



I'm trying my own thing, says pacer Mustafizur Rahman in an interview with The Daily Star
SEE PAGE 11



"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."
UK 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.

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.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



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.

"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

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

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 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 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.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

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.

Several senior teachers of the university said the situation was created 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 to

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

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 infectious disease.

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 Kirtankhola-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.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Circumnavigating Ubehebe Crater, Death Valley, 1983.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Death Valley

When 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 started setting.

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 pupfish.

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 residents.

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

DU CORRESPONDENT

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 yesterday.

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, artists, 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 Dhaka University.

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 Corporation.

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.

ABDULLAH AL-AMIN

Suhrawardy Udyan, 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, the 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 and intellectuals to explore the reasons behind, and consequences of such a decision.

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

"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."

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

Prof Kamrul 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 said.

"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 said.

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.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

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 accused.

Mamata thanks Momen, highlights stronger ties

UNB, Dhaka

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.

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, DNCC 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.



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.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

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.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

Johnson hails Conservatives' win in Labour 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 party in an opposition Labour stronghold.

The "Super Thursday" local and regional contests could reshape the UK as pro-independence forces in Scotland, where voting for the devolved parliament was also held, bid to break away.

But in the initial returns in England yesterday, the Conservatives were performing strongly in various regions and won by a landslide in the northeast parliamentary seat of Hartlepool, in a bitter blow for Labour and its leader Keir Starmer.

The rust-belt town constituency, which is deep in traditional Labour heartlands and has never voted Conservative since its creation in 1974, saw a 16 percent swing to the Tories. "It's a very encouraging set of results so far," Johnson told reporters.

"What this election shows is that people want a party and a government that is focused on them, focused on delivering change," he added on a celebratory visit to Hartlepool.

The result will ratchet up the pressure on Starmer, elected leader a year ago promising to rebuild the party and reconnect with traditional voters.



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

SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT ELECTION

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

REUTERS, Glasgow

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 pro-independence majority returned to the devolved 129-seat 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 pro-union 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

few hours.

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

Britain's departure from the European 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 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.

SNP wants to hold 2nd independence vote by 2023

UK PM Johnson says he won't allow another referendum

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 to "war crimes".

"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 Israeli-annexed 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 long-running 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.

European powers tell Israel to stop settlement expansion

Israel says 'two gunmen' killed in West Bank



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. PHOTO: REUTERS



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 life-saving 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 but 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

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 of the pandemic deaths, however, revealed that the real death toll could be many times higher than the official count.

4 BED

Apartments

Single Apartment Per Floor

At the best locations of
Uttara & Bashundhara
Residential Areas

Please feel free to
Call 16687
01713331201, 01713178006, 01713018408

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":

Sl. No	Tender ID	Name of work
1.	557061	Procurement of Computers, Laptops and UPS.
2.	558986	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 accepted. 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 Portal.

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 SHAZI

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 about it?

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: STAR



A statue of Rabindranath Tagore in Patisar, 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.

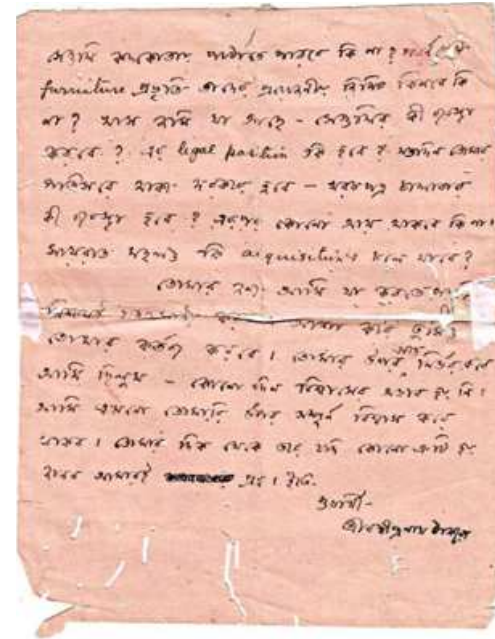
A museum in Patisar, Naogaon, laced with the poet's memory, preserves the letter, along with seven other letters penned by his son and daughter-in-law. There is also the scanned copy of another letter the intended recipient of which is still a mystery. Its original copy is preserved in Mahasthangarh 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



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 Shahajapur 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 'Punya'.

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 Keller, 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 SAMADDA

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 Eid.

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 tele-fiction 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



ILLUSTRATION: OISHIK JAWAD

stress. In addition, the recent deaths have been worrying.

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 "Patala 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 "Ittefaq". 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



Sabila Nur

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.com.

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 Satireday.

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?" 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 the French league," he said.

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.

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, really.

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

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.

said.

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 clout-chaser, 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 very-subtle way of bullying her.



SCHOOL'S OUT?

Scan the code below to win 10,000 BDT worth of books you will barely skim before your virtual exams!*

While Twitter says Kanga-NOT, FaceCrook welcomes her and other bigots

MAHBUB ALAM MUNNA

Freedom of speech is a so called birth right, but it's merely a line that has no application in social media.

The latest victim of this oppression is Kangana Ranaut, the talkative Bollywood celebrity. Twitter has taken her right of tweeting garbage by suspending her account, which had become famous for fallacious hot takes. However, stupidity cannot be a reason for censorship. Because, she stupid as she has the right to be as

wishes.

Kangana might be the latest victim of Twitter's western superiority, but she is not the first one. Dolan Trump has also faced the same. Whatever happens to their Twitter accounts, however, they are always welcome on FaceCrook, along with other bigots.

Trump, informed of Kangana's ban, said, "Kangana, is like my inner curry voice. She talks about things that no one talks about, but in a weird accent. For instance, I

brought up vote rigging in our elections which is generally considered to be a third-world, yuck, problem."

FaceCrook, meanwhile, has decided to keep Kangana's account live.

Kangana said she was still furious with Twitter and took to FaceCrook to air her grievances. "People call me the queen. How dare Twitter suspend a queen's account. As election is over, I am planning to open another twitter account where I will talk about movies until another election appears!"



Drop in Covid-19 infection rates reassuring

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

THAT 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 infection.

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 districts again.

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 end.

Dhaka continues to be choked by plastic waste

How long before the authorities take their commitments seriously?

AT 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 life as well.

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.



BLOWN' IN THE WIND
SHAMSAD MORTUZA

A breath of fresh air: the 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 universities are coming to the end of their

examinations, many of the private university students will be market-ready for employment.

One reason as to why the public universities did not pursue online 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 online platforms and teaching tools. The



'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 untested and unseen. The public system was particularly overwhelmed by the sheer number of students with which it had to deal.

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

Why is India struggling in its vaccination drive?

ASAD RAUF

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 mind-numbing. As one newspaper sardonically 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 capacities.

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

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 complacency 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 University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB), and a professor of English at Dhaka University (on leave).

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 India.

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.



POETRY

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

FAKRUL ALAM

In the song-lyric numbered 230 in *Gitanjali*, 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

this 18 February, 1926 letter to Arthur Geddes, 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 Coomaraswamy, at one time close to the poet and translator of Tagore's song-lyrics into English. Introducing his work in 1912, Coomaraswamy observed about his renderings: "The translations convey only a shadow of the original poetry; they give only the meaning,



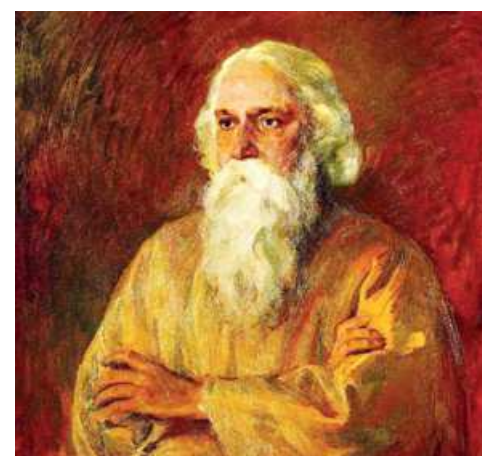
that in the songs themselves is inseparable from their music."

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

to attempt the arduous task of translation. 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 language."

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-



After listening to the singer Rattan Devi—the stage name of the singer Alice Ethel Richardson who would eventually marry Ananda Coomaraswamy and became Ratan Devi Coomaraswamy, 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 Tagore'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 *Gitanjali* 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 *Gitanjali*

that I had completed by the end of the decade, 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, vision 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 or on them.

What I would like to do by way of an ending is to present for readers one of my translations for the *Gitanjali* 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 *Gitanjali* as closely as I have been able to in every respect, including the figure they make on the page:

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 you
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 completely
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 in my life
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, 2020]

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

BSRM
Building a better nation

BUILD YOUR HOME FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS WITH THE TOUGHEST STEEL

treme
B500 DWR
the tough steel

Aktaruzzaman Flyover Chittagong

Principal Cement Brand

SHAH CEMENT

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 under-construction 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.

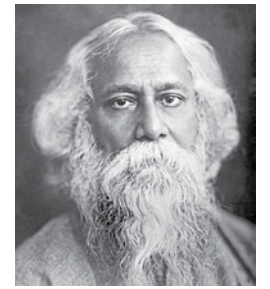
The survey also found that the highest number of containers with the larvae -- 43.82 percent -- were found in high rise buildings, 34.83 percent at under-construction buildings, 15.73 at single houses and 5.62 percent in slum areas.

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



PRAYER TIMING MAY 8

Fajr	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

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 C-section.

Her father SM Mahub Hossain filed the case with Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court in Tangail against Dr Nisfun Nahar, Dr Apu Saha, Dr Abida Sultana, anesthesiologist 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 demolition 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

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

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.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

US may consider taking a good number of them

UNB, Dhaka

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen has said the United States may consider accepting a good number of forcibly-displaced 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.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

evaly

SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN MAY SEHRI IFTAR			
25	8	6:34	
26	9	3:50	6:35
27	10	3:50	6:35

evaly | BELIEVE IN YOU

Delivered 50 lac+ products amid the lockdown!

No one should stop chasing their beliefs. Because your belief will unlock your limitless potential. And we shall never let you down.

evaly | BELIEVE IN YOU