vaccine hesitancy as the price of two doses in the private market has now become higher than the average monthly income in

Thus, severe supply constraints and uncertain delivery timelines, coupled with confusion over who should buy and who would pay (state governments or centre), have crippled India's vaccination drive. Relying on free market principles during a pandemic is a bad idea. For what it's worth, even the citadel of capitalism, the United States of America, is not relying on free market forces to vaccinate its citizens. They are simply buying in bulk and providing it to their citizens for free.

Dr. Asad Rauf is Assistant Professor of Economics, University of Groningen, Netherlands

In fond remembrance of the colossus of Bengali cinema

An open letter to Satyajit Ray on turning 100



Нарру birthday, maestro. The Bengali cultural firmament has no dearth

of stellar figures—I always think of Rabindranath Tagore as the affectionate paterfamilias of modern Bengali literature—but I have felt a particular kinship with you.

Perhaps this was because I was deeply attracted to your work at a time when you were living. Somehow that made you a more intimate presence.

Of course, there is so much to like about you. A world-class filmmaker, juvenile story-teller, composer, typographer, illustrator, graphic artist, you had a keen intellect and an avid curiosity, with a formidable command of both English and Bengali—you were a true renaissance man.

There was another parochial reason. I took particular delight in the fact that your ancestral home was in East Bengal. Your grandfather Upendrakishore Roychowdhury, juvenile storyteller extraordinaire, was from Mymensingh, the land of the storied folk treasury of maimansingha gitika (Mymensingh ballads).

We have always adored you in

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Bangladesh has

been successful

gains in poverty

in making

impressive

reduction in

at the end

the past years.

Bangladesh. In the 1960s, when your film Mahanagar (The Big City) was screened briefly, people queued all night to get tickets.

Within a few years after independence in 1971—I was still a schoolboy then—the full force of your talent hit me. Foremost, obviously, were the films—extraordinarily difficult to see in those days, because this was before the age of streaming or even video.

Then there was your juvenile fiction: the incomparable sleuth Feluda, the whimsical scientist Professor Shanku and the delightful hamper of short story anthologies, embellished with your beautiful illustrations.

Later I came across your prose for adults. Bishoy Chalachchitra and Their Films, Our Films are two collections of your musings on film. Offhand, I am hard-pressed to think of anybody else who wrote both Bengali and English with such felicity of prose, such fluid, elegant diction, and such ease of command (the deceased West Bengal economist Ashok Mitra comes

Your cinematic oeuvre presents a rich, multi-layered contemplation of the Bengali condition.

The Apu trilogy is a lyrical paean to rural Bengal. It follows adorable little Apu, his Brahmin storyteller father Harihar, impecunious but with a heart of gold, the long-suffering, graceful Sarbajaya, the older sibling Durga. We follow Apu all the way to his



Satyajit Ray (1921-1992)

adulthood and ill-fated marriage. Mahanagar takes us into the life of a traditional urban middle class family whose old-school patriarchal values clash with modernity as a housewife steps outside home to pursue her dream of emancipation. Seemabaddha (Company Limited) is an incisive look at life at the top of the corporate ladder with both its glitzy accoutrements and moral pitfalls. Nayak (The Hero) is a haunting reflection on the fickle, insecure world of movie celebrity.

Your delightful forays into Tagoreana include your own particular favourite Charulata, which has a distinctly Chekhovian air, while Teen Kanya presents three delightful vignettes from Tagore's short stories.

I loved the fact that you were such a dyed-in-the-wool Bengali. Many decades ago, the now-defunct Illustrated Weekly of India asked a number of illustrious Indians what made them proud of being Hindus. Your answer was that you were neither a Hindu, Muslim or Christian—you were a Bengali.

It's a deeply personal cultural statement as well as a reflection of your tradition. I consider you to be one of the last and finest exemplars of arguably the most enlightened cultural-intellectual traditions of Bengal—the Brahmo Samaj.

The Brahmo Samaj imbibed the values of European enlightenment to develop a modern Bengali sensibility. From women's emancipation to promotion of rationalist thought to a tolerant, ecumenical approach to faith (Girish Chandra Sen translated the Quran into Bengali), the Brahmo Samaj was the Bengali intellectual tradition at its most enlightened.

Many of your forbears—and you as well—followed that fine example. Your grandfather Upendrakishore owned a printing press, your father Sukumar was inspired by the nonsense verse of Lewis Carroll, and yet in their work and their ethos they were utterly Bengali.

You, of course, mastered that most modern, difficult Western art form of all—the cinema—and crafted films that were imbued with an ineffable Bengali sensibility.

Brahmo Samaj values were reflected in your temperament. You were rationalist, curious, compassionate, and above all had a grace and gentleness of demeanour and spirit. You were a genuine Bengali bhadrolok, a perfect gentleman.

It's been nearly three decades since you have left us, Satyajit-babu. Yet you are still a vivid presence in my life. (I'm not alone. Your books still hit the bestseller lists in Kolkata's

Anandabazar daily.)

Even now, re-reading a Feluda thriller or reading one of your short stories again is a much beloved guilty pleasure. Recently, I saw your Kanchenjungha again. This was your first colour film, made in 1960. I was struck by how contemporary the filmmaking style seemed. Instead of a boy-meets-girl tale, the stock-in-trade of commercial Indian potboilers, the film moves simultaneously yet effortlessly through the lives of a number of characters, all part of an extended upper-crust family from Kolkata on vacation, controlled by a ferocious patriarch, played by the inimitable Chhabi Biswas. There are wheels within wheels, and the film cross-cuts through the various subplots as they are all developed in the film. I saw the film and marvelled again at the fact that decades after you've left us, your work continues to give us such joy.

Your birth centenary is just a date for me. My deep affection and admiration for you has no sell-by date. Your place is secure in my heart.

To borrow a refrain from a fetching song you wrote and composed for your delightful children's film Goopy Gyne Bagha Byne (The Adventures of Goopy and Bagha): "Maharaja, tomaray selam" (I bow to you, emperor).

Ashfaque Swapan, an Atlanta-based writer and

How to improve beneficiary targeting in social protection programmes?



Nawshad Ahmed

of 2019, there were still about 16.5

poor. This number has gone up

million people categorised as extreme

substantially since mid-2020, due to

the onslaught of Covid-19 pandemic.

The sheer number of extreme poor

in the country is no doubt a cause

for concern. As the Covid-19 crisis

of measures such as cash and food

distribution for the new poor. These

were supported by the existing social

protection (also called social safety

programmes which are aimed at

of the poor families.

net, social transfer or social security)

reducing the social and economic risks

The social protection programmes

in Bangladesh include conditional and

unconditional cash transfers or food

assistance to poor families, public

works programme, improvement

supporting families with monthly

payments to women for accessing

system in place targeting the

educational stipends, old age pension,

maternal and child healthcare services,

and building skills to increase labour

productivity and income. The country

has a comprehensive social protection

chronically underfed and vulnerable

population, who are mostly landless,

face seasonal hunger, and depend on

daily-wage employment in agriculture

In 2020-21, a total of Tk 95,574

and other sectors, as well as the

widowed and disabled, etc.

of household nutritional status,

was unfolding in early 2020, the

government undertook a variety

crore has been allocated by the government for social protection programmes. It should be noted that the total public spending on these programmes at the end of 1990s was less than 1 percent of GDP. It increased to 1.6 percent in 2007-2008 and stands at 3.01 percent of GDP in 2021. However, it is not possible to cover all eligible people with these programmes despite a sustained

which is an "exclusion" error; two, many have been included although they do not meet the eligibility criteria, i.e. non-poor—which is an "inclusion" error or "leakage". A sizable number of non-poor are included in each of the programmes which is happening due to weaknesses in the beneficiary selection criteria. Whenever we visit social security programme communities, we hear this complaint



increase in budgetary allocations. Due to the economic shock associated with the pandemic during the last one year, millions of people have either lost their jobs or their income level has gone down substantially, pushing them below the poverty line. The government has recently taken a decision to expand the social safety net programmes to reduce the economic impact of Covid-19. A fresh budgetary allocation of Tk 1,200 crore has been announced for this recently.

Unfortunately, many deserving poor people in the country are not getting the benefits of the social protection programmes. A key challenge in this respect is poor targeting of beneficiaries which means two things: one, many real poor people are not getting the benefits—

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ made by non-beneficiary families who compare themselves with the mis-targeted beneficiaries (non-poor) and wonder how they have not been

included in the programme although

they meet the eligibility criteria. The challenge is thus to have better beneficiary selection criteria so that the real poor get the benefits. To improve the targeting of beneficiaries, first and foremost, a high-level government commitment is required to strengthen programme management, minimise leakages, strengthen monitoring and supervision, and improve the payment system so that the poor receive the benefits on time. With proper identification and timely delivery, the poor will be able to climb out of poverty more quickly.

There is more than one method

for selection of the extreme poor households for the social protection programmes. One of these methods, which is used in many countries, is called "Proxy Means Test". This requires collection of information on (i) household demographic characteristics, (ii) housing quality, access to service facilities and remittances received, (iii) ownership of assets, and (iv) locational advantages. These proxy variables can identify the poor with reasonable accuracy and considerably improve the targeting efficiency.

Let's take a look at the proxy determinants of poverty under these four categories, which should be easily observable and measurable, and relevant for Bangladesh:

Household demographic characteristics

The assumption behind the collection of such information is that a higher number of children in a family increases dependency and reduces household consumption expenditure per capita. The work that the head of a household does—as an agricultural labourer, day labourer, transport worker, rickshaw/van puller, shop or factory worker or one engaged in petty trading—means the income of the person will be low. Also, a femaleheaded household is likely to be poorer when she is widowed, divorced or separated. Again, the household head's educational level is usually found to be negatively correlated to poverty.

Housing quality, access to service facilities and remittances received It is assumed that low-quality materials used in building the house, non-availability of electricity, poor access to clean drinking water and hygienic sanitation facilities, and nonparticipation in NGO microfinance programmes mean the household demonstrates low-consumption levels and is supposedly poor. The families that receive remittances either from inside the country or from outside supposedly have a much better consumption level and enjoy food security.

Ownership of assets

The assumption is that possession of livestock, TV, good-quality furniture, tube well, fan and bicycle demonstrates that the household is not poor.

Locational advantages Geographical location is an additional

factor in determining a household's likelihood of being poor. The eastern part of the country—i.e. Dhaka, Chattogram and Sylhet divisions—are more developed and have better access to urban growth centres of the country and, therefore, a household in these divisions is likely to be non-poor. On the other hand, the western part of the country is lagging behind in this respect, including Khulna, Rajshahi and Barisal divisions, which have a much larger share of the poor people.

The above proxy determinants, which can be easily observed, give information necessary for the calculation of a weighted average status of a household's economic condition and can help in deciding about the household's eligibility for inclusion in a social protection programme. The targeting instruments of the existing social protection programmes are not all based on observable and verifiable criteria. One common beneficiary selection criterion of these programmes is monthly household income, which is neither observable nor verifiable. Another selection criterion is household landholding, which is equally difficult to verify. Since it is administratively difficult to measure both income and landholding, it is recommended that the Proxy Means Test be used for beneficiary selection of ongoing and

any expanded programmes to improve targeting of the poor.

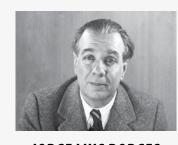
The local government bodies— Union Parishads, Upazila Parishads, Paurashavas, City Corporationsare traditionally involved in the beneficiary selection process. It is recommended that the local NGOs be also engaged in the process, which can help gather reliable information for the Proxy Means Test. Most NGOs in Bangladesh routinely collect similar information from the poor households to identify their own beneficiary groups, and therefore their cooperation should be sought in such endeavours. It is also advisable that rather than collecting information by each social safety net programme separately, it may be better if all the government programmes together design an effective household targeting mechanism which can satisfy the needs of all programmes.

While the types of intervention needed to deal with economic/other shocks associated with Covod-19 are more or less decided within the government circle, how to identify the most deserving families for the benefits offered is a challenge that we need to resolve urgently, for better utilisation of public resources. We already have a social security infrastructure and this can be used as a platform to build upon. We have many ongoing social protection programmes for which budgetary allocation has been made, beneficiary selection committees at the local level are working, the electronic money transfer system is functioning to some extent, and management information systems (MIS) are in existence. With some additional efforts, we can quickly expand these programmes by using an improved targeting method and thereby reducing exclusion and inclusion errors.

Dr. Nawshad Ahmed is an economist and urban

BY MORT WALKER

QUOTABLE Quote



JORGE LUIS BORGES (1899-1986)Argentine short story writer

You can't measure time in days the way uou do money in dollars, because every day is different.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 1 Rich cake 6 Weather aid 11 Island greeting 12 "Pal Joey" writer 13 Multiplied by 14"Shut up!" 15 1972 Billy Wilder

17 Take advantage 18 Fellows 19 Coated, as with chocolate

22 Form 1040 org. 23 Resume business 24 Some messages 25 Irish girl's name 6 Mythical flyer 27 Cornfield cry 7 Cry of insight

30 Argue noisily 31 Bruins legend 32 Enter the race 33 Last 35 Heavenly being

38 Moves cautiously 39 Tick off 40 Grain to grind 41 Begat 42 Nice guys

DOWN 1 Japanese mat 2 Twist of fiction 3 Bible book 4 Subsequently 5 Software surprise

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

8 Vienna's river 9 Out of bed 10 Sized up 16 Banished 20 Real stinker 21 Harvest goddess 24 Malleable metal 25 Sultanate on Borneo 26 Forest worker

27 Reunion attendee 28 Collar 29 Gains by force 30 Cylindrical sandwiches 34 Be bold 36 Genesis name 37 Set a course

VECTEDDAV'C ANCWEDO

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BEETLE BAILEY



BABY BLUES

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT YOUR INTEGRITY IS THREATENING MY JET SKI.



DHAKA SATURDAY, MAY 8, 2021 BAISHAKH 25, 1428 BS



Tagore Songs

TRANSLATED BY FAKRUL ALAM



Megher Pore Megh #32/441

Clouds pile upon clouds And the world darkens Why keep me waiting by the door then, All, all alone? Daylong amidst all sorts of people I remain absorbed in all kind of work, But this day I've been waiting Because you said you'd come! Why keep me waiting by the door then

All, all alone? If you aren't going to reveal yourself,

And are bent on ignoring me, How will I spend my time On such a rainy day?

I cast my eyes afar And keep looking for you. My soul wanders sadly

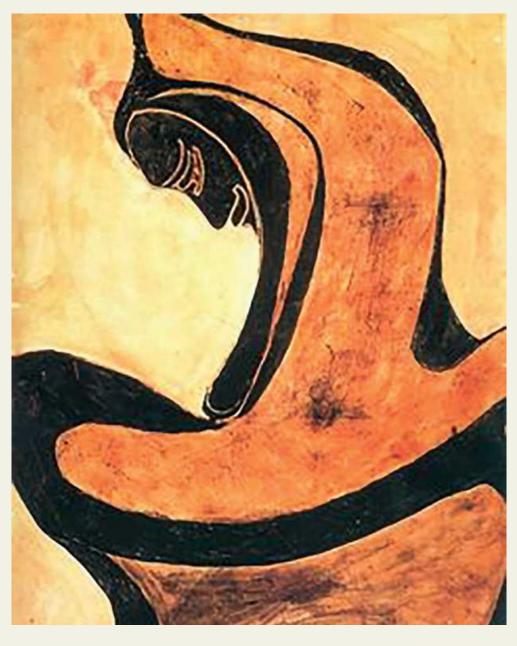
Wafted by the wayward wind. Why keep me waiting by the door then

All, all alone?

Kotobaro Bhebechinu #20/879

How often would I lose myself thinking I would bare my heart at your feet? I would fancy holding on to it tightly And confessing: "I love you passionately!" But I would think too: a heavenly angel— How could I show my love so openly then? I would revert to my thoughts once again

And then conclude: best to stay far away And worship you in this life all by myself. No one should see my love's intensity No one should see me shed tears profusely. But this day you yourself came my way to say "Till now, my love for you I couldn't display!"



Translating Rabindranath Tagore's Song-Lyrics

In the song-lyric numbered 230 in *Gitabitan*, this 18 February, 1926 letter to Arthur Geddes, to attempt the arduous task of translation. Rabindranath Tagore's comprehensive compilation of such verse, we find his delight at capturing the loveliness of the world outside his window in a song-lyric: "I've caught uncatchable loveliness in rhyme's binds—/The loveliness of a distant night-bird/Singing at a late hour of the night/ Wings crimsoned by ashoka flowers of a departed spring/And a heart filled with the fragrance of fallen flowers" (my translation).

Tagore's delight in his accomplishment is understandable. The Bengali song-lyric is utterly delightful in the way it melds its intricate, lovely tune with harmonious and effusive words and vibrant images expressing the rapture of a poet-composer who has captured "loveliness" otherwise "uncatchable" in verse. After all, blending a beautiful melody with lilting words, the rhythms of thought with the rhythms of feeling, and the auditory imagination with the visual one is no mean feat. Although it is much shorter and simpler, one could compare this song-lyric with the celebrated romantic and effusive outpourings inspired by birds we encounter in Shelley's "Ode to a Skylark" and Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale." Of course, the English poems are much longer and more complex; but it is also the case that the nineteenth-century Romantic poets did not think of setting their odes to music and were content to capture the ineffable beauty of the singing bird in the world outside their windows entirely in stanzas structured harmoniously and lines only suggestively melodic.

Tagore then had reasons to be excited. We who have heard the song being sung perfectly by some well-known singer and have some dealings with such poetry tend to be stirred as well by a lyrical impulse that has found a perfect musical form. Some Bengalis, and even a few foreigners who have heard songs such as this one, have been inspired enough by them to even attempt translating them. Tagore himself, of course, had thought fit for at least a decade of his life to translate them into English, and his fame in the western world depends substantially on his own translations of the song-lyrics of Gitanjali: Song Offerings.

And yet Tagore himself soon felt that anyone setting out to translate song-lyrics is embarking on a doomed enterprise. Disillusioned by the increasingly lukewarm and at times even critical reception in the west of later translations of his poems and song-lyrics, he eventually decided to stop translating them, and was eventually content to let others render his song-lyrics into print in their language. Let me quote representative thoughts that he had about the subject from his Bengali essays in my own rough translations, and from his letters, as collected, and at times translated by Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson in their Selected Letters of Tagore (2005). In the essay "Sangeet O Bhab" or "Music and Thought," for example, he says unequivocally, "Song-lyrics can't be read, they are to be heard"; songs express feelings in a way prose cannot. In certain moods, for instance in

who had devised "musical settings" for a few songs, he said unequivocally, "Do whatever you like with my songs, only do not ask me to do the impossible. To translate Bengali poems into English verse form reproducing the original rhythm so that the words may fit in with the tune would be foolish for me to attempt. All that I can do is to render them in simple prose, making it possible for a worthier person than myself to versify them."

Tagore insisted in his essays that in songs the words and the music could not be separated. He also indicated that at best his song-lyrics could be translated into prose that had a whiff of music in them. This is also implied by the Sinhalese-Tamil writer and thinker Ananda Coomoraswamy, at one time close to the poet and translator of Tagore's song-lyrics into English. Introducing his work in 1912, Coomoraswamy observed about his renderings: "The translations convey only a shadow of the original poetry; they give only the meaning,

Convalescing in his rural estate in Sealdah, East Bengal, he apparently felt a sudden impulse to capture the verse he had written in recent years in a representative selection. As he wrote to his dear niece Indira Devi Chaudhuri, aroused by the summer breeze in Sealdah, he felt a stirring in him to capture its music through creative work that would not be demanding beyond a point. Instead of writing original work, "I took up the poems of [the Bengali] Gitanjali. It was just that I knew I had started a festival of poetic delight in my mind once before, fanned by the zephyr of emotions, and so now I felt an urge to rekindle it through the medium of a foreign

This magical quality of the Gitanjali: Song Offerings would similarly kindle the imagination of quite a few people of different mother tongues—some poets but some not—to translate the song-lyrics, whether they encountered them in the original, or in their English renderings by the poet. These men and women ven-



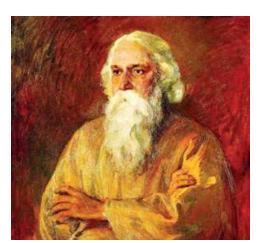
that in the songs themselves is inseparable from

Why then bother with translating the "uncatchable loveliness" of the song-lyrics into other languages, if so much is lost? One answer is that Tagore knew that the songs were his "best work"; as he once said in a letter to Edward Thompson. "I often feel that, if all my poetry is forgotten, my songs will live with my countrymen, and have a permanent place"; he believed they would be his most important "legacy." Anyone wanting to perpetuate his contributions and honor his memory by preserving his work for posterity, internationally or nationally, therefore, can do no better than translate them as well as the best works in other genres, despite the intrinsic difficulties and ultimately impossible nature of the task.

There are other reasons why Tagore embarked on such a "perilous adventure" in trying to capture the "uncatchable loveliness" of his song-lyrics in his Gitanjali: Song Offerings. One is that they themselves aroused the poet

tured into translating them and other song-lyrics from other collections, not daunted by the "uncatchable loveliness" of the compositions, and even if they felt works translated convey at the end only a trace of the original loveliness. The net result, nevertheless, seems satisfying. As Tagore himself said in another context in his Bengali essay, "Sangeeter Mukti" or "Freeing Music," it may be necessary "to liberate what is being walled in and free all confined forces of the world—whether in music, or literature, or thought, or the nation, or society" (my translation, 50). Moreover, and as Tagore had claimed in an exchange with Dilipkumar Roy, a Bengali musicologist and musician, "the essence of a song is universal, even if its dress is local and national" (77). Why should translators then not attempt translating his songs for the world at large even if their loveliness is uncatchable in the last analysis? He himself had led the way!

Indeed, on a few occasions, Tagore even acknowledged that translating song-lyrics was worth the effort, necessary and even inevitable.



After listening to the singer Rattan Devi---the stage name of the singer Alice Ethel Richardson who would eventually marry Ananda Coomeraswamy and became Ratan Devi Coomeraswamy, and who had recorded Indian music and performed Indian songs in concerts in England and America— Tagore observed: "Sometimes the meaning of a poem is better understood in a translation, not necessarily because it is more beautiful than the original, but as in the new setting the poem has to undergo a trial; it shines more brilliantly if it comes out triumphant." In this particular context, he was, of course talking about the singer's stage rendering of a Hindustani song in a foreign setting, but could not his observation be extended to his own translations of the song-lyrics and even of others who had done so into diverse languages as well?

My Own Experience of Translating Tago-

re's Song-Lyrics I have been translating Tagore's verse for over two decades now. The songs are always so melodic that I soon became fully aware of the enormity of the task I had undertaken and often felt myself floundering. Nevertheless, I managed to contribute many song translations to the "Song" section of The Essential Tagore, that I co-edited with Radha Chakravarty (2011) Moreover, whenever I would hear a song sung by a favorite singer, I would go to my copy of Gitabitan and end up translating it. Sometimes I would go back to a song and translate it again, forgetting that I had translated it years ago. There is something obsessive about my efforts, and I am sure that was also the case with other translators. Surely, they had felt like I did after a while that the task was an impossible one—the loveliness of the songs in performance had lured us all to strive and strain to capture the "uncatchable."

Towards the end of the second decade of this century, I decided I would translate all 103 song-lyrics of the English Gitanjali in the sequence that Tagore had worked out for them in his book; the manuscript has been accepted for publication by a leading Bangladeshi publisher and should come out by early next year. Also, I had around 300 song-lyrics from Gitabitan

despite discarding quite a few of my earlier efforts. I am now in the process of readying them all for a publisher.

I feel that more than any other genre in which Tagore wrote, the song-lyrics reflect the length and breadth of his interests. His lyrical side, devotional nature and mystical moments, moments of happiness and grief, patriotism, love of nature and of his fellow human beings, thoughts about life and death and the after-life, vison for the future of his people as well as ruminations on his own fate, eco-critical consciousness, and sensitivity to the seasons of Bengal and its flora and fauna all come out vibrantly as well as musically in his songs. His flair for writing dance dramas, musicals and lyrical plays, his ability to produce songs for ceremonial and other occasions all lead to the song-lyrics. But above all, they are so compelling! This is how I and other translators, and of course singers and directors have been attracted to the songs and felt driven to work with them

What I would like to do by way of an ending is to present for readers one of my translations for the Gitabitan collection that I am finalizing as the conclusion to this paper. I'll only preface it by saying that I tried to follow the versions in Gitabitan as closely as I have been able to in every respect, including the figure they make

Dhay Jeno Mor Shokol Bhalobasha #94/43

Let all the love in me flow towards you O Lord, let all my love flow, flow only towards

Let my most ardent, my fondest hopes Reach your ears, and only your ears Wherever my mind is, and always, let it respond to your call

Let all things hemming me snap

At your summons and only at your summons Let the beggar's bowl I had filled abjectly empty

And all the chambers of my heart fill up instead O Lord, with your gifts, with only your gifts!

O my dearest friend, my innermost one, Let this day be one in which all things beautiful

Sound as songs, composed in pleasing tunes

O Lord, as songs meant for you, for only you!

This is a much shorter and considerably rewritten version of a Virtual Lecture delivered at Tagore Centre, UC Berkeley on October 13,

Fakrul Alam is UGC Professor, Department of English, University of Dhaka.

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1 & Liverpool vs Southampton **PREMIER LEAGUE** Leeds vs Tottenham Live from 5:30 pm

Manchester City vs Chelsea

Live from 10:00 pm

Live from 1:15 am (Sunday) **LA LIGA**

Atletico Madrid vs

Barcelona

Live from 1:00 am (Sunday) Zimbabwe vs Pakistan Second Test (Day 2)

Athletic Bilbao vs Osasuna

Live from 8:15 pm

Live from 1:30 pm

I'm trying my own thing

He was dropped from the Bangladesh Test side and was under some pressure when he went to take part in the Indian Premier League for Rajasthan Royals. But Mustafizur Rahman proved to be the main weapon for his side, picking up eight wickets in seven games and impressing with his variations. The Daily Star's Bishwajit Roy caught up with the paceman, who opened up a bit to discuss various issues. The excerpts of the interview are as follows:



You have worried over the process of return when

the IPL got suspended?

Mustafizur Rahman (MR): Obviously there was a bit of concern considering the rules and regulations from the government and about how we would return and whether the government would allow us to return or not. I would like to thank all the authorities of our government to allow us to return home safely.

DS: Were you in touch with Shakib Al Hasan?

MR: I was in constant touch with Shakib Bhai. The BCB gave us NOC till May 18. Since we were in a bio-bubble, our plan was to return and quarantine for a few days ahead of the Sri Lanka series. DS: How do you evaluate your performance in the IPL this

MR: Overall my performance was good. I am not unhappy, I am

DS: The commentators were all praise of your back-of-the-hand delivery and even termed you as a left-arm Muttiah Muralitharan. Your take on that?

MR: I have been working on this delivery for quite some time, but I didn't have total control. The type of wickets there was very easy to score over 200 runs, so it was tough to bowl there. So I kep everything in mind and practised

training and I am working on it.

DS: You didn't bowl many vorkers since your shoulder surgery. Was there any fear behind it?

MR: To be honest there was some getting better now. As we all batting. If a bowler bowls well

accordingly and realised that the know Lasith Malinga bowls the from one end, the other bowler delivery was going well. I have to best in yorkers in world cricket. practise that delivery a lot more in At the moment things are going well for me but it depends on the rhythm too.

> **DS:** Is it also about having a good bowling partner that can help a bowler become better?

fear at one point but things are MR: It is pretty much similar to

also wants to give his best from the other end.

DS: Your thoughts on return to Tests? How do you see Taskin's return to Test cricket?

MR: I have always said that I want to play in all three formats as there is no end to learning. I am working on my swing. When you play Test cricket, you get enough time to work on your skills whether its swing or bowling a specific line and length. I won't get that opportunity in ODIs or

Taskin bhai worked really hard during the lockdown. He looked in very good rhythm and I want him to continue like this. This will surely inspire me as well.

DS: Your plans for the upcoming ODI series against Sri Lanka?

MR: I am in a very good rhythm

but if I have to stay in quarantine for a long period, there will be some problem. No matter how much I work inside my room, it's totally different working outdoors. I rely on my rhythm for my bowling. However the rules and regulations by the government are also for the betterment of all. So I am not sure whether I will have the same rhythm after a long gap.

DS: Is there any role model that you follow?

MR: Previously I used to follow one player. But at the moment I don't follow anyone and try my own thing. Now I focus on how



Abahani striker Kervens Belfort heads in one of his three goals during a 6-0 demolition of Rahmatganj MFS at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Belfort powers six-star Abahani



An effortless hattrick from Haitian forward Kervens Belfort helped Abahani equal second-biggest their

Bangladesh Premier League victory as the Sky Blues inflicted an emphatic 6-0 defeat on Rahmatganj at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

Abahani's biggest victory also came against Rahmatganj, a 7-0 win during the inaugural season of the BPL in 2007 and their second-biggest margin of victory was a 6-0 win over Khulna Abahani in the second edition of the BPL in 2009.

A ninth triumph from 15 matches helped the Sky Blues topple Sheikh Jamal and grab second position on an equal 32 points, with the six-time champions ahead by virtue of goal difference but aware that the Dhanmondi club have a game in hand.

Leaders Bashundhara Kings have an eight-point cushion on Abahani and Sheikh Jamal, with a game in hand over Abahani. They were scheduled to take on Brothers Union last night.

Abahani and Rahmatganj contested the match on an even footing initially with an attacking mood but Rahmatganj surrendered immediately after Abahani took the lead through a suicidal own goal. Tajik defender Khurshed Beknazarov bundled into his own net while attempting to clear a cut-back from Raihan Hasan in the 27th minute before Belfort doubled the margin 10 minutes later with a left- matches and condemn Baridhara to theil

Brazil's Raphael Augusta. Belfort and Raphael combined again, the latter this time whipping in a perfect cross from the right that Belfort rose high to meet and make it 3-0 three minutes from the break.

After resumption, Rahmatgani's Nigerian striker Felix Chidi Odili got an opportunity to reduce the deficit but he was denied by Abahani goalkeeper Sultan Ahmed Shakil twice from close range within the first five minutes of the second

Belfort completed the league's fifth hattrick, after Omar Jobe, Obi Moneke, Raul Becerra and Robson Da Silva, by driving a low Mamun Mia cross home in the 62nd minute. Three minutes later, Mamun Mia made it 5-0.

Afghan defender Masih Saighani completed the rout with a powerful left-footer from outside the box five minutes from time to help Abahani leave the ground a relatively easy win over Rahmatganj.

In the day's second match, a superb brace from Mohammad Jewel helped Bangladesh Police register a come-frombehind 2-1 win over Uttar Baridhara Club under floodlights.

Saiddoston Fozilov converted a penalty to give Baridhara a 63rd-minute lead before Jewel stole the show. He levelled the margin in the 74th minute with a side volley from a Yao Christian cross before flicking the decisive goal from a Murolimzhon Akhmedov lob to give Police FC their fourth win from 15 footed grounder following a cutback from seventh defeat in 14 games.

Emery's revenge denies another **ALL-ENGLISH FINAL**

AFP, London



Villarreal boss Unai Emery came back to haunt Arsenal as the Spanish side held out for a 0-0 draw at the Emirates on Thursday to set up a Europa League final against Manchester United with a 2-1 victory on aggregate.

Defeat means the Gunners will miss out on Champions League football for a fifth consecutive season with the pressure building on Emery's successor Mikel Arteta.

Sitting ninth in the Premier League, Arsenal are now on the verge of failing to qualify for European football for the first time in 26 years.

"We are devastated," said Arteta. "We tried everything until the last minute. I think we deserved to win the game but the details define these ties.

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang twice hit the post for Arsenal, while Emile Smith Rowe sliced a glorious chance wide early in the second-half.

"We had three big chances, they didn't have anything but they are through," added Arteta, who was forced into a last minute reshuffle when Granit Xhaka picked up an injury in the warm-up.

"So many things happened to us, and so many players were just trying to compete

Villarreal's first European final prevented a clean sweep for Premier League sides across the Champions League and Europa League. The Yellow Submarine will take on United in Gdansk on May 26, three days before Manchester City face Chelsea in the Champions League final on May 29.

three times with Sevilla and taking Arsenal to the final in his only full season in charge The Spaniard was sacked after just 18 months as Arsene Wenger's successor, but again showed his experience at this level

That clash will be Emery's fifth Europa

League final, having won the competition

inferior resources to his former club. "I'm very proud because we know it is very important for us and Arsenal are a very

by guiding his side through despite vastly

good team," said Emery. "Today we are thinking to enjoy this moment and then we prepare the match

against Manchester United. "We deserve to play this final and we will show our best performance. We want

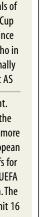
to fight against Manchester for this title." Dani Parejo's free-kick that dipped onto the roof of the net was Villarreal's most dangerous effort as they controlled the firsthalf without threatening to score the vital

HIGHLIGHT

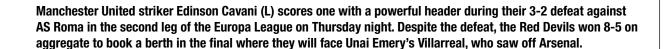
The final between Villarreal and Manchester United will be Unai Emery's fifth Europa League final, having won the competition three times with Sevilla and taking Arsenal to the final in his only full season in charge at the Emirates.

Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's team had tripped up in the semifinals of two League Cups, the FA Cup and the Europa League since he succeeded Jose Mourinho in December 2018 before finally breaking the jinx against AS

Roma on Thursday night. Edinson Cavani became the first player to score two or more goals in both legs of a European semifinal since Klaus Allofs for Koln back in the 1985-86 UEFA Cup against KSV Waregem. The 34-year-old has also now hit 16 goals in his last 15 Europa League outings, including 15 in his last









Nadal, Osaka scoop top Laureus awards

AFP, Seville

Tennis players Rafael Nadal and Naomi Osaka picked up the Laureus Sportsman and Sportswoman of the Year awards on Thursday with football star Mo Salah and Formula One world champion Lewis Hamilton also recognised.

World number two Nadal claimed his fourth Laureus award as he was recognised for his 13th French Open and record-equalling 20th major. Osaka, who won the US Open for the

second time and has four majors, is now a two-time Laureus winner. "Winning the French Open and

equalling the 20th Grand Slam of Roger

Federer has been an unforgettable moment," said Nadal. "It means a lot to equal my great rival, but at the same time, my great friend."

Osaka was recognised also for her anti-racism stance particularly at the US Open where she wore face masks bearing the names of Black Americans who died as a result of police clashes or were victims of racial injustice.

"Regarding my activism on the court, medals.

I think it is important to use my voice, because for me I feel like I often hold back a lot and worry about what people think of me, but you know if you have a platform it is very important you use it," said the Japanese star.

Bayern Munich, winners of the UEFA Champions League and Bundesliga, won the Laureus World Team of the Year

Liverpool and Egypt attacker Salah won the Sporting Inspiration Award for his support of various charities, many in his home town of Nagrig.

He is also a powerful advocate of women's rights in the Middle East.

Hamilton was named the inaugural winner of the Laureus Athlete Advocate of the Year award for his support for racial justice, wearing a Black Lives Matter helmet and black race suit and taking a knee at each Grand Prix.

Canadian snowboarder Max Parrot was one of the most emotional winners. He received the Laureus World

Comeback of the Year after fighting back from cancer to win X-Games gold

Pressure is on Chelsea, says Mahrez

REUTERS, Paris

Manchester City forward Riyad Mahrez said the pressure will be on Chelsea when the sides meet in a high-stakes Premier League encounter at the Etihad stadium on Saturday.

City will be crowned champions for the fifth time in 10 years with three games to spare if they beat fourth-placed Chelsea, who are threatened by West Ham United, Tottenham Hotspur and Liverpool.

They will also wrap up thé title on Sunday if Manchester United lose at

"We want to win to become champions but they also want to win because they want to finish fourth," Algeria forward Mahrez, who scored three of his team's four goals in a 4-1 aggregate victory against Paris St Germain in the Champions League semi-finals, told L'Equipe on Friday. "The pressure will be more on them."

City will then turn their sights towards the May 29 Champions League final, where they will meet Chelsea again, with Mahrez facing his former Leicester team mate Ngolo Kante.

Both players were still in the lower divisions in France in their early 20s.

"I've always had a lot of ambitions, I've always thought I would be able to score in the quarter and semifinals of the Champions League," said Mahrez. "It's true that there are players like Mbappe who manage to do that when they're 17. But some of the players of my generation who were playing in Ligue 1 at 20 have since ended their career.





Aktaruzzaman Flyover Chittagong

Principal Cement **Brand**



4 city areas at risk of dengue

Says DGHS survey in 69 wards of Dhaka north, south city corporations

HELEMUL ALAM

Four areas of the capital are at risk of dengue infection due to the presence of Aedes mosquitoes, which are carriers of the disease.

The areas are: Lalmatia and Iqbal Road under Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) and Sayedabad and North Jatrabari of Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), revealed a survey of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) published on Thursday.

National Malaria Elimination and Aedes Transmitted Disease Control Programme of the Communicable Disease Control unit of the DGHS conducted the survey from March 29 to April 7 at 70 sites of 69 wards of the two city corporations.

Among the containers with Aedes larvae,

the survey found the highest percentage -- 20.22 percent -- in flooded floors of underconstruction buildings, 19.10 percent in plastic drums, 11.24 percent in buckets, 7.87 percent in water tanks, 6.74 percent in the holes of water meters, 2.25 percent in flower pots and trays, 4.49 percent in plastic bottles and 3.37 percent at the bottom of elevator shafts.

The survey also found that the highest number of containers with the larvae -- 43.82 percent -- were found in high rise buildings, 34.83 percent at underconstruction buildings, 15.73 at singe houses and 5.62 percent in slum areas.

Manzur Chowdhury, entomologist and former president of Zoological Society of Bangladesh, said April and the first week of May has seen rainfall on five or six SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



New bank notes on display for sale in the capital's Gulistan area yesterday. Ahead of Eid every year, such fresh notes remain in high demand as these are gifted to children by the elders as Eidi. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Rabindranath's 160th birth anniv today

Bss, Dhaka

The 160th birth anniversary of Biswakabi Rabindranath Tagore is being observed in the country today.

In the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, the SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha AZAN 3-56 12-45 5-00 6-34 8-00 JAMAAT 4-06 1-15 5-15 6-44 8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING								
MADAN	MAY	SEHRI	IFTAR					
25	8		6:34					
26	9	3:50	6:35					
27	10	3.50	6.35					

5 doctors sued

Gauze found in patient's abdomen after C-section

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Five doctors of Tangail General Hospital's gynecology department were sued on Thursday for leaving a piece of gauze inside a woman's abdomen during her

Her father SM Mahbub Hossain filed the case with Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court in Tangail against Dr Nisfun Nahar, Dr Apu Saha, Dr Abida Sultana, anesthetist Fazlul Haque and intern Dr Jakir.

Judge Shamsul Haque took the case into cognisance and ordered Police Bureau

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

ROAD TO FREEDOM
THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

Witness to the killing of **Italian** priest

MAY 8, 1971

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

PAKISTAN ORDERS DEMOLITION OF SHAHEED MINAR

Pakistan Martial Law authorities ordered the domolition of the

Shaheed Minar in Dhaka, reported Associated Press of Pakistan (APP). They decided to construct a mosque on that site. By another order, the Martial Law administrator of East Pakistan asked owners

CURBING COVID

Malaysia bans entry from Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Malaysia has imposed an entry ban on foreign nationals, including Bangladeshis, to curb further spread of coronavirus in the country.

The restriction will come into effect from today, said the High Commission of Malaysia, Dhaka, in a notice issued on Thursday.

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Rohingyas in Bangladesh

US may consider taking a good number of them

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen has said the United States may consider accepting a good number of forciblydisplaced Rohingyas in Bangladesh for filling up a large portion of its new refugee admission quota set for 2021 and 2022.

The minister appreciated US President Joe Biden's recent announcement that his country would enhance the admission of refugees to 62,500 in 2021 and 125,000 in 2022.

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