



## Schools not opening soon

Reopening might be late as infections surge, say edn ministry officials

MAHBUBUR RAHMAN KHAN

The government has extended the closure of educational institutions till June 12, saying the reopening is subject to the drop in Covid infection rate below 5 percent and inoculation of university students.

Education ministry officials said the reopening might be delayed further, considering the rise in virus infection rate in recent weeks and uncertainty over vaccination due to a shortage of jabs.

At present, educational institutions are offering online classes and the government is broadcasting educational programmes on state-run television channels.

Experts said the government is not eager to reopen the educational institutions though it recently allowed resumption of different types of business activities.

They fear that the long closure will increase the number of dropouts as well as child marriage. Besides, it is taking a toll

Plan to start reopening educational institutions on June 13

Reopening only after virus infection rate drops below 5%

Government to vaccinate 1.3 lakh university students

on many children in rural areas, most of whom are deprived of online classes.

At a joint press conference yesterday, Education Minister Dipu Moni and State Minister for Primary and Mass Education Zakir Hossen talked about the reopening of educational institutions that have remained closed since March last year amid the pandemic.

Dipu Moni said they have been relying on the suggestions of the National Technical

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

SOUTH AFRICA

## Mobs loot 50 shops of Bangladeshis

RASHIDUL HASAN and JAMIL MAHMUD

A mob looted and vandalised around 50 shops and malls owned by Bangladeshis in Brandfort of Free State province in South Africa on Tuesday.

The attack comes after businesses of foreign nationals were vandalised and looted over a five-day period since May 16 in Bloemfontein of the same province. The mobs had been protesting poor service delivery by the local government.

Around 10,000 Bangladeshis in Bloemfontein are living in fear after around 400 shops of Bangladeshis were vandalised, torched, and looted by the mobs there.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



A woman helps a man out of his flooded shack while carrying a few of her belongings as high tide flowing inland wash away properties on the low lying areas of Chattogram due to cyclone Yaas. The photo was taken at Anandabazar yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

## No reason to panic over black fungus

Health officials warn people to misconceptions

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health officials yesterday said black fungus infection is not rare and it has treatment, but there is widespread misconception about it.

Black fungus has been in the environment since ancient times and there is no reason to panic about it.

"The way the media portrayed black fungus is not fully correct. This fungal infection has always been a threat to those with a compromised immune systems. It's normal. People should not panic over it," Prof ABM Khurshid Alam, director general of the health directorate, told The Daily Star yesterday.

The comments come at a time when many cases of black fungus, known among doctors as mucormycosis, are being detected in people who are recovering or have recovered from Covid-19.

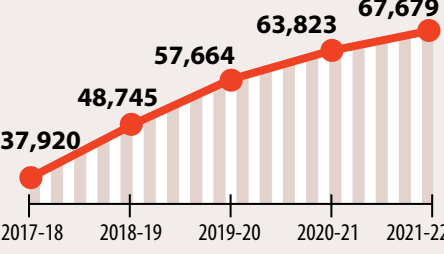
The health DG also said the detection of black fungus infection in two patients at Birdem Hospital was not properly proven yet.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

## Interest burden 6pc heavier in next fiscal

GOVT'S INTEREST BURDEN GETTING HEAVIER EVERY YEAR (in Tk cr)

SOURCE: FINANCE MINISTRY \*PROPOSED



REJAUJ KARIM BYRON

The government's interest burden is set to get heavier in the incoming fiscal year, thanks to its inability to better choose from its financing options.

In the proposed budget for fiscal 2021-22, Tk 67,679 crore has been set aside for debt servicing purpose, up 6 percent year-on-year, according to finance ministry officials.

And as much as 92 percent of the sum would go towards paying interest on debt taken on from domestic sources: national savings certificates and local banks.

As of September last year, the total stock of domestic loans stood at Tk 540,935 crore -- and 58 percent of the sum is attributed to the high interest-bearing national savings certificates.

The government is offering about 11.3 percent interest on an average on

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



Puzzled migrant workers on the footpath outside Sonargaon hotel in the capital as Saudi Arabian Airlines officials said they will no longer book hotels in Saudi Arabia for the workers who are required to stay quarantine in hotels for seven days on reaching the gulf country.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

WORKERS BOUND FOR KSA

## Airlines make it harder for them

RASHIDUL HASAN and JAMIL MAHMUD

Bangladeshi migrants trying to go to Saudi Arabia have found themselves in more trouble as airlines are now saying that hotel bookings for the seven-day on-arrival institutional quarantine must be done by passengers.

Officials of Saudi Arabian Airlines yesterday said they can no longer help migrant workers with hotel bookings.

Biman Bangladesh Airlines, which is scheduled to resume flights to the Middle Eastern country on Saturday after nine days of suspension, too said passengers would have to book hotels on their own.

According to the latest travel

advisory issued by the Saudi civil aviation authority, "The reservation for the institutional quarantine shall be done through the airlines."

It also says airlines should contact the institutional quarantine establishments that are listed by the Saudi ministry of tourism and they shall inform the General Authority of Civil Aviation and the tourism ministry about the contacted quarantine institutions.

Citing the instruction, migrant workers alleged that the airlines were avoiding their due responsibilities.

Many migrant workers yesterday helplessly ran from desk to desk at the Dhaka airport looking for help regarding hotel reservations. They also

gathered in front of the Saudia airlines office in the capital's Karwan Bazar. They, however, found no designated person to talk to.

Talking to this correspondent, several workers said the airlines were avoiding their responsibilities by asking passengers to complete the hotel booking procedure.

According to several former top leaders of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies, more than 33,000 Saudi-bound expatriate workers are waiting to go to Saudi Arabia in the next one month after completing their visa procedures and with tickets in their hands.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

## 2 killed as Yaas batters India

Villages in West Bengal, Odisha inundated; thousands of houses damaged

AGENCIES

Storm surges inundated dozens of villages in eastern India yesterday after a powerful cyclone moved inland from the Bay of Bengal, damaging thousands of mud homes in two coastal states and killing at least two people, officials said.

Barely a week after Cyclone Tauktae claimed at least 155 lives in western India, Cyclone Yaas has forced the evacuation of more than 1.5 million people in the eastern states of West Bengal and Odisha.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

## 4 children drown in storm surges

27 upazilas affected by Yaas; cyclone makes landfall in Odisha-West Bengal

STAR REPORT

Four children drowned in tidal water and a rickshaw-puller was crushed under a tree in Barishal division, while low-lying regions in the country were inundated after cyclone Yaas made landfall yesterday noon on the Odisha-West Bengal coast in India.

In a briefing yesterday, the state minister for disaster management and relief said 27 upazilas in nine districts were affected by the cyclone.

The met office said Yaas weakened to a severe cyclone from a very severe cyclone and was gradually losing its strength. Yet, all the passenger vessels and fishing trawlers were asked to stay close to the shore until further notice as sea remain very choppy.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

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প্রিমিয়াম  
এয়ার ফ্রেশনার  
সৌরভময় এক মনোরম  
পরিবেশের জন্য

শ্রেষ্ঠ করার সাথে সাথেই সৌরভ ছড়িয়ে পড়ে আর চারপাশ জরিয়ে তোলে দারুণ এক আবেশে।

এটি ড্রাই ফর্নুলায় তৈরি হয় বলে বালিশ, কার্পেট, চাদর, পর্দা, ঘর সাজানোর জিনিসপত্র এবং ওয়্যারড্রোবসহ বিভিন্ন জায়গায় সঠিকভাবে ব্যবহার করা যায়।





**BANGLADESH UPDATE**



**1,497**  
New cases in 24hrs



**7,93,693**  
Total cases



**12,458**  
Deaths



**7,33,866**  
Recoveries



**3,507,038**  
Deaths



**168,888,066**  
Total cases

## BHASAN CHAR AND YAAS No injury, no damage

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA from Bhasan Char

Even after fears of widespread inundation and extensive damage, Bhasan Char housing and cyclone shelters stood up well against cyclone Yaas, which made its landfall yesterday evening.

While the small island off Bangladesh's coast with the Bay of Bengal was not in the cyclone's direct path, residents did experience strong winds and tidal surges about two feet higher than normal.

Officials said this experience provided them with a good opportunity to plan for extreme events in the future and contribute to the overall preparedness of the Rohingya refugees.

Officials at Bhasan Char reported that there hasn't been a single incident of damage or injury. "This is the first cyclone in the island after Rohingyas were relocated here. So, it is also a first for the Rohingyas. But we had prepared [for such natural disasters] to the best of our capabilities."

Commodore Rashed Sattar, project director of Ashrayan-3 project, popularly known as the Bhasan Char project, told The Daily Star that this cyclone will help them prepare better for future natural disasters.

"The refugees and we are now confident after already facing one cyclone."

Syed Hossain, a refugee on the island, said, "We were fearing the outcome of natural disasters. But now, there is no fear."

Due to cyclone Yaas, heavy rainfall and winds started from Wednesday night in the island. Life at the Rohingya shelters were normal as people were roaming on the island and fishing at the canals.

"The embankment at Bhasan char is nine feet higher than the water level. So, not a single drop of water entered the island," Commodore Rashed said, adding that there was no casualty, no accident and no damage.

He said even if the cyclone was closer to the island while passing, Bhasan char would not be affected. "In any case, if water entered the island, there are a number of natural canals, lakes, and 120 ponds to accommodate the water. To discharge the water, there are 17 switch gates and 21 water pumps."

"During high tide, water came close to the embankment but that was for only two hours, after which the water started receding."

The Bangladesh government spent around Tk 3,100 crore in developing the island, building infrastructures and putting in place a protection system against extreme climate events under the project delegated to Bangladesh Navy.

About two hours by boat from Noakhali district town, Bhasan Char is slightly south west of Sandwip in the Bay of Bengal, close to the mouth of the Meghna river.

Since the beginning of the project, the UN and other international aid agencies have been reluctant to give a thumbs up to the project, citing risks of tidal surges and cyclones. Project officials said the embankment had been constructed after studying history and data of the last 176 years.

Each shelter was constructed 14 meter above ground-level and can withstand winds flowing 260 km/hrs.

Contacted, International Relations Professor Imtiaz Ahmed said Bangladesh is globally known for tackling cyclones and natural disasters and so when the government has taken up the project, they thought it out well before.

"There were several assessments from the government side. And this cyclone management in the Bhasan Char has now proved that the government took the right decision. Now, the UN and other organisations should pressurise Myanmar to take Rohingyas back and support the government."

## UN to honour 8 fallen Bangladeshi peacekeepers

UNB, Dhaka

The UN will honour eight fallen peacekeepers from Bangladesh to mark the International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers today.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres said their service and sacrifices will never be forgotten, according to a press release from the UN Information Centre in Dhaka.

Guterres will preside over a ceremony at which the Dag Hammarskjöld Medal will be awarded posthumously to 129 military, police and civilian peacekeepers, including the eight from Bangladesh. They lost their lives serving under the UN flag last year and in the first month of this year, the release said.

The fallen Bangladeshi peacekeepers are Abdul Md Halim who served with MINUSMA, Lt Col Md Abdulla Al Mamun and Sgt Mohammad Ibrahim, who served with United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic, Sgt Md Mobarak Hussain, Lt Col Md Saiful ISLAM, Md Saiful Imam Bhuiyan and Sgt Md Ziaur Rahman who were deployed with the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo; and Washerman Nurul AMIN of the United Nations Mission in South Sudan.

Bangladesh is the largest contributor of uniformed personnel to UN Peacekeeping.



An unusually high tide, caused by cyclone Yaas, flows inland breaching an embankment that protected neighbourhoods in Khalgora area of Rangabali, Patuakhali. Top right, residents of a fishing village in Anandapara, Chattogram, look at the ruins of their fishing equipment after the afternoon tide flooded the area. Bottom right, villagers try to keep the water out as the Shakbaria river swells in Kacharibari area of Koyra, Khulna.



PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN/ RAJIB RAIHAN/ DIPANKAR ROY

## 4 children drown in storm surges

FROM PAGE 1

In Barguna's Betagi upazila, a three-year-old boy drowned after falling from his mother's lap when they were going to a cyclone centre.

The victim, Imamul Hasan, was son of Swapan Mia of Sarishamuri village under Betagi upazila.

The incident took place around 11:00am yesterday at South Kalikabari area, said Suhrid Salehin, Betagi's upazila nirbahi officer (UNO).

In Bhola, a rickshaw-puller named Abu Taher (55) died on Tuesday night when a tree fell on him in Char Sakina village under Lalmojan upazila.

At least 30 chars out of 40 in Bhola were flooded and some areas were submerged in five to six feet of water, said Abdur Rashid, deputy director of the district's Cyclone Preparedness Program (CPP).

In the district's remote Monpura upazila, at least 5,000 people were evacuated and brought to a shelter, said Monpura Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Mohammad Shamim Mia.

The road along Hazirhat to north and south Sakuchia, adjacent to the Monpura embankment, has been damaged, the UNO said.

Another remote coastal island, Char Kukrimukri, was also inundated. Around 1,500 people were taken to cyclone centres in Dhalchar union of Charfashion upazila as the union went under six to seven feet of tidal

water, said Abdus Salam, chairman of the union parishad.

Besides, cracks developed on a 300-metre embankment at the old Hijla point, said Prashanta Kumar Roy, Barishal district's relief and rehabilitation officer.

Different points on Kazir Char road of Barishal's Muladi upazila were completely destroyed while different portions of the embankment of Nalua union in Bakerganj upazila were also damaged, said Prashanta.

Besides, areas of Palashpur, Chakarua, Sagardi, Gernadi, Muladi, Hizla and Mehendiganj were also flooded, he said.

Water level of different rivers in Barishal increased by 10 to 137 centimetres above the danger level yesterday during the tidal surge, according to a Water Development Board (WDB) official.

Meanwhile, at least 175 villages were flooded in Patuakhali due to the tidal surge. Several hundred houses and many arable lands were inundated.

Cracks developed at different points of the 41-kilometre embankment, according to a WDB official.

Over 2,600 ponds and 600 fish enclosures were submerged causing a loss of around Tk 50 crore, said officials of the fisheries department.

In Pirojpur, some fifty villages

located alongside different rivers got flooded, causing inundation of many houses, farmlands and fish enclosures.

Road communications remained suspended for over four hours at the Pirojpur-Hulerhat road as a portion of the road had been submerged.

In Satkhira, over a thousand families were marooned after cracks developed at 49 points of WDB's embankment. Communication in many areas remained suspended and many shrimp enclosures were washed away.

In Khulna, around 7,500 people of four villages in Koyra upazila suffered from waterlogging as tidal water entered the villages following breaches of portions of the embankment.

Over a hundred houses collapsed and around 500 shrimp enclosures were washed away, according to local administration and locals.

In Cox's Bazar, the sea beach was asked to hoist cautionary signal number three as the sea water may rise up to six feet than normal time. Besides, a portion of the jetty's pontoon in Saint Martin's Island was broken.

In Pabna and Sirajganj, water level increased in the Jamuna river, which may flood low-lying areas.

[Our correspondents from respective districts contributed to the story]

## Schools not opening soon

FROM PAGE 1

Advisory Committee on Covid-19, which has recommended reopening the educational institutions once the infection rate drops below 5 percent.

Yesterday, the infection rate was 9.11 percent.

At the virtual briefing, the minister said, "We want to reopen schools as early as possible. The [Covid] situation has improved but the risk of infection has gone up due to increased public movement."

"A student can be infected at school or on way to school and spread it to the elderly family members... We have to keep this in mind."

If the situation improves, the government will reopen educational institutions on June 13, she said.

"Preparations have been made to ensure hygiene at schools and colleges. A good number of teachers and staffers have already been vaccinated. But the reopening of universities depends on vaccination of students."

She said the government has a plan to inoculate 1.3 lakh university students. They have to take two shots of Covid vaccine each, and this will take some time.

### REOPENING PLANS

The education ministry plans to hold in-person classes for the SSC and HSC examinees of 2021 and 2022 six days a week, said Dipu Moni.

The syllabuses of SSC and HSC have been shortened. The SSC students will have to attend classes for 60 days and the HSC students for 84 days.

"After that, there will be a two-week gap. And then the examinations will be held."

Students of class six to nine will have to go to school once a week. The number of classes will be increased in keeping with the improvement in Covid situation, said the minister.

Zakir Hossen said they plan to reopen schools on June 13.

Students of class five will attend classes six days a week whereas students of class one to four will go to school once a week, he added.

**AGGRIEVED STUDENTS**  
Educational activities of around four crore students have been affected by the Covid-induced closure since March 17 last year. It led to cancellation of exams and left the academic calendars in disarray. School students were promoted to the next grade this year without any examinations.

The government has been broadcasting educational programmes on state-run TV channels for primary and secondary school students. Many schools, colleges and universities have been offering online classes. But many students, especially those in rural areas, were left out because of the digital divide.

The long closure has also made students restless.

Yesterday, students under the banner of "General Students of Dhaka University" at a press conference at the TSC urged the government to reopen the university immediately.

In Rajshahi, students held

demonstrations in the city's Shahab Bazar area, demanding immediate reopening of all educational institutions.

Many guardians have resented paying full tuition fees for online classes.

"My daughter who is in class one has no interest in online classes, yet I've been paying full tuition fees for her," said Md Akramuzzaman, a banker, in the capital.

**WHAT EXPERTS SAY**  
Rasheda K Choudhury, executive director of the Campaign for Popular Education, said the latest announcement will give some comfort to the guardians and students who have become impatient.

"The government has to find a solution to ease the growing restlessness."

"The digital divide has resulted in learning loss as many students in rural areas are deprived of education... It will be a bigger challenge for the government to address."

Besides, many children had to leave school and engage in hazardous work following job loss of their parents due to the pandemic, she observed.

The long closure has resulted in a rise in the number of dropouts and also child marriage, Rasheda pointed out.

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) data shows that the infection rate dropped below 5 percent between January 09 and March 08. But it started rising since

the second week of March.

Contacted, Be-Nazir Ahmed, former director (disease control) at the DGHS, said, the infection rate varies from place to place.

"If you go through the data, you will see the infection rate in some areas is over 5 percent while it's 1 or 2 percent in some other places. The government could reopen schools in the areas with low infection rate by taking proper health safety measures."

"This will create a level playing field for the children in both villages and towns."

Talking to this newspaper, DGHS Director General Abul Bashir Mohammad Khurshid Alam said the government in December last year made a list of university students for vaccination.

"But the initiative stumbled after the Serum Institute of India halted the supply of vaccine doses."

He said they will launch a vaccination programme for university students after getting Chinese vaccines. The doses will be administered to the students aged 20 and above.

The government moved to buy vaccines from China and Russia after India halted vaccine export in March. India's Serum delivered 7 million of the 30 million shots that Bangladesh bought from it.

Bangladesh will buy 1.5 crore Sinopharm vaccine doses from China, and the first consignment is likely to arrive next month.

## Daily new cases, deaths drop slightly

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of new Covid cases and deaths from the deadly virus slightly dropped yesterday.

Seventeen more people died from Covid-19 in 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday, said a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

In the previous day, the death toll was 40.

With yesterday's deaths, the total number of deaths reached 12,458 and death rate was 1.57 percent.

Around 1,497 new positive cases were recorded in the meantime, bringing the total number of people infected to 7,93,693, added the release.

On the previous day, 1,675 people tested positive for the viral infection -- highest since May 7, when 1,682 cases were confirmed.

Yesterday, the positivity rate was 9.11 percent, while the total positivity rate was 13.52 percent.

Around 16,434 samples were tested across the country in those 24 hours.

At least 1,056 Covid-19 patients recovered during the period.

The total number of recoveries rose to 7,33,866 and the recovery rate stood at 92.46 percent.

Among the 17 deceased, 10 were men and seven women. One of them was aged between 31 and 40, one between 41 and 50, four were within 51-60 and 11 were above 60 years, added the DGHS release.

## 2 killed as Yaas

FROM PAGE 1

Cyclone Yaas was packing gusts of up to 140 kph (87 mph) as it made landfall around 0900 HRS IST (Indian Standard Time), or 0330 GMT, the Indian Meteorological Department said.

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee said that the seaside town of Digha had been "swamped" by waves up to four metres (13 feet) high.

She said two people had been killed, including one dragged into the sea by the waves in Digha and another crushed when his house collapsed.

"I have never seen such a storm ever in my life," said Purnendu Jana, a Digha resident. "The water may cross the main road for the first time."

Local hotel owner Shiuli Das said: "Many of us are here, all of us are really scared."

Nearly 20,000 mud houses and temporary shelters were either destroyed or damaged and more than a dozen river islands were flooded with a number of embankments breached, Mamata said.

The busiest regional airport, in the city of Kolkata, had been shut until Wednesday evening.

In Odisha there was also extensive damage with hundreds of trees uprooted although there was minimal damage to power infrastructure, relief official Pradeep Kumar Jena said.

The cyclone was expected to weaken gradually into a deep depression around midnight. The wind speed at the centre of the cyclone at 9:00 PM was 75 to 85 km per hour with gusts of 95 km per hour.

Although the weakened considerably, the cyclone is predicted to bring heavy rains and authorities have advised fishermen not to venture out to sea. Jharkhand, which lays on the way of the storm, was also put on high alert. Officials yesterday began to evacuate people from low-lying areas in vulnerable districts like East and West Singhbhum.

Almost 5,000 disaster workers were deployed in India with tree and wire cutters, emergency communications, inflatable boats and medical aid, the National Disaster Response Force said.

Officials fear the emergency will further complicate efforts to halt a surge in coronavirus cases that has now killed 310,000 people.

Masks were distributed in emergency shelters but West Bengal state minister Bankim Chandra Hazra told AFP that maintaining social distancing would be "a big challenge".

"This cyclone spells double trouble for millions of people in India as there is no respite from Covid-19," said Udaya Regmi from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

Some vaccination centres in threatened districts, as well as Kolkata, suspended operations and a special effort had been launched to ensure the supply of oxygen and medicines to hospitals, officials said.

## Airlines make it harder for them

FROM PAGE 1

"Due to complexities in hotel booking, many migrant workers might fail to go to Saudi Arabia in time. In that case, visas of many migrant workers might expire," Fakhrul Islam, former finance secretary, Baira and president of Recruiting Agency Welfare Organization of Bangladesh, told The Daily Star.

Tipu Sultan, president, Recruiting Agency Oikya Parishad, said the present situation required that the expatriates' welfare ministry come forward and help the remittance-earning workers with the hotel bookings.

Several thousand Saudi-bound Bangladeshi migrant workers have been facing untold sufferings due to the new travel advisory of Saudi Arabia that requires medical insurance against Covid-19 infections and hotel reservations for seven days of institutional quarantine.

The Saudi authorities said violators shall be deported and banned from entering the Middle East country indefinitely.

After the issuance of the fresh travel advisory that came into effect on May 20, the Saudi Arabian Airlines assisted the Saudi-bound workers in booking hotels until May 24.

On May 25, the airlines authorities hung a notice at different points of their office premises, informing that Saudi-bound migrant workers will have to complete the hotel booking process on their own using specific apps.

In its notice, Saudia asked all Saudi-bound Bangladeshi workers to book hotels for quarantine a minimum of 72 hours before their flight's departure through the Saudia Holidays website <https://holidaysbysaudia.com>.

For hotel booking confirmation, Saudi-bound passengers were also asked

to contact their respective employer/Kaphil/company/travel agency, or visit the website.

"Without booking through Saudia Holidays website, no hotel confirmation will be accepted," the notice also reads.

According to the notice, there is no need for quarantine package for non-residents and first-time visitors who have completed 14 days since receiving all doses of vaccination. They must provide a certificate or proof in accordance with the requirements set by the ministry of health.

Residence/Iqama holders who completed their vaccinations in the KSA will also not need quarantine packages, added the directives.

In an interview with The Daily Star on Tuesday, Country Manager of Saudia in Bangladesh, Tarik A Alowaidi, however, assured that if any Bangladeshi passenger misses flight or

needs to change flight date on different grounds, Saudia will issue fresh ticket and will accommodate them in other flights without any charge.

Talking to The Daily Star, a senior official of Saudia yesterday said they had provided service temporarily to the Bangladeshi workers regarding hotel booking as it was new to the passengers.

"But we cannot provide this service for an indefinite period as we lack necessary number of staffers to do this. Besides, it is also not our job," he said, wishing anonymity.

Talking to this correspondent in front of the Saudia's office, Mahbub Alam, a Saudi-bound worker, said he was at a loss since the airlines was no longer providing him with the service he needed. "I have bought my return ticket from a travel agent in Saudi Arabia. I find it hard now to contact the travel agent for completing my hotel

booking," he said.

Besides, he said, despite repeated attempts, he failed to contact his Kaphil/employing company.

"Under this situation, I just feel helpless," he also said.

Another Saudi-bound worker said he was not educated enough and did not have the know-how for hotel booking.

Saudi-bound expatriate workers need to spend around Tk 65,000 to Tk 70,000 for staying at the hotel for quarantine.

Following the fresh travel advisory, Biman Bangladesh Airlines on May 20 suspended all its flights to Saudi Arabia for nine days until May 29, saying they need time to make arrangements to comply with the fresh travel advisory.

Saudi Arabia is the largest expatriate income market for Bangladesh. At least 26 lakh expatriates are working in different sectors in that country.



## Gas supply to be halted in parts of capital today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Gas supply will remain halted in several areas of the capital for up to six hours today, as the gas distribution company is undertaking pipeline relocation work.

In a statement, Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company said that supply will remain suspended from 10am to 4pm at Tejkunipara, Tejgaon Girls' School, Karwan Bazar, Christian Para, Sonargaon Hotel and Kathal Bagan, Dilu Road, Paribagh, eastern side of Sonargaon road and western side of Kataban road areas.

According to Titas, supply will be disrupted to facilitate relocation of a gas pipeline from Tejgaon Rail Crossing to Sonargaon Hotel.

Adjacent areas of the affected locations may also experience low pressure in supply for the same reason, it further said.

"Pipeline relocation is part of a route alignment of utilities under the Dhaka Elevated Expressway Project," the company added.

Authorities concerned have expressed their regret over the gas supply disruption, the statement added.



PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

Contrary to many parts of the country that saw cloudy and stormy weather due to cyclone Yaas yesterday, Sylhet saw temperatures in the high 30 degrees as the sun beat down on the city. A man is seen pouring water from a deep tubewell site in Shahi Eidgah area to find some respite from the scorching heat.

## BODY FOUND IN MOSQUE SEPTIC TANK

# Extramarital affair led to killing: Rab

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The murder of readymade garment worker Azharul Islam, whose dismembered body was recovered from septic tank of a mosque in the capital's Dakshinkhan on Tuesday, was preplanned.

His wife Asma Akter conspired the murder with the Dakshinkhan Sardar Para Mosque Imam Abdur Rahman, Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) said yesterday.

Rab arrested Abdur on Tuesday morning, and collecting information from him, recovered the body of Azharul (30) from the tank.

Later, Rab have also arrested Asma on charge of the murder. While addressing reporters, Commander Khandaker Al Moin, legal and media wing director of Rab, said the murder took place due to extramarital affair between the imam and victim's wife.

Rab said in January year, Abdur used to visit the victim's home and teach Arabic to Azharul and his son.

At one point, Abdur engaged into a relationship with Asma. Azharul came to know about their relationship in March, and asked the Imam for not to come to his home anymore, said the Rab official.

But the relationship continued between them, and in late March, Asma and Abdur plotted to kill Azharul, said Moin.

At first, the plan was to kill Azharul by hiring someone, but Asma later advised the imam to kill Azharul in his room, he said.

Abdur even bought a SIM card and gave it secretly to Asma so that they can discuss about their murder plan. Their plan was to kill Azharul seven days before Ramadan but the plan was foiled as the victim fell sick and went to village home in Tangail, said the Rab official.

Finally on May 18, as per the plan, Asma sent his husband Azharul

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## MITU MURDER

# PBI writes to UN agency office about ex-employee

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Ctg

Investigators of Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) have now sent an official letter to local offices of a United Nations agency, seeking information about a former employee, in connection with the gruesome murder of Mahmuda Khanam Mitu, wife of former Superintendent of Police (SP) Babul Akter.

Inspector Sontosh Kumar Chakma PBI's Chattogram metro unit, and the investigation officer (IO) of the case, sent the letter to the agency's Cox's Bazar sub-office and office in Dhaka on Tuesday, seeking information about a woman who used to work for it in 2013.

Her name came to light after Mitu's father Mosharrif Hossain on May 12 filed the murder case with Panchlaish Police Station against former SP Babul and seven others, over Mahmuda Khanam Mitu's murder in 2016.

In the case statement, Mosharrif alleged that Babul was involved in extramarital affairs with the woman while he was in

Cox's Bazar as an Additional SP there. However, the woman's name is not mentioned as accused in the case.

Mosharrif alleged that Mitu had been mentally and physically tortured by Babul before killing, after she had come to learn of the extramarital affair.

Asked about the letter, Sontosh Kumar told The Daily Star, "For the sake of investigation of Mitu murder case, we have sent a letter to the UN agency's offices seeking some information about her."

However, he refused to disclose further information in this regard.

According to PBI sources, PBI asked the international organisation to provide the woman's full address, phone number, passport number and a copy of passport, her former address in Cox's Bazar, and her movement registers in Cox's Bazar.

Babul got two books -- "Taliban" written by Ahmed Rashid and "Best Kept Secret" by Jeffery Archer -- as gifts from the woman in 2013, and he reportedly wrote about his

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## POLICE ATTACK ON DEMONSTRATION

# Injured RMG worker's family seeks adequate compensation

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The family of Kanchan Miah, a ready-made garments worker who was critically wounded by the police while protesting for an extension on Eid holidays, demonstrated for compensation at the Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

Kanchan Miah, worked at a factory owned by Ha-meem group. He was peppered with hundreds of rubber bullets by police on May 10 at Tongi, leaving him disabled for the near future.

This incident had happened when the workers of Ha-Meem Group's Creative Collections Ltd and That's It Garments Ltd were demonstrating near their factories in Gazipur, demanding that they get their due Eid holidays.

Workers' rights leaders informed that because of the close range of the shots, Kanchan's intestines were permanently damaged, and over a hundred centimetres of his intestine had to be dissected out. Kanchan is currently expelling excretion through a colostomy bag.

The exact number of bullets he was hit with could not be ascertained because they go into the hundreds, said Taslima Akhter, labour leader of Bangladesh Garments Sromik Samhati.

"I am not asking for alms. I am asking for compensation

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

## COVID-19 SURGE IN CHAPAINAWABGANJ

# Patients rush to Rajshahi as district hospitals struggling

ANWAR ALI, Rajshahi

With district-level hospitals unable to provide adequate facilities, Covid-19 patients have been rushing into Rajshahi Medical College Hospital (RMCH) in the divisional headquarters.

The situation turned worse since increase in the infection rates in the frontier district of Chapainawabganj, where the district administration imposed a seven-day lockdown since Tuesday.

"We are struggling to accommodate patients," RMCH director Brig Gen Shamim Yazdani told The Daily Star yesterday.

He said they could accommodate 30 new patients yesterday -- 15 of them from Chapainawabganj -- as some 13 patients died in last 48 hours.

RMCH, that has a capacity of taking in 150 Covid-19 patients, was treating 162 patients yesterday.

Of the patients, 86 were from Chapainawabganj alone as the district started seeing a surge in infections two weeks after Eid.

Directorate General of Health Services could arrange only 41 ICU beds in four hospitals in two districts of Rajshahi and Bogura for Covid-19 patients, among eight districts in Rajshahi division.

The six other districts -- Joypurhat, Pabna, Sirajganj, Chapainawabganj,

Naogaon and Natore -- have no ICU support, according to information by the divisional health directorate.

The RMCH director said they were lobbying hard for five more ICU ventilators for the last year.

"Serious patients don't go to the hospitals in the district," Dr Zahid Nazrul Chowdhury, Civil Surgeon of Chapainawabganj, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"Those patients directly go to Rajshahi," he said, adding that they referred only four patients since coronavirus outbreak in the country in March last year.

Chapainawabganj hospitals have the capacity to provide 20 litres Oxygen per minute, but patients requiring ventilators need to visit Rajshahi, he said.

The district health chief said they have been pleading with the government for providing ICU support since the beginning of the pandemic, but those facilities were yet to reach them.

The division's infection detection rate was recorded at 28 percent on Tuesday, when samples of 988 persons were tested and 275 came out positive.

But in Chapainawabganj alone, 59 percent of samples tested from 270 people were positive; the district's infection detection rate was 55 percent the day before.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

# Where are they now?

Tale of three boys from the iconic "Muktijuddhe Tin Kishore" photo

MD AMINUL ISLAM, Mymensingh

Three young boys in their teen years, one standing, ready to throw a grenade, two others kneeling down, their rifles pointed afar; the photograph drips with their grit and intent, and it has become a symbol of the Liberation War. The photo, "Muktijuddhe Tin Kishore", is an ubiquitous presence in newspapers and invitation cards marking Victory Day and Independence Day events. It even hangs on the walls of the liberation war affairs ministry.

The three boys from the photo -- Abdul Khaleque, the one with the grenade; Abdul Mazid (middle), and Mujibur Rahman -- are all from Tangail's Musuria village, under Delduar upazila. Of them, Khaleque and Mazid are still alive, while Mujibur passed away in 2016.

The photo was shot by Naib Uddin Ahmed, one of the most important documenters of the Liberation War of the Tangail-Mymensingh region.

Sadly, none of the three subjects of the photograph went on to live very comfortable lives, with two of them being ravaged by financial insecurity.

Khaleque now lives on a piece of land leased by a company at Foy's Lake area in Chattogram. Out



The photo of Mujibur, Mazid, and Khaleque is one of the most recognisable images of the 1971 war.

of work, he has to depend on the freedom fighters' monthly allowance to manage his family of five. Due to extreme poverty, Khaleque had to leave Kushtia Polytechnic Institute in 1974, in only his third semester.

Mujibur Rahman used to pull rickshaws and struggled throughout his life to run his family of five, until succumbing to cancer in 2016, in an almost untreated state, lamented Khaleque.

Mazid perhaps fared a little well. He went on to

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## Brood fish release sample eggs in Halda river

Full spawning expected today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Brood fish in Halda River have released sample eggs starting Tuesday night. Halda is the sole natural spawning ground for carp-like fish in South Asia, and the fish have laid eggs in various points of the river.

Egg collectors got 200-500 grammes of eggs on average since Tuesday night at Noyahat area of Gourdura union.

Hathazari upazila administration beefed up their surveillance to prevent netting of mother fish in Halda. Kamal Soudagor from Noyahat area, a seasoned egg collector told The Daily Star that they started coming across the eggs since Tuesday night and are hoping to see full spawning today.

Professor Manzoorul Kibria, an eminent Halda researcher told The Daily Star that these sample eggs are laid by brood fish in preparation for a full spawning.

He reaffirmed that a full spawning is expected by today.

Ruhul Amin, upazila nirbahi officer of Hathazari upazila told The Daily Star they increased surveillance as poachers become active in this time to catch mother fish.



Although Chapainawabganj is in lockdown in light of sharply rising Covid-19 cases, agricultural products like paddy and mangoes have to be transported to other parts of the country. Rajshahi district administration has put up a check-post on the entry-point from the neighbour district to ensure health guidelines. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

## Rajshahi students attend symbolic 'class' on street

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

A group of students demonstrated yesterday by holding a symbolic class on the street in the city's Shaheb Bazar area, demanding immediate reopening of all educational institutions.

During the demonstration, they placed a six-point demand including vaccination of all teachers, students, and officials of the educational institutions.

The students, under the banner of General Students' Committee, held the hour-long demonstration since 11:30am.

Ishtiaq Ahmed, the committee's convener, chaired the demonstration attended by over 50 students from different schools, colleges, and universities in the city.

They also demanded that authorities of the respective campuses be given their own authority to deal with the Covid-19 situation, its containment, treatment and other factors.

They demanded that entry tests for universities be held immediately, resumption of all suspended examinations, and opportunity for infected students to appear for their supplementary exams later.

A rally -- that was held simultaneously with the demonstration -- was attended by local student leaders.



Over 50 students joined a token "class" on the streets of Shaheb Bazar area in the city, demanding resumption of classes and exams and holding of admission tests.

PHOTO: ANWAR ALI

## Biker killed in road crash at Hatijheel

Another dies in Joypurhat

STAR REPORT

A motorcyclist died after his bike collided with another bike in Dhaka's Hatijheel area yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Anwar Hossain (35), a staffer of a garment factory.

Anwar was passing the New DIT Road near Hatijheel around 8am. Suddenly, another motorcycle coming from the opposite direction collided with his bike. The collision left Anwar with a head injury, said Sub-inspector Enamul Haque of Hatijheel Police Station.

Pedestrians took him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where doctors declared him dead, he said.

Another motorcyclist, who sustained minor injuries, fled immediately with his bike.

The SI said they came to know deceased's name from an office ID card recovered from the body. Police are trying to learn more details, he said.

The body was sent to hospital morgue for autopsy.

In Joypurhat, a man was killed and another injured as a shallow engine-run three-wheeler overturned in Akkelpur upazila on Tuesday night, reports our Dinajpur correspondent.

The deceased -- identified as Rezaul Islam (42) -- was from Sahapur village in Sadar upazila.

The injured -- Shajahan Ali (40), driver of the vehicle -- was taken to Joypurhat Modern Hospital.



## HEALTH GUIDELINE IN PUBLIC TRANSPORTS

## Need law enforcers' support to ensure it

Says Moshir Rahman Ranga

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Rangpur

Without support of law enforcers, it is not possible for the transportation sector to maintain health guidelines in public transports, said Moshir Rahman Ranga, president of Bangladesh Transport Owner Association.

He made these remarks at a views-exchange session with journalists at Rangpur city's transport owners association office yesterday.

"We are trying our best to maintain the health guidelines, but in most cases, it's not possible for us alone," he said.

He also urged the government to deploy more law enforcement members on the road, along with officials of Bangladesh Road Transport Authority (BRTA), to help enforce the guidelines.

Most people do not want to follow health guidelines on public transports, he said, adding that it's not always possible for transport workers to make passengers adhere to the rules. Transport owners have given out strict instructions to workers to follow the guidelines, Ranga said.

Meanwhile, he also told journalists the public transport sector in the country has suffered an irreparable loss during the pandemic. In addition, the government is also being deprived of getting revenue from the sector.

"In such a circumstance, we urge the government to waive taxes for the sector," Ranga said.

Transport owners have also demanded Tk 25,000 crore incentive support from the government for the sector. Ranga reiterated the demand and urged the government to consider the proposal.

## SHAHINUDDIN MURDER

## MA Awal denied bail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday sent former Laxmipur lawmaker MA Awal and his alleged goon Zahirul Islam Babu to jail after rejecting their bail petitions in the trader Shahinuddin murder case.

Meanwhile, another accused Nur Mohammad Hasan confessed to a magistrate that he was directly involved in the killing.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Mahmuda Akhter passed the order after Inspector Syed Iftakhar Hossain of Detective Branch of police produced Awal and Babu before the court on completion of their four-day remand in the case.

In the forwarding report, the IO said Awal and Babu gave important information about the murder which was being verified. Moreover, Babu was present at the place of occurrence and took part in the killing. So the IO appealed to the court to confine them to jail until the investigation is completed.

The IO did not submit any petition either for placing Awal on remand again or for recording his confessional statement, court sources said.

## 4 held over rape in Khulna

STAR REPORT

Police in Khulna yesterday arrested four persons in connection with a gang-rape incident, while another person was arrested by police in Gazipur, after he allegedly attempted to rape a child.

Meanwhile, a 14-year-old boy yesterday confessed to raping and strangling a second-grader to death before a Manikganj court, police said.

In Khulna, a housewife (25) was allegedly raped by four persons around 10pm on Tuesday at an abandoned house near Khalishpur New Market area, reports our correspondent.

The woman filed a complaint with Khalishpur Police Station. Police in a drive arrested the four -- Sayeed (35), Nuruzzaman (35), Sumon (18), and Nazmul (20) -- from different parts of Khalishpur.

Nimai Chandra Kundu, OC of Khalishpur Police Station, said the suspects are notorious thieves and muggers and accused in multiple cases.

A rape case was filed against them, said Nimai, adding that the woman was sent to a victim support centre.

OC Alam Chand of Kapsasia Police Station said police arrested one Kafil Uddin (60) from Gazipur Sadar's Bagherbazar area around 11am yesterday, after he tried to rape a seven-year-old girl at her house Tuesday morning, reports our Gazipur correspondent.

The girl received treatment at Kapsasia Upazila Health Complex and was later admitted at Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmad Medical College and Hospital, he added. The arrestee was sent to jail through a court.

Manikganj's Additional Superintendent of Police Hafizur Rahman yesterday said a 14-year-old boy gave confessional statement of raping and murdering a child. He was sent to Gazipur juvenile development centre, said the police official, adding that the boy and the girl were neighbours, adding the incident took place on May 21 in the woods.

The body was recovered a day later, and autopsy report confirmed murder after rape, he said.

## Injured RMG

FROM PAGE 3

for what happened to my father," said Mustakin, the 16-year-old son of Kanchan Miah. Mustakin is the eldest of five children.

Worker rights leaders of Bangladesh Garments Worker Trade Union Centre, Garments Sromik Oikyo Forum were present at the demonstration, among others.

They informed that Department of Inspection of Factories and Establishments (DIFE) gave Kanchan Miah a lump sum of Tk 50,000, but that would barely cover the immediate cost of treatment, let alone the cost of running a family in the future.

Kanchan has seven dependents who survived off his salary. He had been working at the factory for 12 years.

It will be difficult for Kanchan Miah to rejoin work anytime soon, said the demonstrators, and so the compensation must take that into consideration, said the labour leaders.

They demanded that Kanchan Miah be recompensed according to the International Labour Organisation Employment Injury Benefits Convention, 1964.

In addition to Kanchan Miah, nine other workers were gravely injured when the police shot at the workers.

Gazipur police said workers blocked a road and threw brick chips at police, prompting the use of firearms.

## Where are

FROM PAGE 3

join the Ansar Battalion following the war and is now a retired officer.

However, for all their woes, it's not like the trio asked for anything in return when they put everything on the line to join the war. "We decided to fight for our country, and we sought nothing in return," Mazid told this correspondent.

"But what is painful is that though our photos are widely circulated, none of our names, not even Naib Uddin Ahmed's name is credited anywhere," he said.

When the Liberation War unfolded, Khaleque -- then only a seventh-grader -- and some of his fellows contemplated joining, but didn't know how. One day, Bangobir Quader Siddiqui, came to Musuria and spoke to young boys of the village. He asked them if they wanted to go to war, and 42 of them agreed. They were listed and left the village, without informing their families.

After reaching Baruha, a village some five kilometres away, they boarded three boats heading for the Indian border.

During the journey, the boatmen covered the boys with log grasses, Khaleque recalled. Whenever Pakistan Army's gun boats approached them, the boatmen said they were transporting the grass for cattle.

"When we reached Bahadurabad Ghat in Dewanganj upazila of Jamalpur, we came across a lot of dead bodies at the ghat area. Some of our mates couldn't stomach it. They decided to return home, so only 22 of us reached India's Mainkar Char," he said.

They went through a 21-day training on



PHOTO: COLLECTED

## Khaleque became a regular visitor at Naib Uddin's son Nawsher's house in Mymensingh.

frontline fighting and another 13-day training on guerrilla warfare at Meghalaya. "We used to visit different bordering areas of Mymensingh and Sherpur for operations from India," Khaleque said. "When the war was nearing its end, we entered Bangladesh and reached Mymensingh on the first week of December."

"After independence, we went to Mymensingh to surrender our arms. Someone from there identified me and told me about Naib Uddin. Five of us visited his house in BAU campus. He was delighted to see us," he continued.

"Naib Uddin took several photographs of us and another one with his five-year-old boy Nawsher Ahmed Nipun in my lap. I used to visit Nipun at his residence at Mymensingh city when he was critically ill," Khaleque reminisced. "He died in 2014."

Interestingly, Khaleque and his friends had little interest in the photograph and had no clue about its influence for a long time after the war.

"I was seriously impressed by the image for the first time when I saw a large installation of it at the Liberation War Museum in 2005," Khaleque said. He hadn't met Naib Uddin in a long time. He asked an employee of the museum and collected the photographer's contact.

"When I phoned Naib Uddin, he was utterly surprised to hear my name. He later invited me to a solo exhibition at Bengal Gallery in Dhaka," Khaleque chronicled.

"It was filled with rare photographs of the war, but our photo seemed to evoke a special kind of emotion among the audience," said an emotional Khaleque.

Khaleque went on to establish "Bangabandhu O Muktiyodhha" museum on four-decimals of his ancestral land. It contains photographs, books, and paper cuttings of the Liberation War.

He has been running it from his monthly allowance, but recently got a grant of Tk 50,000 from the local upazila parishad. He said he'll spend the money to buy furniture for the museum.

So many years have passed, most of Khaleque's mates from the war now lay at rest. But the war veteran is proud of the life they got to live, despite their relative obscurity, especially of the three boys who appeared on the photograph. But he's not complaining.

"We never thought this photograph would go on to become such an important part of the Liberation War history," Khaleque said with pride.

## Patients rush

FROM PAGE 3

In Rajshahi, the infection rate was 16 percent yesterday, while the rate was 33 percent the previous day.

The districts in the division also lack coronavirus testing facilities, with only six RT-PCR laboratories testing samples from all eight districts.

The health directorate allocated funds and equipment for installing three more RT-PCR labs in Rajshahi, Pabna and Naogaon, but none of those could start operation in the last three months.

However, local authorities in Chapainawabganj are likely to launch an RT-PCR laboratory from today in the wake of increasing coronavirus infection rates.

The government RT-PCR lab that has

been working on tuberculosis so far was prepared for detecting coronavirus and is likely to start testing coronavirus samples from today, Dr Zahid Nazrul Chowdhury told The Daily Star yesterday.

He also said the beds for treating coronavirus patients was increased to 50 from 10.

Prof Sabera Gul Nahar, the in-charge of Rajshahi Medical College's RT-PCR lab said they had to operate in four shifts a day whereas most laboratories are performing only one shift.

She said her laboratory has been testing 500 samples daily on average.

"In the last few days, we had to leave more than 150 samples a day for testing on the next day," she said.

## PBI writes

FROM PAGE 3

extramarital affair on different pages of the books, said PBI sources.

The books were seized from Babul, now in jail, after his father-in-law filed the case with Panchlaish Police Station against him and eight others, investigators said. Babul is now behind bars, while three others were shown arrested in this case.

On June 5, 2016, Mitu was stabbed and shot dead while she was taking her son to

his school-bus stop at the port city's GEC intersection. After the murder, Babul filed a case against three unidentified men with Panchlaish Police Station.

On May 11 this year, the Chattogram PBI summoned Babul to its office for questioning over the murder. He failed to give satisfactory answers to the detectives and was taken into PBI custody. The following day, Mitu's father filed a murder case against Babul and seven others.



Vehicles seized by the police are left in front of police stations mostly remain there without any regard. Over time, they not only catch rust, but even their parts get stolen. This photo was taken last week in front of Bangshal Police Station in the capital.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

## Extramarital affair

FROM PAGE 3

to Dhaka from Tangail. The next day, the Imam called on Azharul's cell phone and asked him to meet at the mosque.

After Azharul went to meet Abdur after sunset, he asked the victim to go to his room and rest, saying he is coming shortly after Esha prayers, Commander Moin told media.

Later in his room, Abdur attacked Azharul with a machete kept in the room, cut his body into six pieces and dumped it in the septic tank before Fazr prayers, said Moin.

On May 25, locals informed the elite force after odour started coming from the area. Rab then started shadow investigation and learned about Azharul's disappearance.

Following further investigation, Rab arrested Abdur and recovered the body.

The victim's younger brother Md Hasan

filed a case with Dakshinkhan Police Station on Tuesday night.

Commander Moin said Abdur called Asma before and after the killing to inform her how the murder was conducted.

In primary interrogation, Abdur admitted to committing the murder, the official said.

## COURT PLACES TWO ACCUSED ON FIVE-DAY REMAND

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court yesterday placed Abdur Rahman and Asma on five-day remand in the case filed over the incident.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Nivana Khair Jesi passed the order after Investigation Officer Anuj Kumar Sardar, also a sub-inspector of Dakshinkhan Police Station, produced the duo before the court with a 10-day remand prayer, court sources said.

**Patuakhali Science and Technology University**  
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Memo No. PSTU/ESDM/Lab. E/Tender/20/39/588 Date: 25/05/2021

**Invitation for Re e-Tender**

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

SL No.	Tender ID No.	Invitation Reference No.	Name of works	Tender security (amount in BDT)	Tender closing date & time
1	581483	PSTU/ESDM/Lab. E/Tender/20/39/585	Supply and Installation of Laboratory Equipment (Computer and Accessories) of Faculty of Agriculture, ESDM, LMA, NFS and Central Laboratory for 2020-2021 FY at PSTU.	Tk 15000	07-Jun-2021 12:00:00
2	581376	PSTU/ESDM/Lab. E/Tender/20/39/586	Supply and Installation of Laboratory Equipment (Electronics) of Faculty of Agriculture, ESDM, LMA, NFS and Central Laboratory for FY 2020-2021 at PSTU.	Tk 30000	07-Jun-2021 12:30:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (Email: [helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

Member Secretary  
Tender Invitation Committee  
GD-1069

Combating the threats of antimicrobial resistance and zoonotic diseases to achieve the GHSA in Bangladesh

**Bangladesh Livestock Research Institute**  
Savar, Dhaka-1341

No. 33.05.2672.108.06.006.21/131 Date: 25/05/2021

**e-Tender Notice**

e-Tender will be invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocurement.gov.bd>) for procurement of following works. Details are given below:

Tender ID No.	Ref. No. & Package Description	Tender publishing date & time	Tender closing date & time
581810	Ref. No.: 33.05.2672.108.06.006.21-129 Supply of Chemicals & Reagent	25/05/2021 at 16.00	10/06/2021 at 15.00
581935	Ref. No.: 33.05.2672.108.06.006.21-130 Supply of Lab Consumable	25/05/2021 at 16.00	10/06/2021 at 15.00

To get access to the e-Tender document, the required fees are to be deposited through any registered branch of enlisted banks on or before 10/06/2021 at 14.00. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

**Mohammed Abdus Samad, PhD**  
Project Director  
Phone: 02224491690

Size: (4"x 3/C)  
GD-1070

**The Security Printing Corporation (Bangladesh) Ltd.**  
Gazipur-1703

e-Tender Notice for procurement of the following items for The Security Printing Corporation (Bangladesh) Ltd., Gazipur as per e-Tender schedule.

**Name of the items of e-Tender for procurement:**

- e-Tender for supply of 45,000 kgs. Polythene Sheet.
- e-Tender for supply of 6,12,000 yards Markin Cloth (without strach).
- e-Tender for supply of 4,000 kgs. rust free Steel Strap.
- e-Tender for supply of 24,000 pcs Corrugated Carton (for Cigarette Stamp packing).

For details, please visit our website:  
Website : [www.spcbl.org.bd](http://www.spcbl.org.bd)  
Telephone : 88-02-9205110-15, 9205116  
Mobile : 88-01534002183 & 88-01534002184  
Fax : 88-02-9205108, 9205109  
E-mail : [info@spcbl.org.bd](mailto:info@spcbl.org.bd)  
Tender site : <https://spcbletender.bb.org.bd>

**Syed Amjad Hossain**  
General Manager (Local Purchase & Sales)  
Phone: 88-02-9204405

GD-1068

**Japan sending help for Covid response**  
DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Japan has announced of providing isolation gowns, safety goggles, gloves and masks to Bangladesh as assistance for Covid-19 response. The items include 30,000 isolation gowns, 2,500 safety goggles, 1,00,000 gloves and 2,08,000 masks, part of Asia-Europe Foundation's stockpiled items financed by Japan, said Japanese embassy in Bangladesh in a statement yesterday.

**চুয়েট, কুয়েট ও রুয়েট এর স্নাতক ১ম বর্ষ/লেভেল-১**  
(শিক্ষাবর্ষ: ২০২০-২১)

**সমন্বিত ভর্তি পরীক্ষা সংক্রান্ত বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, কোভিড-১৯ এর বর্তমান পরিস্থিতি বিবেচনায় চুয়েট, কুয়েট ও রুয়েট এর স্নাতক ১ম বর্ষ/লেভেল-১ (শিক্ষাবর্ষ: ২০২০-২১) সমন্বিত ভর্তি পরীক্ষা আগামী ১২ জুন (শনিবার) ২০২১ইং তারিখের পরিবর্তে ১২ আগস্ট (বৃহস্পতিবার) ২০২১ইং তারিখে পূর্ব ঘোষিত সময় অনুযায়ী অনুষ্ঠিত হবে।

অধ্যাপক ড. মোঃ রবিউল আলম সভাপতি  
কেন্দ্রীয় ভর্তি কমিটি (শিক্ষাবর্ষ: ২০২০-২১)  
চুয়েট, কুয়েট ও রুয়েট এর সমন্বিত ভর্তি পরীক্ষা

অধ্যাপক ড. মোঃ মইনুল ইসলাম সদস্য-সচিব  
কেন্দ্রীয় ভর্তি কমিটি (শিক্ষাবর্ষ: ২০২০-২১)  
চুয়েট, কুয়েট ও রুয়েট এর সমন্বিত ভর্তি পরীক্ষা

৯৯৮-১০১০



### Natore MP's nephew lands in jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Natore

A Natore court yesterday sent a local Swachhasebak League leader to jail in connection with a case for assaulting an executive engineer of Water Development Board (WDB) and obstructing government work.

Earlier on Monday night, WDB Executive Engineer Abu Raihan filed the case with Natore Police Station against Nafuil Islam Antar, general secretary of Swachhasebak League's Natore municipality unit, and nephew of Natore-2 Lawmaker Shafiqul Islam Shimul.

Meanwhile, protesting the attack, WDB officials and employees formed a human chain and organised a press conference in front of Pani Bhaban in Dhaka the same day.

The following day, police arrested Antar from his house in Bargachha area of Natore town around 5:30pm.

According to police, Antar and his father Amirul, a contractor who works for the WDB, and also the treasurer of Natore district Awami League, locked in an altercation with Engineer Raihan when he questioned the quality of a construction work.

At one stage, Antar physically assaulted the engineer.

Later, WDB officials and workers rescued him and took him to Natore Sadar Hospital for treatment.

## Low yield frustrates Nazirpur litchi growers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Litchi growers in Nazirpur upazila of Pirojpur are not happy due to low yield of the succulent fruit.

Farmers said that this year they have got hardly any litchi from their orchards. Even, there are orchards where not a single litchi has grown.

"There are around 400 litchi trees in my orchard. But I have got litchi from only a few trees," said Hangsopoti Mistry of Tarabuniya village under Sakharikathi union in the upazila.

He is the pioneer of litchi cultivation in the upazila.

"Last year, we got a good yield but the fruits were damaged due to bad weather," he also said.

"But this year we are very disappointed with the lowest yield," he said.

Manmatho Edbor, another litchi grower of the village, said that though he has over 100 litchi trees in his orchard, he has not been able to sell any litchi from there.

"Only three trees in my orchard have

borne fruits," he said.

Litchi growers said that they have cultivated litchi commercially at the village and as it is a good source of income for them and more farmers are being interested to cultivate the fruit.

"However, we could not think that we won't get any fruit from the trees this year," said Sawbari Boral, a female farmer of the village.

Because of excessive heat the trees did not flower this year, they said.

"Though some of the trees flowered, most of them dropped due to drought," said farmer Sujon Sikder.

Digbijoy Hazra, Nazirpur upazila agriculture officer, said that of the seven upazilas in the district, litchi grows well at Nazirpur.

There are litchi orchards on 25 acres of land and over 150 farmers are directly involved with litchi cultivation, he also said.

"But this year, the farmers have got the lowest yield due to unfavourable weather," he added.



A litchi orchard in Pirojpur's Nazirpur upazila.

PHOTO: STAR



An abandoned cinema hall in Tangail's Delduar upazila.

PHOTO: MIRZA SHAKIL

## Curtains down: 46 cinema halls in Tangail shut down in 15yrs

MIRZA SHAKIL

There were 51 cinema halls in Tangail in the 1990s. But only five have managed to survive while 46 had to yield their place to newer forms of entertainment, revolution of mobile phone technology and lack of audience.

The owners still think it is possible to keep the business alive if movies with engaging stories and good production value are made and digitized cinema halls can be built with government assistance.

The cinema hall business in Tangail started with Raushan Talkies built at a secluded corner of the then small municipal town in 1950 by Lebu Chowdhury.

Following his footsteps, other movie halls opened in 12 upazilas. The number stood at 51 in the 1990s.

But within just 10 to 15 years, 46 cinema halls closed down due to various problems such as lack of audience, movies with poor production value, and losses.

Despite these crises, the owners of the five cinema halls -- one in Tangail town, two in Nagarpur Sadar upazila, one in Madhupur Sadar upazila and one at Balla in Kalihati upazila -- have kept the dwindling business alive in the district. But they do not know how long they can continue.

Inspired by Lebu Chowdhury, Montu Miah of the town's Dighulia area established the most attractive cinema hall of the town on Main Road in 1964. He named the hall Rupobani, the second theatre in the district.

In 1973, Lebu Chowdhury,

lifetime president of the hall owners' platform in the district, built his second cinema hall (third in the district) named Ruposhi on his own land at Battala in Tangail town. Later, he built three more cinema halls in Delduar, Mirzapur and Dhanbari upazilas.

In 1975, Chhana Miah of Adalatpara built the fourth cinema hall Malancha in the middle of Adalatpara and Thanapara while Afzal Chowdhury of the same area constructed a hall named Keya the next year.

Later, 46 more cinema halls were established at different places one by one till 1990s.

The business was profitable till 2000. The halls used to screen five shows daily from 10:00am to 1:00am.

There were five sitting arrangements inside the halls -- Front Stall, Stall, Real Stall, DC and Box. Moreover, a separate sitting arrangement was there for female audience. Following the booming business, cinema hall workers' union was formed in the district.

Currently, Malancha holds four shows -- at 10:00am, 1:30pm, 4:30pm and 7:30pm -- with almost zero audience.

There are three separate arrangements for the audience -- Real Stall, DC and Box -- and the prices of the tickets are Tk 50, Tk 60 and Tk 70 respectively.

During a recent visit to Malancha Cinema Hall, this correspondent found that the hall was showing the movie 'Rangbar Badsha', featuring two actors from Tangail district -- Manna and Amit Hasan. The film

has been rented at Tk 6,000 for seven days.

Some former cinema hall workers said 46 cinema halls in the district were closed from 2001 to 2015.

Jahangir Hossain, a tea stall owner in the town, said he used to watch movies every week. "The stories of the movies and the actors, actresses at that time were good. I also used to some movies more than once."

"But as the quality of movies started dropping, I stopped going to the movie halls," he said.

"But, in future, if movies with quality stories and good artistes come, I'll go back to the cinema hall and watch the movie," he added.

Jahid Hasan of Sabalia area in the town said he stopped going to halls after the death of his favourite actor Manna and the demolition of cinema halls.

Ganesh Chandra Sarkar, then director of Keya Cinema Hall and general secretary of the district cinema hall workers' union, said audiences are not going to the halls as they can watch any movie on mobile phones now.

Dulal Chowdhury, son of late Lebu Chowdhury and the then owner of Raushan Talkies and Ruposhi cinema halls, said, "After the death of my father in 2002, we had to shut the business due to huge losses."

Raushan Talkies had to be closed in 2006 due to cancellation of land leased from Coronation Dramatic Club at Nirala intersection in the town. Ruposhi Cinema Hall was shut down in 2011 due to loss, Dulal added.

## Where bridge has no road

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A bridge built without any connecting road in Ajmeriganj upazila of Habiganj is yet another example of fleeing public of their money.

In fiscal year 2015-16, around Tk 28 lakh was spent to construct the bridge over a canal to connect remote village of Uttarhati with Satgaon Public High

School on the other side of the canal. But, in reality, an existing road nearby has been serving the purpose very well for the villagers.

Villager Sajjad Mia said they would not mind using the bridge as an alternative way to the school, but they never had the chance to use the bridge for all these years, as connecting roads were never made for it.

In reality, an existing road nearby has been serving the purpose very well for the villagers.

Even seventh grader Joy Nath Das, a student at Satgaon Public High School, knows it was a waste of money. He said when there is already a good road to go to the school, spending money on building the bridge for a second route to the school was absolutely unnecessary.

Other than some children jumping off it into the canal for fun in the rain, the bridge now serves no purpose, said Jashim Uddin, from the same village.

As an added headache, boat accidents often take place when those collide with the bridge due to strong current in the canal during the monsoon, he added.

Farmer Mahfuz Mia said the bridge could be put to good use if only several lakh taka were spent to build roads for it.


Contacted, Mohammad Ali, project implementation officer in the upazila, said there was a road on one side of the bridge, but it was washed away by floods.

Efforts are underway to repair the damaged road, he added.



The Tk 28-lakh bridge lying useless without any road for over five years, near Uttarhati village in Ajmeriganj upazila of Habiganj.

PHOTO: STAR




### বাংলাদেশ কৃষি গবেষণা ইনস্টিটিউট

#### Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute

সংগ্রহ ও ভান্ডার শাখা

জয়দেবপুর, পাজীপুর।



কৃষি সমৃদ্ধি

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Memo no: PN: GD-03/7443 Date: 24 May 2021

### e-GP: Tender Notice No.37(2020-2021)

e-Tender is invited in the e-GP system Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following goods. Details are given below:

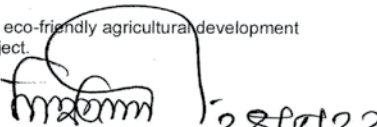
Sl No	Package no.	Tender ID & Ref No	Description of goods	Tender Documents Last selling (Date & Time)	Tender Closing date & Time	Tender Opening date & Time
1.	PN:GD-03	581182 & IRN: 489	Field Equipment 04 items	06.06.2021 17:00	07.06.2021 15:00	07.06.2021 15:00

The interested persons/firm may visit the website [www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) to get the details of the tender.

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the national e-GP portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, Registration in the National e-GP system portal is required.


Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP system portal and e-GP Help Desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

Project Name: "Establishment of Agriculture Research Station, BARI, Gopalganj and eco-friendly agricultural development project in south-western part through strengthening of research" Project.



(Md. Younus Ali)  
Deputy Director (In-Charge)  
On behalf of Director General

GD-1072



### গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ  
পুলিশ কমিশনার এর কার্যালয়  
পাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ, পাজীপুর

#### দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

তারিখ: ২৫/০৫/২০২১খ্রিঃ

স্মারক নং-পাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ/২০২১/১২৬৭/খি

"The Public Procurement Act-2006 & The Public Procurement Regulation-2008/2010" (সংশোধনী-২০১৬) অনুযায়ী ২০২১-২০২২ অর্থ বছরে পুলিশ মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশের নিম্নলিখিত কাজ বাস্তবায়নের নিমিত্তে বাংলাদেশের প্রকৃত ব্যবসায়ী/প্রতিষ্ঠান/সরকার/স্বতন্ত্র/ব্যক্তিগত/নির্দিষ্ট/অন্যান্য/প্রতিযোগিতামূলক উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাবে।

দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি নম্বর-০২/২০২১-২০২২ অর্থ বছর

ক্র. নং	স্মারক নং	কাজের বিবরণ	সিটিউনের মূল (অফারের মূল্য)	দরপত্র জমাভের পরিমাণ (সেফারের মূল্য)	কাজ সমাপ্তির সময়
১.	০১	পাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশের জন্য মনিটরিং সিস্টেম সরবরাহ	৭৫০/-	৩০,০০০/-	২০২১-২০২২ অর্থ বছর
২.	০২	পাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশের জন্য বাসহাট ব্র্যান্ড সরবরাহ	১,০০০/-	১,০০,০০০/-	
৩.	০৩	পাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশের জন্য বাসহাট সিস্টেম সরবরাহ	৭৫০/-	৪০,০০০/-	
৪.	০৪	পাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশের জন্য বিভিন্ন উদ্ভিদ সরবরাহ	৫০০/-	৩০,০০০/-	
৫.	০৫	পাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশের জন্য কম্পিউটার ও অসুবিধা সরবরাহ	৭৫০/-	৩০,০০০/-	
৬.	০৬	পাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশের জন্য কম্পিউটার সমস্যা সরবরাহ এবং কম্পিউটার রেমোন্স কাজ	১,০০০/-	১,০০,০০০/-	
৭.	০৭	পাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশের জন্য যন্ত্রপাতি ও অন্যান্য সরঞ্জামাদি সরবরাহ	৫০০/-	৪০,০০০/-	
৮.	০৮	পাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশের যন্ত্রপাতি ও অন্যান্য সরঞ্জামাদি রেমোন্স	৫০০/-	৩০,০০০/-	
৯.	০৯	পাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশের আসবাবপত্র/খাদ্যাদি রেমোন্স	১,০০০/-	১,০০,০০০/-	
১০.	১০	পাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশের জন্য বিভিন্ন উদ্ভিদ সরবরাহ	১,০০০/-	১,০০,০০০/-	
১১.	১১	পাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশের পুলিশ পরিদর্শক হতে তদারকি কর্মকর্তাদের সামার ও উইকার টিউনিকাম শোশাট সোয়াই কাজ	৭৫০/-	৩০,০০০/-	
১২.	১২	পাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশের যানবাহনের কীটামাল ও যুগ্ম যন্ত্রপাতি (টায়ার, টিউব ও ব্যাটারিসহ)	১,০০০/-	১,০০,০০০/-	
১৩.	১৩	পাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশের যানবাহন রেমোন্স (হেলিক্স-পেইন্টসহ)	৭৫০/-	৩০,০০০/-	
১৪.	১৪	পাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশের জন্য কাগজ গাউন সরবরাহ (মাইক্রোসফট)	১,০০০/-	১,০০,০০০/-	
১৫.	১৫	পাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশের জন্য বোর্ডিং রেন (হেলনা খাবার) সরবরাহ	১,০০০/-	১,০০,০০০/-	
১৬.	১৬	পাজীপুর মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশের জন্য আউটসোর্সিং পদ্ধতিতে জনবল সরবরাহ	১,০০০/-	১,০০,০০০/-	

**বিশেষ জ্ঞাতব্য:**

(ক) প্রকল্পের ব্যক্তি বা প্রতিষ্ঠানের স্বত্বাধিকারীর স্বাক্ষরকৃত পত্রকে আবেদনপত্র বর্ণিত স্থান হতে প্রকল্পের বিজ্ঞাপন প্রকাশের তারিখ হতে ২০/০৬/২০২১খ্রিঃ তারিখ অবধি চলাকালীন সময় পর্যন্ত দরপত্র গিভিউন করা যাবে।

(খ) সর্বশেষে প্রকাশিত নি পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট আইন-২০০৬ ও নি পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট রেগুলেশন-২০০৮/২০১০ (সংশোধনী-২০১৬) বিধিমালা অনুসরণ করা হবে।

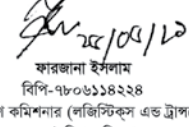
(গ) দরপত্র গিভিউনে অন্যান্য শর্তাবলী বিচারিতভাবে বর্ণনা করা হবে।

(ঘ) দরপত্রের কতক গিভিউনে বর্ণিত সকল শর্তাবলী অস্বীকার করা হবে।

(ঙ) নির্দিষ্ট তারিখ ও সময়ের পর গিভিউন বিক্রয় ও দরপত্র গ্রহণ করা হবে না।

(চ) কোন কারণে দরপত্র প্রকাশের দিন অবধি বাকি থাকলে পরবর্তী দিনে প্রকাশিত হবে এবং নিম্নে দরপত্র গ্রহণ ও খোলা হবে।

(ছ) দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী কর্তৃক কোন কারণে দরপত্র গ্রহণের পরে দরপত্র গ্রহণের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।



ফারহান ইলিয়াস  
বিপি-৭৮০১১২২২২  
উপ-পুলিশ কমিশনার (লিডারিং এন্ড ট্রেনিং)  
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তারিখ: ২৫/০৫/২০২১



## NEW RULES FOR SOCIAL MEDIA IN INDIA

## WhatsApp sues govt

REUTERS

WhatsApp has filed a lawsuit in Delhi against the Indian government seeking to block regulations coming into force yesterday that experts say would compel Facebook's messaging app to break privacy protections, sources said.

The case asks the Delhi High Court to declare that one of the new IT rules is a violation of privacy rights in India's constitution since it requires social media companies to identify the "first originator of information" when authorities demand it, people familiar with the lawsuit told Reuters.

The WhatsApp lawsuit escalates a growing struggle between Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government and tech giants including Facebook, Google's parent Alphabet and Twitter in one of their key global growth markets.

Tensions rose after police visited Twitter's offices this week. The micro-blogging service had labelled posts by a spokesman for India's dominant party and others as containing "manipulated media", saying forged content was included.

New Delhi has also pressed tech companies to remove what it has described as misinformation on the Covid-19 pandemic ravaging India, and some criticism of the government's response to the crisis, which is claiming thousands of lives daily.

While the new law only requires

WhatsApp, which has half a billion users in India, to unmask people credibly accused of wrongdoing, it says it cannot in practice do that alone.

WhatsApp says that because messages are encrypted end-to-end it would have to break encryption for receivers of messages as well as the originators to comply with the new law.



A government official said WhatsApp could find a way to track originators of disinformation, a long-standing stance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration, and that the US company was not being asked to break encryption.

Among the new rules are requirements that big social media firms appoint Indian citizens to key compliance roles, remove content within 36 hours of a legal order, and set up a mechanism to respond to complaints. They must also use automated processes to take down pornography.

Facebook has said it agrees with most of the provisions but is still looking to negotiate some aspects.



Army soldiers evacuate people from a flooded area to safer places as Cyclone Yaas makes landfall at Ramnagar in Purba Medinipur district in the eastern state of West Bengal, India, yesterday. At least two people died yesterday as howling winds and waves the height of double-decker buses belted eastern India in the Covid-stricken country's second cyclone in as many weeks.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## 'DE FACTO ANNEXATION' OF PALESTINE

### Ireland condemns Israel, sanctions on the cards

AGENCIES

The Irish government has supported a parliamentary motion condemning the "de facto annexation" of Palestinian land by Israeli authorities, in what it said was the first use of the phrase by a European Union country in relation to Israel.

Irish Foreign Minister Simon Coveney said on Tuesday that the motion, brought forward by opposition party Sinn Fein, "is a clear signal of the depth of feeling across Ireland".

"The scale, pace and strategic nature of Israel's actions on settlement expansion and the intent behind it have brought us to a point where we need to be honest about what is actually happening on the ground. ... It is de facto annexation," Coveney, of the centre-right Fine Gael party, told parliament.

"This is not something that I, or in my view this house, says lightly. We are the first EU state to do so. But it reflects the huge concern we have about the intent of the actions and of course, their impact," he said.

If passed, the amendment would require the government to expel the Israeli ambassador to Ireland and to impose economic, political and cultural sanctions against Israel.

Most countries view settlements Israel has built in territory captured in the 1967 war as illegal and as an obstacle to peace with the Palestinians.

Some of the Irish parliamentarians wore face masks bearing the Palestine flag or of the checkered keffiyeh pattern. The Irish parliament, or Dáil, was set to debate the People Before Profit amendment of the Sinn Fein Private Members motion later yesterday, with a vote expected later.

## UN rights body mulling probe

Blinken arrives in Egypt on mission to shore up ceasefire

AGENCIES

The UN Human Rights Council will consider launching a broad, international investigation into abuses in the latest Gaza conflict and also into "systematic" abuses, according to a proposal as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken arrived in Cairo to strengthen efforts to shore up ceasefire between Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza.

The Rights Council will hold a special session on the latest conflict today, at the request of Pakistan, as coordinator of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the state of Palestine.

Those countries submitted a draft resolution late on Tuesday that would establish an independent international commission of inquiry to investigate all human rights violations in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem, and in Israel, since April 13. It would also examine all underlying root causes of tensions

## GAZA CONFLICT



and instability, "including systematic discrimination and repression based on national, ethnic, racial or religious identity," the draft said.

The independent team would collect and analyse evidence of crimes perpetrated, including forensic material, "in order to maximise the possibility of its admissibility in legal proceedings".

Reporting back in June 2022, it would identify those responsible to try and end impunity and ensure legal accountability.

Since being set up in 2006, the UN rights council, a 47-member forum, has held eight previous special

sessions that have condemned Israel and set up several probes into alleged war crimes.

Meanwhile, Blinken arrived in Cairo yesterday after meeting with Israeli and Palestinian leaders to throw Washington's support behind the Friday truce that ended 11 days of heavy Israeli bombing of Gaza and rocket fire from the enclave into Israel.

Israeli air strikes and artillery fire on Gaza killed 253 Palestinians, including 66 children, in 11 days of conflict from May 10. Rocket and other fire from Gaza claimed 12 lives in Israel.

After talks with Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas at his headquarters in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, Blinken vowed to rebuild US relations with the Palestinians by reopening a consulate in Jerusalem, as well as giving millions in aid for the war-battered Gaza Strip.

In Cairo, Blinken is to meet Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi before flying on to Jordan for talks with King Abdullah II.

## NEWS IN BRIEF

### Taliban warn neighbours against allowing US bases

The Taliban warned Afghanistan's neighbours yesterday against allowing the United States to operate military bases on their soil, the insurgents insisting they would thwart such a "historic mistake". Washington is in the final stages of withdrawing its troops from Afghanistan, and a flurry of diplomatic calls between the United States and Pakistan in recent days has fuelled speculation the Pentagon is scouting for new bases to use against the Taliban. Several of Afghanistan's neighbours allowed the US military limited use of air bases in the early 2000s after the overthrow of the Taliban. Such overt physical support has largely ended, however, although some countries do allow their airspace to be used for military flights.

### Myanmar excluded from WHO annual meeting

Faced with the dilemma of who to recognise as Myanmar's legitimate representative following February's coup, World Health Organization members yesterday opted to exclude the country from their annual assembly. The 74th World Health Assembly had received requests from both Myanmar's ousted civilian authorities and the military junta that seized power nearly four months ago to represent the country. This year's gathering of the WHO's main decision-making body, which began Monday and lasts through June 1, is considered one of the most important ever as the Covid-19 pandemic rages on. Myanmar has been in turmoil since the February 1 putsch, which has sparked near-daily protests and a nationwide civil disobedience movement.

### Rouhani urges greater 'competition' in Iran election



Iran's President Hassan Rouhani yesterday said he had asked the supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to ensure greater "competition" in June elections after many prominent hopefuls were barred from running. "The heart of elections is competition. If you take that away it becomes a corpse," Rouhani said at a televised cabinet meeting. "I sent a letter to the supreme leader yesterday on what I had in mind and on whether he can help with this." Iran's candidate-vetting Guardian Council on Tuesday approved seven hopefuls to run in the June 18 poll to succeed Rouhani. The body disqualified moderate conservative Ali Larijani, the long-time parliament speaker and a Rouhani ally, as well as his first vice president, Eshaq Jhangiri, among other well-known names.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



Electric and LED candles bearing the names of people killed by police illuminate the fist sculpture as people gather at the George Floyd Square to commemorate the first anniversary of Floyd's death, in Minneapolis, Minnesota, US on Tuesday evening.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## ANNIVERSARY OF GEORGE FLOYD'S DEATH

## Family appeals to Biden to reform police

AFP, Washington

The family of George Floyd appealed Tuesday for sweeping police reform on the anniversary of the African American man's murder by a white officer, as they met President Joe Biden at the White House.

The president and Kamala Harris, America's first female and first Black vice president, hosted several of Floyd's relatives in the Oval Office after the family spoke to top lawmakers hoping for progress on reform.

"The Floyd family has shown extraordinary courage," Biden said after their meeting -- declaring himself "hopeful" that a deal could be struck after the Memorial Day holiday this weekend.

The legislation being considered to increase police accountability would be named after Floyd, who suffocated after being pinned down under the knee of Minneapolis officer Derek Chauvin on May 25, 2020.

"If you can make federal laws to protect the bird, the bald eagle, you can make federal laws to protect people of color," Philonise Floyd, George's younger brother, said as he emerged from the private meeting.

The family later visited Black Lives Matter Plaza close to the White House, which became a focal point for demonstrations in the weeks after Floyd's death. Floyd's death sparked protests against racial injustice and police brutality across a country.

Chauvin, who knelt on Floyd's neck for more than nine minutes as he passed out and died, is to be sentenced in June for murder and manslaughter.

The police reform bill would ban potentially fatal restraint techniques used on suspects, like chokeholds, and end so-called "no-knock warrants" that authorize police to burst into a suspect's house unannounced. The most far-reaching of the measures would be to end legal protections that block civil lawsuits against police accused of misconduct.

## West waging 'hybrid war'

Defiant Belarus leader defends plane diversion, blasts critics, gets Russia's backing as West mulls sanctions

REUTERS, Moscow

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko yesterday said a journalist pulled off a plane that landed in Minsk had been plotting a bloody rebellion, and accused the West of waging a hybrid war against him.

In his defiant remarks, his first in public since he ordered a warplane to intercept a Ryanair flight between EU members Greece and Lithuania, he showed no hint of backing down from confrontation with countries that accuse him of air piracy.

"As we predicted, our ill-wishers from outside the country and from inside the country changed their methods of attack on the state," Lukashenko, 66, told parliament. "They have crossed many red lines and have abandoned common sense and human morals."

Belarus has already been subject to



EU and US sanctions since Lukashenko cracked down on pro-democracy protests after a disputed election last year. But his decision to intercept an international airliner flying through his country's air space and arrest a 26-year-old dissident journalist has brought a new level of condemnation and vows of far more serious action.

The journalist, Roman Protasevich, whose social media feed from exile had been one of the last remaining independent sources of news about Belarus, was shown on state TV on Monday confessing to organising

demonstrations. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson called the footage "distressing" and Belarus opposition figures said it was proof he had been tortured.

Late on Tuesday, state TV broadcast a similar confession video of Sophia Sapega, a 23-year-old student arrested with Protasevich.

Europe's aviation regulator issued a bulletin yesterday urging all airlines to avoid Belarus airspace for safety reasons, saying the forced diversion of the Ryanair flight had put in question its ability to provide safe skies.

Lukashenko, in power since 1994, promised to respond harshly to any sanctions. In his remarks to parliament, Lukashenko said street protests were no longer possible in Belarus, perhaps signalling a further crackdown on opponents.

The Kremlin yesterday said that it had no reason to mistrust the Belarusian explanation of the events.

## MIGRANT DEATHS IN THE MED

## EU partly to blame: UN

REUTERS, Geneva

The European Union is partly to blame for deaths of migrants taking boats across the Mediterranean due to unanswered distress calls, obstruction of humanitarian rescue efforts, and so-called "pushbacks" to Libya, the United Nations said yesterday.

Thousands of refugees and migrants including many from Africa undertake long, dangerous journeys via Libya to Europe each year, often embarking on small, inflatable boats in search of a better life.

Death rates are rising and so far this year at least 632 people have died on that route, the UN rights office said in a 37-page report entitled "Lethal Disregard", calling this a "human tragedy on a massive scale".

The report found that the lack of migrant protection "is not a tragic anomaly, but rather a consequence of concrete policy decisions and practices by the Libyan authorities, European Union member states and institutions, and other actors."

## PROBE ON TRUMP ORGANIZATION

## New York prosecutors form grand jury: reports

AFP, New York

New York prosecutors have convened a grand jury that is expected to decide whether to indict former president Donald Trump, suggesting they may have found evidence of a crime, US media reported Tuesday.

The development is the latest step towards the 74-year-old Trump, who left the White House in January, possibly becoming the first ever ex-US leader to face criminal charges.

Investigators are examining whether the Trump Organization committed tax evasion, insurance and bank fraud.

Investigators suspect the Trump Organization may have artificially inflated and reduced the value of assets, particularly several properties in New York state, to either get bank loans or reduce their taxes.

Trump fired off a statement in response to the reports, rejecting the investigation as "purely political" and "a continuation of the greatest Witch Hunt in American history."

The grand jury was set up recently and will sit three days a week for six months, reported The Washington Post, citing two unnamed people familiar with the case.

The Washington Post said the move, also reported by ABC, suggests that Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance may have found evidence of a crime, if not by Trump then somebody close to him.





## BOOK REVIEW: HISTORY AND POLITICS

## Red terror or revolutionary war?

RAZI AZMI

*Lal Shontrash: Siraj Sikder O Sarbahara Rajneeti* (Baatighar, 2021) is about the birth, growth, and withering away of a revolutionary organisation about which most Bangladeshis have heard and very many are curious. Given the clandestine character of the short-lived Purba Banglar Sarbahara Party and the turbulent times in which it existed, very little information about this organisation had been available until now. What was hitherto known was in bits and patches, as a bewildering mixture of fact, myth, and fiction.

The party's leader, Siraj Sikder, acquired cult status in his lifetime and turned into a mythical figure after his death in police captivity in 1975 at the rather young age of 30. Compounding the curiosity are the circumstances of his death, which are as controversial as his revolutionary life. In light of this, writer and researcher Mohiuddin Ahmad has taken upon himself a very challenging task and it must be said that he has acquitted himself rather well.

A political historiographer and noted *Prothom Alo* columnist, who formerly served as Assistant Editor at the *Daily Ganakantha*, Ahmad has previously written about the political histories of Awami League, BNP, JASAD, and the events of "1/11". As with these previous books, *Lal Shontrash* is a gripping historical account from beginning to end, a real life story of some naïve young men and women barely in their adulthood coming together under Sikder's leadership to liberate the oppressed and exploited people of Bangladesh through armed struggle.

The book consists of two parts. The first is a summary of the Leftist politics, parties, and movements in East Bengal (Bangladesh), in general, and of the Sarbahara Party, in particular. In the second part, Ahmad publishes the accounts of 11 party activists based on interviews published, unpublished, and some conducted by the author himself.

Published for the first time, for instance, is a written testimony by Bulu, who was not only active in the party for many years but also was married to Taher, Sikder's closest comrade and deputy until his assassination in August 1971. As such, the value of Bulu's testimony lies in the fact that it is a contemporary, first-hand account straight from the heart and never intended for publication.

Some of the facts explicitly mentioned or implied in Bulu's testimony are explosive and certain to invite the wrath of Sikder devotees, particularly his multiple marriages and alleged extra-marital liaisons and advances. But the fact is that these unsavoury truths about Sikder are corroborated elsewhere; they are neither a fig-

DESIGN: DAILY STAR BOOKS  
BOOK COVER DESIGN: SABYASACHI HAZRA

ment of the author's imagination nor an effort to vilify the late leader.

The other accusations against Sikder, that of autocratic leadership and a personality cult, which brooked no criticism and led to harsh expulsions and even assassinations, are quite well known. It was this tendency that resulted in a murderous rampage within the party after the supremo's death. Comrades accused fellow comrades of betrayal and some were executed after summary "show trials", leading to a meltdown of the party.

Continuous hardships, secretiveness, violence, and repression cumulatively resulted in dissension and deterioration within the party, aggravated by Sikder's sudden death in January 1975. Ahmad has provided the best available details of the circumstances of Sikder's capture and death from four different sources, three published and one based on an interview the author conducted with a then-serving high official of Rakkhi Bahini.

Very helpfully, Ahmad also provides in his book a list of names of party activists along with the pseudonyms by which they were known within the party. However, although he provides a list of his sources in an appendix, the lack of proper citations in the text often leaves the reader confused. It might have been useful to provide a full chronological list of the party congresses, conferences, and meetings in an appendix for ready reference.

There are also a few inaccuracies and mistranslations which the author ought to rectify in future editions. For example, he mentions that the party's magazine *Lal Jhanda* ("Red Flag") was first published in September 1974. I

am able personally to attest to the fact that the first issue was published sometime in mid to late 1969. It was clandestinely cyclostyled late one evening in an architect's office in Topkhana Road in Dhaka, where Bulu's brother Kalam worked. Being a party sympathiser, he had provided party cadres the key to the office. The word "jhanda" was chosen after some deliberation, being preferred (by Sikder himself) over the more authentic Bangla synonym "potaka". ("Jhanda" resonated militancy, whereas "potaka" sounded too gentle!)

Many admirers of the party and its leader, among other things, will perhaps protest the title of Ahmad's book, which translates to "Red Terror"; but it is neither misleading nor inaccurate. Sarbahara Party cadres, like all revolutionaries throughout history, had no scruples against employing terror, and even execution, against those they perceived as enemies and traitors, including their own.

After all, Sikder and his followers—devotees of the revered Chairman Mao Zedong—were self-professed believers and practitioners of "armed struggle, class war, people's war and revolutionary terror". It is too early to say how history will judge Siraj Sikder and his Sarbahara Party. But this book is a very commendable effort on the part of Mohiuddin Ahmad to preserve the record for future historians to work with.

Razi Azmi was involved with the Sarbahara Party in its formative years. He is a former academic with a doctorate in modern history.  
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## BOOK REVIEW: FICTION

## 'Who They Was': A powerful voice from the rough streets of London

LABIB MAHMUD

Gabriel Krauze is not your average Booker-longlisted author. He rocks streetwear, Air Maxes, gangster chains, and most importantly a big grin that unveils his signature "iced grillz"—a statement of one's journey on the streets. *Who They Was* (4th Estate, 2020), Krauze's debut novel, is written in British-Jamaican patois, and is an auto-fictional account that mirrors his life as a London gang member in South Kilburn at the time of his pursuing a BA in English Literature at the reputed Queen Mary University. It is the marriage of two polar worlds, academia and violence, that strips London in all its mixed-up glory through a narrative that is brutally blunt and heavily comprised of urban slang. So, how does a book like that, defying all

bare life with rights that can be taken away within the blink of an eye.

It does, however, raise concern for cultural appropriation as the British-Jamaican patois is employed by an author of Polish descent. If we were to consider a positive representation of the marginalised culture, then Krauze does justice to it. Snoozz recognises and puts forth his privileges of being white. He is aware of the fact that he received a shorter jail sentence in contrast to what someone of colour may have received, and through a predominantly slang narrative, the novel dismantles preconceived prejudices as Snoozz is automatically assumed to be of mixed race due to his gang involvements. Krauze criticises the media for its inauthentic and

racist portrayal of street life, and politicians for deliberately not acknowledging the conditions that make violence the norm.

Gabriel Krauze, now in his 30s, has left that world behind him, and through his Booker longlisted-debut novel, has constructed a narrative that captures the truest and rawest essence of gang life. *Who They Was* is unquestionably a work of art, not just because of how it paints a picture of a world so foreign to us, but rather because of how it positively represents the marginalised cultures and gives hope to a whole generation. Krauze has established something that has not been adequately discussed—which is the fact that he has created a distinctive voice which serves as an emblem of revival, and creates a way for more literature of the same. 'Thug Literature', as I like to call it, will help youths make sense of their surroundings through reading and writing, and reclaim what has been lost living in the conditions created by the same society that tries to exclude them.

Labib Mahmud is a freelance writer and designer. His interests lie in subversive literature and discourse. Reach him at labib.mahmud848@gmail.com or @labib.mahmud on Instagram.

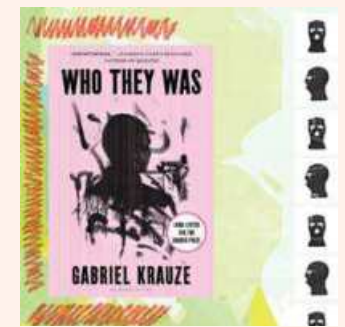


ILLUSTRATION: MEHRUL BARI

way for a new genre—I dare to call it: 'Thug Literature'.

This unconventional novel starts on a high, as Snoozz (Krauze's street name) alongside his partner Gotti attempt a robbery in broad daylight. Snoozz spends his days "bunning zoots" (smoking marijuana), attempting "eats" (robbery), selling "buij" (heroin) to "nittys" (druggies), facing trial and jail time—all contributing to an individual being excluded from the domain of the political life; and concurrently, he is attending seminars on Nietzsche, submitting 3,000 words term papers, and trying to bridge the gap between him and his Polish immigrant parents. This conflict of the hero and the anti-hero propounds the intricacies and grim realities of the world we live in today. It may seem like there is a deep fetishisation of violence and gang life here, but in a way it gives voice to the criminally marginalised, to those who are included but in a form of exclusion. What it paints truly is an image of a

## BOOK REVIEW: FILM CRITICISM

## A journey with 50 Bangla films

NUJHAT JAHAN KHAN

Three years ago, I remember watching Noor Imran Mithu's film *Komola Rocket* (2018) at Bashundhara City with two of my friends. I miss those days when going to a theatre was a normal occasion. While I was enjoying some popcorn and chocolate ice cream, my eyes were fixed on the screen in the darkness. I was wondering how the cinematographer and crew had used such narrow spaces inside a boat to take the perfect shots, and how the scriptwriter had managed to create a feeling of sympathy in the audience's heart for a wealthy garment factory owner whose greed was responsible for the death of hundreds of his workers. I agree with the ideas of independent filmmaker Faridul Ahasan Shourav, who writes in his new book, *Journey by Cinema* (Gronthik Prokashon, 2021), that one of the biggest strengths of *Komola Rocket* was its ending and the way we do not know whether the launch finally reached its destination safely, because the director left the meaning of the last scene open to the audience's interpretation.

In *Journey by Cinema: Dhaka-Kolkata Notun Route E*, writer, photographer, and film activist Faridul Ahasan Shourav analyses 50 Bangla films made in Bangladesh and India, including independent productions like *Live from Dhaka*, *Jonaki*, and *Amalkatha*, thrillers like *Udhao and Khoj*, science fiction films like *Professor Shanku o El Dorado*, experimental films like *Blackout* and *Nirbaak*, and selections from the political genre like *Herbert*, *Meghe Dhaka Tara*, and so on. In its range and research on art films and filmmaking, the book covers extensive ground on the technical aspects of the field. Shourav talks about and offers criticism on screenplay, acting, direction, cinematography, art direction, sound design, editing, make-up, and music composition, all from his unique point of view. His language is natural and accessible, making it easy for readers to connect to the many stories he recounts—this is marred only by his expounding of details that may count as spoilers for some of the films.



The positives, though, offset its negatives. In one such highlight, Shourav, revealing the 'behind the scenes' anecdotes from *Nirbaak*, shares how director Srijeet Mukherjee's creative impulses had been inspired by Salvador Dali's anthropomorphic paintings. These backstories were the most fascinating part of the book for me, difficult as it is to find reliable resources for 'behind the scenes' stories related to Bangla films, amidst the pool of Hollywood- and Bollywood-centric content on YouTube.

Regarding the credo of the author, it is evident in his writing that Shourav is reluctant to strongly criticise art films in the book. He rather picks through a heap of Bangla movies so that the reader can easily select good films to watch, and engage in conversations on interpretation, over a comforting cup of tea or some rice.

Nujhat Jahan Khan is a media professional.

## BOOK REVIEW: HISTORICAL FICTION

## A poet, a murder mystery, and a vivid portrait of 1857 India

SARAH ANJUM BARI &amp; SHAH TAZRIAN ASHRAFI

In 1857, a wave of uprisings sparked through India in a bid to overthrow the British rulers. The Sepoy Mutiny was the first time Indian soldiers rose against the British East India Company in the face of corruption and unjust social reforms—including ruthless land taxes that unfairly penalised the working class. Set in this time period, Raza Mir's debut novel, *Murder at the Mushaira* (Aleph Book Company, 2021), is as much a murder mystery as it is a historical portrait.

On the morning of the 8th of Ramzan in 1273 AH, one British spy and "oily syphiant" by the name of Sukhan Khairabadi is found dead at a mushaira at the novel's beginning, after a night of ritualised poetry readings at Nawab Ifukhar Hasan's haveli. His death gains the highest priority among British officials as they assume it must have links to the brewing rumors of rebellion. As investigating officer, Kirorimal Chainsukh, is entrusted with the duty to find Khairabadi's killer, the fatal threat of meeting a deadline motivates him to seek the help of "amateur detective" and poet laureate Mirza Ghalib, whose wit, intelligence, knowledge, and connections with Delhi's elites make him a valuable asset for solving crime. Pressure from the British mounts, and Ghalib pulls in his forensics-specialist friend Master Ramchandra to get to the bottom of the mysterious crime.

As Chainsukh, Ramchandra, and a delightfully Sherlock-like Ghalib are thrust into the heart of the investigation, they stumble across a sea of suspects and secrets tied with the tensions brewing between the Company and rebel soldiers. Why was Khairabadi poisoned on top of being stabbed? How many killers were involved? Was his death truly connected with the brewing rebellion? Previously the author of *Ghalib: A Thousand Desires* (Penguin, 2019) and *The Taste of*

*Words: An Introduction to Urdu Poetry* (Penguin, 2014), Raza Mir's detour to fiction here is marked with sharp attention to detail, especially when he describes the food, clothing, architecture, ammunition, and science in the world of the novel. Dum biryani, kebabs, parathas and quail-stuffed goats mount the tables inside a shining haveli, abundant, yet "miraculously soft on the eye", and the prose soon absorbs the reader into a Delhi humming under the 19th century rule of emperors, landlords, and colonial powers; a Delhi in which newsprint is as valuable



ILLUSTRATION: ZAREEN TASNIM BUSHRA

as gold, and a grand horizon is framed by the Red Fort, its Lahori Darwaza, and the canals of Chandni Chowk. This is more than vacant imagery, though, because they are filtered by the points of view of servers and house maids, whose outlook on the decadence casts subtle judgment on its careless cruelty and wastefulness. "What could one

expect", Mir's narrator writes on the eve of the murder, "when one served the inebriated and depraved nobility of Delhi, who stood around and spouted empty erotic verse while two-faced foreigners stole their country from under their noses?"

Against this artful worldbuilding, the quick pace of the plot and a stiffness to the characters—whose list is rather long—make it hard to become emotionally invested in the story or its people. Their stories are most heartfelt when narrated through inner monologues; in conversation, their dialogues feel rigid and reversed.

In spite of this, a whirlwind of emotions befalls the reader towards the novel's climax, as one tragic event after another, each touched by the characters' acts of bravery and sacrifice, pile up. As we witness, also, the harassment of farmers by jagirdars and zamindars as a means of keeping large sections of people subjugated, Raza Mir's exploration of colonial violence through the lens of India and the Sepoy Mutiny is remarkable. The nod to Orhan Pamuk's *My Name Is Red* (Faber & Faber, 2001) is all too evident in the structure of the text, in the verses of poetry spearheading each chapter and its alternating narrators. But though present, the debate between originality and reproduction of art is secondary in this story.

*Murder at the Mushaira*, essentially, is interested in the distillation of larger historical and political narratives into the ordinary. It is a masterclass in evocative worldbuilding and the writing of crisp, clean prose. The pleasure of reading it would have been heightened with more seamless execution of some characters and scenes.

Sarah Anjum Bari is editor of *Daily Star Books*. Email: sarah.anjum.bari@gmail.com  
Shah Tazrian Ashrafi is a contributor.



## Vandalised livelihoods of Bangladeshi expats in South Africa

*Urgent action needed from our government*

It is extremely disturbing to learn of the plight of Bangladeshi expats in South Africa, as over 400 Bangladeshi-owned shops have been vandalised and looted in Free State's capital, Bloemfontein, since May 16. These attacks were carried out as part of the protest against the shortcomings of the local government in providing its services. No doubt the misled belief that migrants are "stealing" opportunities for locals is behind the targeted attacks on shops owned by Bangladeshis and other foreign expats.

The nearly 10,000 Bangladeshis living in and around the Bloemfontein area now fear for their lives and livelihoods. Those who have already lost their shops and businesses are currently taking shelter with other Bangladeshi migrants near the town. This large-scale vandalism has led to many losing everything they had. On top of this, those who want to return home to Bangladesh are unable to do so, given that entries from South Africa have been banned since April due to the fear of the country's Covid-19 variant spreading here.

While we realise how frustrating it can be to witness the local authorities not providing their due service to the members of the public, we condemn the targeted and ruthless attacks against the businesses and homes of Bangladeshis and other migrants by South African locals.

We also believe the Bangladesh government and its representative in South Africa, the Bangladesh High Commission in Pretoria, should act urgently to aid our expats who have suffered these attacks. Simply "collecting information about the incident", as the foreign minister said the high commission has been asked to do, is not enough. There needs to be a marked effort to help the affected come back to Bangladesh safely (with necessary health checks performed, of course) or to aid them in recovering their livelihoods in South Africa. We hope the high commission has made its concern for the safety of the lives and livelihoods of Bangladeshis known to the South African government which has an obligation to protect foreigners living in their country.

## Sinopharm vaccine delivery in June a welcome announcement

*Diversification of vaccine sources should have been a priority months ago*

We commend the government's quick action in securing more vaccines for the citizens during the Covid-19 pandemic, especially since we have recently seen a spike in cases, prompting another round of lockdown across the country. According to Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen, Bangladesh will purchase 1.5 crore Sinopharm vaccines from China, and its first consignment of 50 lakh vaccines is likely to arrive in Dhaka in June. The remaining one crore will arrive in July and August, with 50 lakh vaccines being delivered each month. The minister also said that a Chinese team will visit Bangladesh in a week or so to see the feasibility of vaccine co-production, and that discussions with Russia are also in its final stages.

While we are glad to hear of this positive turn of events, we cannot help but wonder why such steps were not taken much earlier, instead of Bangladesh becoming wholly dependent on one source of vaccination. This has turned out to be a crucial error since, so far, the Serum Institute of India has delivered only seven million of the 30 million vaccines bought by Bangladesh, and the authorities are scrambling to make up for this vaccine shortfall.

Yet almost eight months ago, in September 2020, Health Minister Zahid Maleque told *The Daily Star* that Russia was not only keen to provide Bangladesh with Covid-19 vaccines, but wanted to explore options of manufacturing the vaccine within Bangladesh as well. We are at a loss to understand why—when this possibility opened up so long ago—we had to wait until April 2021 for talks between the two countries on the potential supply and manufacture of Sputnik V within Bangladesh.

We feel the authorities, in a similar fashion, failed to explore the option of Chinese vaccines last year, even though in June 2020, the Chinese embassy in Dhaka confirmed that Bangladesh will be a priority once China has developed a vaccine. However, after the possibility to collaborate with Sinovac on vaccine trials in the country fell through when the Chinese company asked Bangladesh to co-fund the project, no more was heard on the matter of procuring Chinese vaccines.

With Covid-19 cases soaring in districts bordering India, experts have expressed fears of another coronavirus surge in Bangladesh by the end of next month if transmission of the Indian variant cannot be contained. There is absolutely no room for complacency in this scenario. The government must make amends for its previous lethargy and ramp up efforts to get Covid-19 vaccines from all possible sources in order to urgently re-start Bangladesh's vaccination programme.

# HANDLING OF THE SECOND WAVE

## Can someone in the administration please explain their decisions?



BRIG GEN SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN NDC, PSC (RETD)

It is not easy to rationalise some of the recent actions of the government related to the realm of governance, in other words, related to us the people. For now, let us address the second wave of the pandemic and the government's actions or reactions to deal with it.

Can anyone tell me why the government continues to extend the so-called lockdown which is being observed only through its violation by most people? What is the logic in keeping the shopping malls open without ensuring that the safety guidelines are followed? The poor and marginalised people, who eke out a living doing daily jobs like the Pedit cab ("Pedit cab" gives some dignity to the rickshaw pullers) or three-wheeler drivers, were kept from plying the road without arranging for their sustenance, while private cars were seen chock-a-block on the streets. Their owners were going to tend to their businesses which provide their livelihoods.

For a considerable time, buses, both private and public, were kept off the road but private offices remained open. How were those who work in these private enterprises, most of them of the lower and middle-income groups, to attend office? Small shops were asked to close, at least

during the early phase of the lockdown in April, whereas big shopping malls were allowed to stay open. And very few were seen to be observing the Covid-19 safety protocols in these malls. When public buses were allowed eventually, with the caveat that they could carry only fifty percent of the capacity, the fare was increased by sixty percent—strange logic, if anyone can find any logic at all.

But what has defied reason most is the government decision to keep all kinds

doubled from what it was in early and mid-May.

The vaccine fiasco is another difficult issue for anyone with anything between the ears to figure out. The pandemic has spawned some new terminologies of which "Covid diplomacy" is one, followed by the "vaccine diplomacy". We saw the frenetic vaccine diplomacy early this year, sometimes open and sometimes furtive, by two of our close friends, both vying for our backing on strategic and geopolitical

decision makers, in their infinite wisdom and magnanimity, had paid for the three million doses in full and in advance. We were left in the limbo, and China had the last laugh. China has finally agreed to sell 1.5 crore Sinopharm vaccines to us and the first consignment is likely to arrive in Dhaka in June, according to a statement made by our foreign minister on Wednesday. That is some comfort.

Surprisingly, very little about this matter has been discussed or commented upon in the media, and very few questions asked, if at all.

The government's handling of vaccine procurement reeks of unprofessionalism, and has been bereft of any concern for national security. One needs hardly reminding that public health is an important adjunct of national security, particularly when it has been afflicted severely by an unprecedented pandemic, in Bangladesh as well as almost all countries in the world. And no one should tinker with it. Going for only one single source, for any item, and more so Covid vaccine, defies the basic fundamentals of procurement. No one has the right to put public health at risk, which this very injudicious decision had.

We are fighting an enemy for which one of the main weapons is vaccines. Should we have depended on only one source of supply and one business house at home to handle this issue, even if the cost was cheaper than other vaccines? Keeping handy alternatives and multiple sources is a part of intelligent and judicious planning. On the issue of cost, can anyone tell me what have we done to be charged more than a dollar for the vaccine than what it costs in India?

The nation deserves an answer. Such an issue would have been discussed in parliament were it functioning the way it was meant to be. Decisions should stem from thrashing out all options and their pros and cons. The administration owes it to the people to do so. But today, one cannot ask unpleasant questions or reveal unpleasant facts without risking the Sword of Damocles—the draconian Digital Security Act—falling on one's head, or another one—the Official Secrets Act—as it did on the head of a senior journalist of the leading Bangla daily in the country. There are more questions to be asked regarding that and a few more pressing national issues, but we shall defer those for next week.

Brig Gen Shahedul Anam Khan, ndc, psc (Retd), is a former Associate Editor of *The Daily Star*.



The government-enforced lockdown has proved to be a complete farce with contradictory decisions coming from the policymakers and people continuing to disregard health safety guidelines.

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

*The government's handling of vaccine procurement reeks of unprofessionalism, and is bereft of any concern for national security. One needs hardly reminding that public health is an important adjunct of national security*

of transports off the road during the Eid holidays, hoping that doing so would discourage people from travelling home. Did it? No administration conversant with the traits and attitude of its people, or alive to their woes, could have thought of such a policy. Nothing can keep our people from going home on the occasions of the two major festivals of Eid, except perhaps an all-out curfew. And nothing could. In fact, nearly three million people had reportedly left Dhaka for the Eid holidays and a large number, if not as many, had come in Dhaka. We are all aware of the way these people made for their destinations. Wouldn't it have been better if all the modes of surface transport could run with enforced safety protocols? That would have saved these poor people money and physical torment as well as ensured a modicum of health safety. No wonder, the number of infected cases has

issues. Ultimately, our government put everything in the Indian basket, for whatever reason. It was a victory of sorts for India over China, which was also in the running for acquiring contract with Bangladesh to supply Covid vaccines, but only fleeting, revealing what Shashi Tharoor calls "unspoken subtext: rivalry with China". And we were left high and dry in the face of the Serum Institute of India reneging on the agreement.

Serum even failed to meet up the agreed amount of five million doses per month, except for the first month. Not only could it not supply the agreed quantity of doses, after the second consignment, the supply was stopped altogether. Should our planners not have foreseen a *force majeure* situation where India's own requirement might necessitate disrupting external supply, as was the case in this instance? Surprisingly, our

## The case against SP Babul Akter

*Only a robust investigation can serve justice*



MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

The complainant is now complained against. This dramatic development, however, does not come as a total surprise because, in the informed quarters, there was a continuing suspicion of the veracity of the complainant's version of the incident that allegedly led to the killing of his wife in 2016 in broad daylight in Chattogram city. We are talking about the arrest and remand of former Superintendent of Police (SP) Babul Akter, who had earlier lodged a murder complaint accusing some unidentified criminals, without furnishing credible and cogent motives for the murder of his wife.

It may be recalled that SP Babul Akter was very much under the cloud of suspicion immediately after the murder. Reportedly, a high-powered committee, formed by the commissioner of Chattogram Metropolitan Police to enquire into the incident, found traces of culpability in the conduct and actions of the complainant husband, and accordingly sent a report to the Police Headquarters.

At the Police Headquarters, some senior police officers reportedly interrogated Babul Akter and they also did not find the actions and submissions of the said officer above board. In short, Babul's version of the incident supposedly occurring due to his actions taken against terrorists and criminals was not found to be credible. He was, however, not charged for criminal actions, as sufficient evidence pointing to his culpability was not forthcoming at the time. The officer reportedly resigned which was accepted by the government, although there were speculations that he was, in fact, eased out of public service for unbecoming conduct and disturbing accusations pointing to his probable involvement in the conspiracy to commit the murder of his wife.

In spite of what has happened during the time since May 2016, when the unfortunate murder took place, the redeeming feature as of now is the Police Bureau of Investigation's non-acceptance of the version given by the accused officer, as well as the registration of a regular case



File photo of former SP Babul Akter (Centre).

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

for murder and conspiracy and the arrest and remand of the suspect. At the time of writing this piece, it has been learnt that Babul Akter declined to judicially confess his involvement in the murder conspiracy. This was only natural, the accused being an investigator of some experience himself and suspected to be criminally disposed.

It would be pertinent to mention here that judicial confession, even if given by an accused, is not a strong piece of evidence in the absence of credible material and oral corroboration, and almost invariably runs the risk of being retracted during the trial process. The need, therefore, quite clearly, is the unearthing of the conspiracy and resultant commission of the murder. So when this writer is urging a robust investigation, the import is that the investigation should move, in earnest, from the evidence to the accused and not otherwise.

According to media reports in this

regard, the source of the accused officer who allegedly hired the killers has been able to evade arrest thus far. Therefore, the arrest of this individual is strongly likely to unearth the motive and conspiracy of the murder. Any experienced investigator would know about the needful to be done following the apprehension of an abettor of criminal conspiracy.

This writer would recommend caution in the process of investigation. It needs to be mentioned that the rule of law, in its application to the criminal process, is primarily concerned with the protection of the rights of the accused persons and not of the victims, and upholding civil liberties of the citizens. To many, both the rule of law and its subservient criminal jurisprudence are unequivocally in favour of the offenders, the criminals, the lawbreakers, the accused. Experts say that the dice, from the very beginning, is loaded against the effectiveness of

investigation.

In a case where the charge against the accused is one of murder, in the normal course, it may not be possible to convict the accused on circumstantial evidence without adducing direct evidence. Though there is no legal infirmity in basing conviction only on circumstantial evidence, it has to be satisfied that the circumstances from which the inference of guilt is to be drawn have been fully established by unimpeachable evidence beyond a shadow of doubt. We have to remember that the accused is not to prove his case but has simply to give a reasonable explanation to the charge.

Admittedly, investigators have a difficult task at hand. They have to come with flying colours in the interest of honest and truthful investigation as also the ethos of public service.

Muhammad Nurul Huda is a former IGP of Bangladesh.



# Why removing 'except Israel' from passport is problematic



**W**HAT the Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said on May 20 about his ministry's predicament is nothing unique. Expressing his regret about Prothom Alo journalist Rozina Islam's arrest, he said, "As foreign

ministry, we have to face questions over this." Dropping the words "except Israel" from the declaration of validity of the Bangladesh passport, too, made him and his ministry face questions that are quite intriguing and not so easy to brush aside.

The BBC Bangla on May 24 reported that following the publication of the news, the foreign minister called Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal and was told that the decision had been taken six months before. It indicates that this was done without any assessment of any political fallout or legal consequences. Despite his assertion that "there has been no change in Bangladesh's position towards Israel as it still does not recognise Israel," the unintended consequences of the controversial change are quite worrying and should not be ignored.

When I got my first passport in the early eighties, it had a declaration saying it was valid for all countries except South Africa, Taiwan and Israel. At the time, South Africa was an apartheid state and facing a global boycott except in a handful of Western colonial powers. Dropping of South Africa's name from the exclusion list happened only after the abolition of apartheid and end of the boycott.

During the last decade, Taiwan too has been quietly dropped from the exclusion list although we do not have any diplomatic ties with them. It happened due to extensive lobbying by some business groups that even tried to allow Taiwan to open a trade

liaison office in Dhaka. It caused some diplomatic tension with China and, in the end, permission was denied for allowing a trade mission. But those business lobbies have achieved their objectives, as dropping the name from the exclusion list allows them to make business trips to Taiwan.

The explanation given by the government for removing "except Israel" from the passport seems a feeble one as many other countries, who do not have diplomatic ties with Israel, still maintain such exclusion written on their passports. Any claim implying that passports of countries like Malaysia, for example, are not up to the international standard is laughable.

Therefore, a plausible explanation could be that something similar to Taiwan may have contributed to this move. If not, then could it be in the interests of some state entities that have pressing needs for hi-tech services from Israel, as it has very high reputation in sophisticated technologies including in the field of security and defence?

The news of the change, though



FILE PHOTO

*The explanation given by the government for removing "except Israel" from the passport seems a feeble one as many other countries, who do not have diplomatic ties with Israel, still maintain such exclusion written on their passports.*

introduced six months before, without any announcement, could not have come at a worst time when Israel faces heavy criticism all over the world for its airstrikes on Gaza, including from some of its long-time allies and backers. The timing of the decision is rather intriguing, which is around November 2020, the month when elections were taking place in the United States. It was the time when President Trump and his son-in law Jared Kushner were pressing Muslim countries to establish direct diplomatic ties with Israel following the signing of the Abraham Accords between Israel and Bahrain and the UAE. The Trump administration also succeeded in bringing in Sudan and Morocco, in October and December respectively, to sign deals with Israel for normalisation of relations. Can we rule out a similar move on the part of the Trump administration to push Dhaka towards normalising relations with Israel?

As passports are meant for certifying the holder's identity and citizenship issued by a government, entitling them to travel opportunities under its protection to and from foreign countries, any country excluded in the document is bound to refuse the holder's entry into its territory. So, removal of "except Israel" will certainly make Bangladesh passport a valid travel document for Israel. Despite not having any diplomatic relations, any Bangladeshi will be able to apply for visa at any Israeli embassy in a third country. And, after receiving a visa, visiting Israel will no longer be an offence under Bangladeshi law. Is there any law that can prevent such visits? In the past, visiting Israel was treated as an offence. The assertion by Bangladeshi officials that the ban on travelling to Israel remains in place is perhaps more of a political statement rather than one backed by law.

Understandably, at the beginning, Israel

will be keen on issuing visas, albeit for a short time. Because, any relationship, formal or informal, with a country having the world's third largest Muslim population is something that helps Israel boost its image. The top two countries with the highest Muslim population are Indonesia and Pakistan, with whom Israel has not succeeded in establishing any formal ties. In this context, Israelis have every reason to be elated at the development in Bangladesh as its recent military actions in Gaza against Palestinian civilians have seriously dented its image. The Deputy Director General in charge of Asia Pacific at the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Gilad Cohen's "Great news!" tweet is not the only one expressing jubilation at this development; Israel's mainstream media too were cheerful, like the Haaretz, which claimed it was "essentially lifting a decades-long travel ban".

The significance of the end of "expressed boycott" of Israel should not be underestimated, as for Israel, the global movement known as Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) has been hurting them for over a decade. The BDS movement's wider impact has been hurting Israel so much that the US has banned this grassroots campaign by law, following the former's successful lobbying, and some other European countries are also considering doing the same.

If there is no other purpose behind removing the words "except Israel" from the new Bangladeshi passport, then the government should immediately recall all new passports and affix those words by putting a stamp or seal bearing the declaration of Israel's exclusion. Now is not the time to change policy about Israel. Emotions among people about the Palestinians' just struggle for freedom and an end to illegal occupation there are running high. And, there's no apparent gain in changing the course that we have been following for 50 years.

Kamal Ahmed is a freelance journalist.

# School closure should be a last resort

HYUNCHEOL BRYANT KIM, SUNGSUP RA, and RYOTARO HAYASHI

**S**CHOOLS have been fully or partially closed for more than a year in many developing countries. As of March 29, 2021, the world's longest full closure was in Bangladesh, at 47 weeks, according to the UNESCO. Myanmar was close behind, at 43 weeks, and the Philippines, at 33 weeks. When partial school closure is included, Nepal is highest (53 weeks) in the world and school closures in South Asia continued, especially long closures in the developing Asian region.

Indeed, as Covid-19 variants surge in some developing countries in Asia, policy makers may even be considering extending school closures. But is this the right approach?

Some policy makers want to keep schools closed until large-scale vaccination is achieved in a given population, which may contribute to herd immunity. Yet, this goal will take time, especially in developing countries, given limited vaccine availability, complicated logistics, and phased deployment approaches. This is particularly true since vaccination for school-aged children has not yet been fully developed.

It is against this backdrop that we ask whether school closures should still be considered a priority option for developing countries.

We argue that school closure should be a last resort. The projected economic cost is huge: A recent Asian Development Bank estimate suggests a present value of USD 1.25 trillion in future earnings losses in Asia and the Pacific assuming that every student loses USD 180 every year from their expected future annual earnings. In addition, many developing countries have struggled to adopt online and distance education, due to variable access to digital devices and internet, meaning many children are simply going without schooling.

Despite these apparent long-term



PHOTO: ADB

**School closure should be a last resort, in part because it is expected to cause students in Asia and the Pacific to lose future annual earnings.**

economic losses and rising learning inequality, some policy makers still wish to keep schools closed to protect children from Covid-19. It makes sense to introduce strict lockdown including school closure when Covid-19 variants are increasing exponentially, as we have seen in some developing countries over the last few weeks. For those countries with relatively less risk, however, it is reasonable to question whether school closure is the best option to save children's lives.

Looking at ground reality, school closure does not mean children are quarantined all the time. Some might meet their friends at the friends' houses or at the playground, without wearing masks. And even if they stay home, evidence in Bangladesh suggests that even poor households bring coaching and private tutoring from outside the family to compensate for learning loss. These behaviours could bring more Covid-19 risks to children and their household members. Conversely, several rigorous studies

provide evidence of what Covid-19 infection would be like without school closure. Evidence from Australia, Germany, Italy, the Republic of Korea and the United States consistently shows that school closure appears to have limited or no effect on Covid-19 incidence. The exception is Israel, which found a small gradual increase in Covid-19 incidence after schools were reopened, but no observed increase of Covid-19 related hospitalisations and deaths. Policy makers in developing countries

may counter that evidence for developing countries is lacking. This sounds pertinent because schools in developing countries may not have good water and sanitation facilities. Higher density in classrooms and greater teacher absenteeism could also challenge safe school environments against Covid-19 transmission. In addition, policy makers could argue that the above evidence is outdated given new Covid-19 variants, which could cause more paediatric infections resulting into some cases of mortality for school-aged children.

However, where Covid-19 variants are not increasing exponentially, each country could gather evidence through pilot school reopenings in their own contexts, with stringent provision of measures in place to protect student safety. The Covid-19 variants could affect more children. However, Covid-19 infection might not necessarily come more from school reopening compared with the counterfactual scenario of continued school closure. In case it does, the effect of school closure may not be large enough to justify the irreparable damage to children in both the near and the longer terms.

Evidence for developing countries may not get produced fast enough, and many guidance notes and lessons learned are available nowadays for making schools safer, such as wearing masks. Schools that follow good practices could actually be safer for children than keeping them at home.

It goes without saying that if school closures are lifted, situations must be closely monitored, particularly the effect of Covid-19 variants.

As such, we must keep in mind that school closure should not be a first option. The school reopening decision should adopt a risk-based approach and school closure be used as a last resort.

Hyuncheol Bryant Kim is Associate Professor, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology. Sungsup Ra is Director, Human and Social Development Division, South Asia Regional Department, ADB. Ryotaro Hayashi is Social Sector Specialist, South Asia Regional Department, ADB.

## QUOTABLE Quote



**SONIA SOTOMAYOR**  
Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States (1954—)

*If the system is broken, my inclination is to fix it rather than to fight it.*

## CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

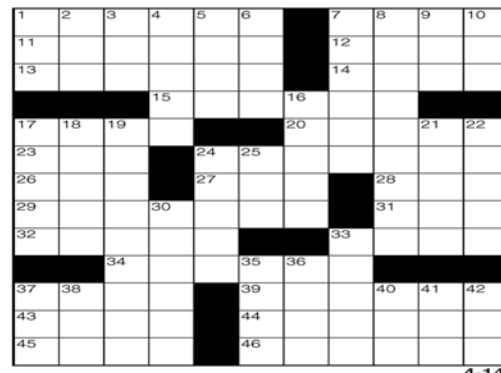
### ACROSS

- 1 Movie excerpt
- 5 Cricket or crew
- 10 Indy entrant
- 12 Printer need
- 13 Join forces
- 14 Concert setting
- 15 Chess piece
- 16 Like early sci-fi monsters
- 18 Mogul
- 20 Really impress
- 21 Verdi opera
- 23 Stoplight color
- 24 Fancy dance
- 26 Funny Foxx
- 28 Homer's neighbor
- 29 Shore flier
- 31 "\_\_\_pig's eye!"
- 32 Ask out cf

- 36 Illegal searches, in slang
- 39 Writer Rita \_\_\_Brown
- 40 Smoker's pipe
- 41 Letter before iota
- 43 Director Sergio
- 44 Wise ones
- 45 Slalom curves
- 46 Schooner pole

### DOWN

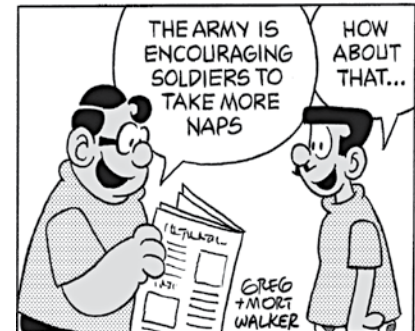
- 1 Cookie bit
- 2 Roofed patio
- 3 Cake cover
- 4 Sulky state
- 5 Antlered animal
- 6 Skin opening
- 7 Three feet
- 8 Made fresh
- 9 Bartered
- 11 Like some engines
- 17 German conjunction
- 19 Gadot of "Wonder Woman"
- 22 Collars
- 24 City on the Ganges
- 25 Slow movements
- 27 Sch. Subj
- 28 Tiny taste
- 30 Flow out
- 33 Letter after psi
- 34 Trio of myth
- 35 Banquet
- 37 George Jetson's wife
- 38 Mine yields
- 42 Deli meat



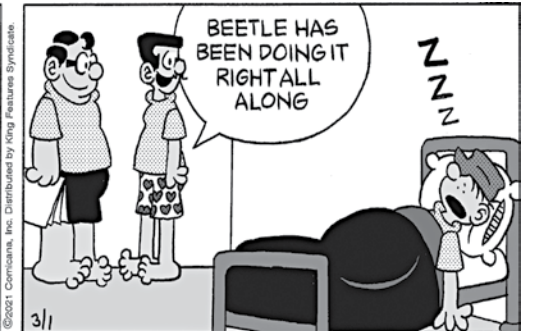
## MONDAY'S ANSWERS

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

## BEETLE BAILEY



## BY MORT WALKER



## BABY BLUES

## BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



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



## No reason

FROM PAGE 1

"We have also talked to them [Birdem doctors]. They also have not confirmed [the matter] to us. But we are investigating the matter," Prof Khurshid said.

Meanwhile, Nazmul Islam, spokesperson of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), yesterday said a guideline on preventing and treating black fungus infection might be issued soon.

"It [black fungus] can only cause an outbreak in some special situation. We are closely observing the development. We hope it won't get out of hand," he told a virtual briefing.

Mucormycosis has specific treatment, he said. "There is no evidence that it infects many people. But the treatment is definitely expensive."

The clinical management committee of the DGHS has been working to adopt a guideline as early as possible, he informed.

"We will give specific proposals within a very short time because the drugs needed to treat black fungus are not easily available. Considering this, we are working so that no one can take advantage [of the situation]," he said.

A team of experts is examining the people said to be infected with black fungus, he said, urging everyone to wait for the findings of the experts.

According to the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Mucormycetes, the group of fungi that cause mucormycosis, are more common in soil than in air, and in summer and fall than in winter or spring. Most people come in contact with microscopic fungal spores every day. So, it's probably impossible to completely avoid coming in contact with mucormycetes."

These fungi aren't harmful to most people. However, for people who have weakened immune systems, breathing in mucormycete spores can cause an infection in the lungs or sinuses which can spread to other parts of the body."

## Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 12

consisted of Noorjahan Murshed, who was elected to the Pakistan National Assembly, Phani Bhushan Majumdar and Shah Moazzem Hussain. About 60 MPs belonging to different Indian political parties attended the meeting.

Phani Bhushan Majumdar said the recognition by India of the Bangladesh government would certainly boost the morale of the Bangladesh people, enhance prestige of the newborn state and inspire other countries to follow suit.

**LECTURE SERIES ON BANGLADESH OPENED**  
The Bangladesh martyrs memorial lecture series was inaugurated at a function recently held at the Indian Association Hall under the auspices of Lekhok-Shilpi-Sikshabrat-O-Samajkarmi Sangha.

Tracing the liberation movement during the past 23 years, Kamaruzzaman, president of the Bangladesh Sikhak Sahayak Samiti and in-charge of the educational and cultural affairs of the Bangladesh government, gave a vivid account of how poor countrymen of East Pakistan were being exploited by the West Pakistani ruling clique.

**US PLAN FOR FOOD RELIEF IN EAST PAKISTAN**  
On May 27, 1971, Executive Secretary of the US Department of State Theodore Eliot sent a memorandum to the US President's Assistant for National Security Affairs Henry Kissinger as to the planning for food relief in East Pakistan:

"We have already taken initial steps to ensure that food is available in India for refugees from Pakistan. Beyond this, however, looms the potentially much greater problem of food shortages in East Pakistan itself, which normally must import two million tonnes of food annually. There is now sufficient food either in stock or awaiting shipment to East Pakistan, but the critical problem is distribution. We believe that about 1.5 million people in the area hit by cyclones last November are now in dire need of food, and there is likely to be a food shortage throughout the province unless the Government of Pakistan mounts a large-scale relief program within the next few months. An Interdepartmental Working Group has been set up to coordinate all aspects of our contribution to relief work in Bengal but we recognize that neither we nor any outside donor can be of more than marginal help in meeting the problem."

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

## Interest burden 6pc heavier in next fiscal

FROM PAGE 1

the savings instruments, whereas most of the banks are collecting deposits at 4 percent interest at most.

Subsequently, sales of national savings certificates in the first nine months of the fiscal year overshot the full-year target by 66 percent.

The government had set a target of borrowing Tk 20,000 crore by way of savings certificates in fiscal 2020-21.

"When the banks are sitting on excess liquidity, why are we taking on debt through savings certificates? This is unnecessary," said Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office.

The government could have very well gotten the funds at 2-3 percent interest had it turned to the banks, which are sitting on excess liquidity of about Tk 198,400 crore as of March, up a whopping 120.7 percent from a year earlier.

What is more, the government was a loser in two ways for its excessive borrowing through savings certificates: a big amount that it mopped up was black money.

On one hand, the black money holders had evaded tax over the years, and on the other hand, they would be getting higher interest on the sum.

In the first nine months of the fiscal year, a record Tk 14,295 crore

was legalised, and a major sum was by investing in savings certificates and fixed deposits.

"Given the state of the economy, we could have easily taken on more debt. And we could have done better on the loans we are taking and the interest we are paying," Hussain said, adding that the government's foreign aid use could have been better.

External debt indicators are below their thresholds and the public debt level is below the benchmark under the baseline and stress test scenarios, said a recent report of the International Monetary Fund.

As of September last year, the government's stock of outstanding foreign loans stands at \$45.3 billion, according to the Economic Relations Division of the finance ministry.

The interest rate on funds from the WB is 1.25 percent, the Asian Development Bank 2 percent and from Japan International Cooperation Agency less than 1 percent.

Besides, as of April, about \$50.2 billion of foreign aid is sitting idle in the pipeline, while the WB, the ADB and other development partners have expressed their intent to provide budget support to the Bangladesh economy to better manage the pandemic whirlwind.

More funds would flow into

Bangladesh give the negative interest rates in the developed world but the Bangladesh government's low absorption capacity is getting in the way.

The government's foreign aid utilisation has improved and it is thanks to different steps taken in recent times, said Kazi Shafiqul Islam, a former ERD secretary.

Foreign aid utilisation in a year hovered around the \$6 billion-mark but in fiscal 2019-20, it was about \$7.3 billion -- which is the highest yet.

If the \$735 million of cash support from the IMF for the pandemic is considered, the amount crosses the \$8 billion-mark.

And Bangladesh's under par foreign aid utilisation is not always of its doing, according to Islam.

"Delays take place because of issues on both sides."

The donor side lays out conditions for projects, particularly for procurement, which can be time-consuming.

"Those conditions are sometimes necessary as there is less corruption."

On the Bangladesh side, there are efficiency issues amongst the ministries and divisions.

"Projects are revised many times," Islam added.

Regardless, the government needs

to undertake reforms to address the weak fiscal capacity, which necessitates turning to expensive borrowing instruments, said Ashikur Rahman, senior economist at the Policy Research Institute, a think-tank. "Our current tax to GDP ratio is extremely low and is around 8 percent, which contradicts what was planned in the 7th Five-Year Plan [2016-2020] and 8th Five-Year Plan [2021-2025]. This underscores the urgency with which finance ministry should prioritise critical fiscal reforms that should, over time, reduce our dependence on expensive borrowing instruments," he added.

At the granular level, the higher interest payments mean the government has less to spend on important areas such as infrastructure, health and education systems, and social protection, said Syed Akhtar Mahmood, a former economist of the WB.

"Increasing interest payments are a consequence of high and increasing public debt, which, in turn, is due to a mismatch between government expenditures and revenues. Thus, it is important that government makes a greater effort to boost its revenue earnings -- our tax/GDP ratio is rather low -- and ensure that its expenditures are efficient," he added.

## Souls founder Ronny Barua passes away

FROM PAGE 12

nurturing his own dreams of making music as a part of a band. He was further motivated by "Guru" Azam Khan and his band Uchcharon, with Azam Khan being a revolutionary trendsetter for upcoming musicians of that era.

In 1974, he founded Souls alongside Tajul Imam, Sajed Ul Alam, Momtazul Hoque Lulu and Ahmed Nawaz.

Over the years, artistes like Tapan Chowdhury, Naquib Khan, Ayub Bachchu, Partha Barua, and Pilu Khan joined, making the band sound unique and etching a place in the hearts of Bangladeshi listeners.

"Ronny da was an excellent artiste and an amazing human being. His contributions as one of the founding members of Souls were exemplary," shares National Award-winning singer and composer Bappa Mazumdar. "He

was suffering from cancer for a long time and after so many hardships, he lost the battle. I extend my sincerest condolences to his family."

Having graduated in design in 1979, Ronny was also a prominent figure in theatre, directing background music, lighting and set for many plays for Arindyam Natya Sampradaya, including "Elebele", "Paap Punya", "Laalshalu", "Shajan Megh".

Celebrated lyricist Shahid Mahmud Jangi expressed grief at the artiste's passing, as did many members of the musical fraternity on social media.

"My childhood friend, founding member of Souls and everyone's beloved Subrata Barua Ronny has left us," he wrote on Facebook. "My condolences to his family." He had written many famous songs for Renaissance, Souls and LRB, having formed a close bond with Subrata Barua Ronny.

With organisations Chattogram Charushipli Sangathan and Shaikatchari, Ronny actively worked to ensure the district's first Pohela Boishakh celebrations. For 15 years, he had overseen Chattogram Shilpakala Academy's Pohela Boishakh Celebrations as well. Ronny was also a pivotal member of Bangladesh Designers' Forum.

Legendary music director and keyboardist of Feedback, Foad Nasser Babu reminisced his relationship with the artiste. "Although he was senior to me, I shared a very friendly relationship with him. We had numerous conversations about music and its development. He was someone that we could depend upon blindly."

"For any suggestions or comments, I could always reach out to him and he would do the same. A brilliant drummer and musician, I believe he was the real 'soul' of Souls. I am deeply

saddened by his demise. He was one of our key supporters when we were trying to set up the Bangladesh Musical Bands Association, also known as BAMB. He was a great friend to Feedback. We worked closely with him and learnt a lot. I convey my prayers and hope he is in a better place now."

Nasim Ali Khan from Souls, on his Facebook post yesterday, said,

"This is a very sad day for me. One of my musical mentors, the selfless soul of Souls, has left for eternity. He was a friend and a soulmate who always inspired me in my strive. Rony da, we shall miss you terribly. You have been an icon and always shall remain one. May you bask in the grace of Allah SWT in heaven till we meet again."

Subrata Barua Ronny's last rites took place yesterday at the Chattogram Buddha Temple. He is survived by his wife, a son and a daughter.

## Mobs loot 50 shops of Bangladeshis

FROM PAGE 1

Brandfort saw the latest wave of attacks on Tuesday after protests broke out there over poor service delivery by the local government, said Sumon Chowdhury, a Bangladeshi businessman who has been in South Africa for 17 years.

Sumon has several shops and malls in Bloemfontein and Brandfort. He said all his shops in Brandfort have been vandalised and looted on Tuesday.

He claimed that this was the first time shops and malls of foreigners were attacked in Brandfort even though such attacks were common in other places of South Africa.

Anisur Rahman, whose four shops were looted and vandalised

in Bloemfontein, told The Daily Star yesterday that several hundred Bangladeshis in Brandfort were living in fear.

"I have friends in Brandfort who told me that they were scared after the attack," said Anisur, who has been in South Africa for 11 years.

"Following the attacks in Bloemfontein, we didn't get any support from our high commission in South Africa. Likewise, Bangladeshis living in Brandfort are yet to get any help from the high commission."

After the attacks in Bloemfontein, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen told The Daily Star that law and order in different parts of South Africa had been not good over the years.

"We are working on how to address

the situation. We have already asked the Bangladesh high commissioner in South Africa to collect information about the incidents," he had told The Daily Star.

According to an estimate of the Bangladesh high commission in South Africa, around three lakh Bangladeshis live in the country. Most of them are involved in businesses while a small number of them have white collar jobs.

Quoting local authorities, news portal The South African reported that at least 70 people were arrested until May 19 after protests began against raw sewage flowing on the streets, poor sanitation, lack of public toilets, unfinished local government projects and public representatives indulging

in corruption.

The tragic killing of a juvenile, who was allegedly shot by a security guard, further intensified the protests.

Daily Maverick, a news portal in South Africa, on Friday reported that frustration with service delivery failures resulted in 585 incidents of public protest between January 2013 and April 2021, 378 (65 percent) of which turned violent.

The xenophobic attacks on foreigners and their businesses are fuelled by the misguided perception that foreigners are reducing economic opportunities for South Africans, it said.

Despite repeated attempts, this newspaper could not reach officials of the Bangladesh high commission in Pretoria for comments.

## No headway in six years

FROM PAGE 12

of its total broad-gauge network, has been electrified by March this year, according to the website of Central Organisation for Railway Electrification (CORE).

CORE, which is responsible for electrification of railway tracks in India, plans to electrify all broad-gauge routes by December 2023.

A former chief electrical engineer of BR said introduction of electric trains in Bangladesh would reduce operation and maintenance costs. Besides, the trains are environment friendly.

The cost of an electric locomotive is much less than that of a diesel locomotive. The BR now spends a huge amount of money on diesel, the engineer said.

He said launching of electric traction system using the existing rail tracks is possible.

Another BR engineer said a diesel locomotive has around 40,000 parts, including a lot of moving ones.

The maintenance cost of an electric locomotive is less as it has fewer moving parts.

**LONG DELAY**  
Bangladesh Railway in February 2015 had sent a proposal to the railways ministry on carrying out feasibility study on converting Dhaka-Chattogram section for electric traction, BR documents show.

The ministry in June that year had asked BR to add Dhaka-Narayanganj section with the Dhaka-Chattogram section. Accordingly, the BR modified the proposal and sent it to the Planning Commission in August that year.

In January 2016, Planning Commission asked BR to modify the proposal again and fixed the feasibility study cost at Tk 8.12 crore against the proposed figure of Tk 9.58 crore.

Two months later, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gave directives to introduce electric trains on Narayanganj-Gazipur section in the first phase.

Subsequently, Planning

Commission in July 2016 asked BR to modify their proposal to conduct the feasibility study on Narayanganj-Dhaka-Joydebpur section, instead of the Dhaka-Chattogram section.

The BR again sent their modified proposal in June 2017. But the Planning Commission held the second meeting on the proposal in July 2019.

In the meantime, the decision changed again following the directives of the government high ups and Bangladesh Railway sent a revised proposal, a BR official said wishing not to be named.

A section of railway officials, who are benefiting from the decades-old diesel-powered rail operation system, are working against the move, three current and retired BR officials claimed.

A huge amount of money is spent for procurement and maintenance of diesel engines and diesel and those officials fear that they would lose

their benefits once the electric traction system is introduced, they said.

"So, they are working against the initiative," a BR official said.

According to officials, once the electric traction system is launched, it will cut 35 percent operation cost and 30 to 50 percent maintenance cost. Besides, it would reduce carbon emission by 20 to 30 percent.

BR Director General Dharendra Nath Mazumdar said electric train was something very new for BR and that's why it was not possible for them to introduce the electric traction system overnight.

"Many things, including new electric engines, are involved with this system. So, introduction of the system is supposed to take time," he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Asked why it was taking six years to start conducting the feasibility study, Dharendra Nath said he has to check documents before commenting on the reasons for the delay.

## Bangladeshis

FROM PAGE 12

Bangladesh Yousef SY Ramadan at the state guesthouse Padma.

"If anyone goes there, that person will be liable to prosecution. There have been such instances."

The minister mentioned that the government never allowed anyone to visit Israel. And the immigration officials will stop anyone from traveling to Israel as they did in the past.

There has been confusion recently over whether Bangladeshis can travel to Israel as the words "except Israel" have been dropped from "This passport is valid for all countries of the world except Israel" printed in e-passport.

The minister had earlier clarified that this was done to maintain the international standard of the passport and it does not mean, in anyway, a change in Bangladesh's foreign policy. Bangladesh maintains its travel ban on Israel.

At yesterday's event, Momen said Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was a strong supporter of the Palestinians. Bangladesh, since its independence, has been providing assistance to Palestine and wants a Two-State solution as per the pre-1967 border.

"Bangladesh raised the Palestine issue time and again at the UN General Assembly. We believe one day an independent and sovereign Palestine will be established."

Beacon Pharmaceuticals Ltd Managing Director Mohammad Ebadul Karim handed over medicines worth Tk 40 lakh to the foreign minister. The humanitarian assistance will be sent to the Palestinians, who faced devastation during the 11-day war between Israel and Hamas.

Momen mentioned that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will provide \$50,000 as humanitarian assistance to the Palestinians. Besides, different organisations and individuals are extending their help to them.

## Mango traders

FROM PAGE 12

Mohammad Shaju, another trader, said he had leased a garden with 300 mango trees at Betbaria village in the district's Sadar upazila spending Tk 4 lakh.

He also could not earn a penny yesterday by selling the mangoes, he said.

Muhammad Nazrul Islam, deputy director of Department of Agriculture Extension (DAE) in the district, said the district's economy depended on mango trade.

A total of 34,738-hectare land in the district is used for mango cultivation. The production target was 2.5 lakh metric tonnes this year, he added.

Contacted, the agriculture department officials said no restriction was imposed on mango farmers and traders. They could send their produce to other districts maintaining health guidelines.

According to the traders, Gopalbhog mangoes were being sold between Tk 1,400 and Tk 1,500 per maund (40kg).

## Seals helping

FROM PAGE 12

That's why a team from the Sea Mammal Research Unit at the University of St Andrews, in Scotland, enlisted the help of some of Antarctica's permanent residents: seals.

The furry, aquatic mammals thrive year-round in the freezing climate and can dive up to 3,000 feet below the water's surface, said Lars Boehme, an oceanographer and one of the project's leaders.

By fitting the seals with sensors, the researchers gain insight into the seals habits and ecology, while also gathering data from inaccessible parts of the ocean.

Scientists around the world are now drawing on this data to learn more about the Antarctic environment and how it could impact climate change.

Researchers have been tagging seals since 2004 to gather environmental information from around Antarctica. However, little was known about the Amundsen Sea in West Antarctica, where two of the continent's fastest melting glaciers -- Pine Island Glacier and Thwaites Glacier -- are located. So in 2014, Boehme led a team to tag seals there.

While six seal species live in Antarctica, only Weddell and southern elephant seals dive into the deeper layers of the ocean -- the main reason these species were chosen for data collection, said Boehme.

The seals are hunted by orcas and other seals in the water, but have no land predators, so the scientists can approach them easily. "They're not running away," said Boehme.

The team members sedate the seals with a blow dart and glue a smartphone-sized sensor to the fur on the backs of their heads. The process doesn't hurt the animals or impact their social lives, said Boehme. Seals molt annually, so the device falls off after a year.

Boehme said the team is careful to minimize their interactions with the seals. Tagging up to 14 seals per trip in 2014, 2019, and 2020, the team have got the process down to just 10 minutes per seal he said, and are working to reduce the size of the devices.

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**"EARNINGS CALL"**  
We are pleased to inform you that the Company will arrange an "Earnings Call" to discuss on the financial results of **Third Quarter (Q3)** for the FY 2020-2021 of the Company on **Tuesday 01 June, 2021** at 3:30 PM via live webcast at the following link of <https://bbscables.bdinvestor.invescon.html> with participant's details. The shareholders or research analyst or financial reporters or other stakeholders can participate in the event by visiting the above link. To participate in the question and answer session, the prior registration is required by filling up the registration form in <http://bbscables.com.bd/investor/invescon.html> with participant's details. The details of Earnings Call can be available in the website ([www.bbscables.com.bd](http://www.bbscables.com.bd)) of the Company.

Place: Dhaka;  
Date: 26 May, 2021

For BBS Cables Ltd.  
SD/-  
**Md. Nazmul Hasan ACS**  
Company Secretary

## Two journos, Somoy TV CEO sued under DSA

FROM PAGE 12

from Chunarughat in Habiganj.

The plaintiff filed the case after Somoy TV ran the report under the headline "Adaloter Tritiyo Srenir Karmacharir Aboidho Sampader Pahar" (mountain of illegal assets of a third class employee of a court) on February 23.

Alamgir in the case statement claimed that the report was "untrue, false, fake, baseless, vindictive and defamatory".

He also filed a Tk 10 crore defamation

case with the First Joint District Judge's Court in Noakhali on May 5 against the same six accused over running the report.

The complainant said his and his family's reputation and prestige were damaged due to the broadcasting of the "false" report by Somoy TV.

Contacted, journalist Afzal, an accused in the cases, said they prepared the report based on the charge sheets in two corruption cases against Alamgir.

The Anti-Corruption Commission had

filed the two cases against Alamgir on charges of amassing illegal wealth and laundering money, he told The Daily Star yesterday.

Afzal also said he did not know the three other co-accused in the two cases and that he had no idea why they were accused.

Describing the Digital Security Act, 2018 as a gag on the free press, different rights bodies and platforms of journalists have criticised use of the law against the media, journalists and rights activists.



## 'I WANT A TROPHY'

Real Madrid's Karim Benzema said he's targeting a trophy with France after he was recalled to their provisional Euro 2020 squad following a controversial, six-year international exile. The prolific star, sidelined by Les Bleus since 2015 over his alleged role in a blackmail plot, missed out on France's 2018 World Cup win and their run to the Euro 2016 final on home soil. Benzema, 33, told L'Equipe he was "proud" of his call-up, which followed talks with France coach Didier Deschamps earlier this month. "I want to win a trophy with the French team," he said, adding that he hoped to "bring a little bit extra" to the World Cup-winners. Benzema, who has 27 goals in 81 international appearances, was last week named as this season's best French foreign-based player by the country's players' association. --- AFP



# Who will take the baton from the Fab Four?

NABID YEASIN



Bangladesh on Tuesday prevailed through a looming threat of cyclone and registered a thumping 103-run victory over Sri Lanka in Mirpur.

The victory sealed the Tigers' first-ever bilateral series win over the Lankans and with it, Bangladesh also segued from a gloomy period into a state of steadiness, for the time being, in their cricketing adventure.

Bangladesh are now at the summit of the ICC ODI Super League table with 50 points in eight matches, and that ought to lift the Tigers' spirit as they achieved all this coming on the back of nine losses out of 10



out of vulnerable situations through their performances. Fifties from Tamim, Mahmudullah and Mushfiqur in the first ODI and a century from Mushfiqur in the second game coasted Tigers to easy victories.

Time and again, selectors sidestep admitting the harsh reality of Bangladesh not possessing a single consistent performer aside from the said quartet by boasting about the 'rich pipeline' they have to lean into at any time.

Head coach Russell Domingo stressed the urgency of preparing for life after Tamim, Shakib, Mahmudullah and Mushfiqur, all of whom are in their 30s, just ahead of the ongoing series. Why did he do so? Perhaps, being part

of the team management and having scrutinised Bangladesh from close quarters in the past few years, Domingo could sense the necessity of the issue he raised in order to formulate a long-term plan, something that the team management often talks about but clearly lacks.

In the last three years, Bangladesh played a total of 44 ODIs, winning 25 of them. Unsurprisingly, during this period the bulk of the runs were scored by the aforementioned four seniors. Out of the 10,798 runs scored by Bangladesh, these four players accounted for 51.42 per cent or 5,552 runs.

The fact that any one or all four of them featured in every ODIs played in the past three years prove

these players' consistency, but it also points out the team's over-dependency on the said cricketers. These players missed any game during this period only due to injuries, suspensions or when they took a leave from national duty as Bangladesh, even after all these years of international cricket, do not possess the luxury of resting any senior player and send a youthful, yet capable, squad to any major tournament or series like India, Australia or England often do.

It obviously augurs well for Bangladesh that the senior players have almost consistently performed over the years, but it could also be a scary thing when considering what Domingo said -- life after the quartet.

Mushfiqur spoke after his match-winning 125 in the second ODI against Sri Lanka, saying: "Would be very happy and hope that the likes of Liton [Das], Afif [Hossain] and Mosaddek [Hossain] start contributing in the near future as it becomes difficult for only the seniors to tackle all the pressure in a game." Was there a hint of concern and frustration in the voice of the senior campaigner? If yes, was his concern not a valid one?

It has been almost six years since the likes of Liton or Soumya Sarkar have been playing almost regularly for Bangladesh with 'potential' and 'talented' tags preceding their names. But unfortunately, they are still fighting to be consistent in the team. At times, there were a number of other players who broke into the squad with significant hype only to fade away after a brief period. While some players have been the victim of the selectors' nonsensical and untimely chop-and-change policy, the others, like Liton and Soumya, have failed after repeated opportunities.

This may be a time for a reality check for Bangladesh. Who is to be blamed here? Should the blame be pinned on the team management for their lack of planning, vision and their process of operating or should the players be faulted for not grabbing opportunities when presented?

The answer needs to be found soon if life after the quartet and Bangladesh's cricketing future is to be secured.



## 'Always tried to focus on little details'

SPORTS REPORTER

Off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz has become only the third bowler from Bangladesh to be ranked among the top two of the MRF Tyres ICC Men's ODI Player Rankings after a fine showing in the first two matches of the three-match ODI series against Sri Lanka. Mehedi has advanced three places to reach the second position after returning figures of four for 30 and three for 28 bowling with the new ball. All-rounder Shakib Al Hasan had grabbed the number one position in 2009 for the first time while left-arm spinner Abdur Razzak is the other Bangladesh bowler to have been in the top two, reaching the second position in 2010.

"When I started playing for the national team, I only played Test matches. I didn't get chances to play ODIs initially. I got a proper chance to play ODI in 2018 during the West Indies tour and we won the series. Since then I've been playing ODI regularly. Playing the World Cup has increased my confidence as I faced world-class players at that time. My goal was not to let the batsmen dominate me. I have always tried to focus on the little details," said the 23-year-old Miraz.

In the last 44 matches over past three years, the quartet of Tamim, Shakib, Mushfiqur and Mahmudullah accounted for 51.42 per cent or 5,552 runs out of a total of 10,798 runs scored by Bangladesh.

matches across formats.

But even after these accomplishments, there still remains a major concern considering the future of Bangladesh cricket. Despite playing in their favourite format and against a rather inexperienced Sri Lanka side, it was once again players from the senior quartet of Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiqur Rahim, Mahmudullah Riyad and Shakib Al Hasan who pulled Bangladesh



## Stardom to obscurity and back again

ANISUR RAHMAN

After displaying her potential in her inaugural tournament by grabbing a gold medal, archer Diya Siddique went AWOL in both domestic and international meets over the past two years before again bursting into the limelight by winning a silver medal from the Archery World Cup in Switzerland along with Bangladesh's top archer, Ruman Sana.

Although Ruman was instrumental in the recurve mixed event, Diya also played a tremendous role as Bangladesh reached their first final on the big stage as well as helping herself break out of a two-year funk, which started in Spain during the 2019 World Archery Youth Championships in Madrid.

Now, on the back of her success in Lausanne, the 11th-grade BKSP student is aiming high in the same event ahead of the Archery World Cup (stage-3) and another competition that will act as a qualifier for the Tokyo Olympics, both in Paris next month.

"After winning a gold medal in the ISSF International Solidarity Championships, I was really dreaming big of going further at the international level but I could not perform in the next two international tournaments the same year. I produced poor scores which were below my expectation during the World Youth Championships in Madrid, lost my momentum and dropped out of sight," Diya told The Daily Star yesterday.

In those World Youth Championships, Diya finished 70th out of 83 competitors with a score of 585 in the qualification round. Her countrywoman Ity Khatun made 637 to finish 28th in the Recurve Junior Cadet event before being ousted 1-7 by Aiko Rolando of Italy in the elimination round.

"Then my confidence really hit a nadir as coaches and I could not figure out the problems that I was facing even though everyone was guessing there might be a problem with shooting. I often missed the target once every six shots. I burst into

tears many times because of the problem and went into depression," the 17-year-old said. "Finally, they found that the problem related to finger power and trigger. Then I changed my basics and started shooting faster than before and gradually overcame the issue."

Diya, unearthed through the NSC's 2017 talent-hunt programme, recorded her best-ever score during the Archery World Cup in Switzerland, 634 out of 720, although her overall best score of 649 was made during a trial session. However, the Nilphamari native is inconsistent in the elimination round as established by her average score of 8.74 out of 10. She needs to work that up to an average above nine if she wants to come out of the shadows and firmly establish herself.

"I am still far away from world-class archers. I think I am now a bit behind the world's middle-class archers. I really need to toil hard to get to their level. I have to improve my qualification total to 650-660, which I think is achievable. I also need to gather international experience," said Diya, who is now ranked 216th in the world's women's recurve ranking. "I also have to focus my concentration more during shooting and shrug off the pressure."

Although the teenager initially dreamt of becoming a doctor, she gave up that dream due to archery's demanding training load, which hindered her studies. Diya is now shifting her focus and trying to become an army officer or pursue higher education alongside her archery career.

"My father wants to see me in the Bangladesh Army and if I get selected in the ISSB exam in future then I will think about whether to continue with archery. But, my wish is to study in Dhaka University or Jahangirnagar University and pursue a career in teaching or another profession and continue as an archer."

Only time will tell what is in store. Diya is now concentrating on next month's events in Paris and has set her sights on the semifinal of the Recurve mixed event alongside Ruman with hopes that she can also book a direct seat for the Tokyo Olympics.

## Potential leadership void looms large

MAZHAR UDDIN



The process of preparing a future captain starts by grooming the relatively younger players into leadership roles, often as vice-captains, and train them to share responsibilities side by side with the experienced, senior cricketers so that they may evolve into future leaders.

Interestingly, over the past few years now, the Bangladesh team does not have a vice-captain in any of the three formats which raises the question of who are the future leaders for the Tigers when the transition period finally arrives.

It is those five familiar faces -- Mashrafe Bin Mortaza, Shakib AL Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim, Tamim Iqbal, and Mahmudullah Riyad -- among whom the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) revolved

around when it came to giving leadership roles over the last decade.

Mominul Haque was an exception although he was appointed as the Tigers' Test skipper only after regular skipper Shakib was banned from international cricket in 2019. His lack of exposure in the role prior to that appointment certainly made things difficult for him.

Captain of the Tigers' inaugural Test side, Naimur Rahman, thinks that captaincy is something that comes through a process and having a young vice-captain facilitates effective communication between the seniors and juniors in the side.

"We have actually discussed this issue unofficially and I have raised the topic in the past. It's very important for a captain to discuss various issues of the team with someone and the vice-captain is the ideal candidate," Naimur told

The Daily Star.

"With the absence of younger players in such a platform the team discussion gets limited only between the senior players. Having a young vice-captain actually creates a bridge between the seniors and the younger players, who at times shy away from leadership responsibilities," the former national team captain added.

However, considering the current context of the Bangladesh team, the inconsistent display from the likes of Soumya Sarkar, Liton Das or Mohammad Mithun -- all of whom have played over five years already, has remained one of the biggest reasons for selectors of not entrusting them to follow the process.

Despite the setbacks, BCB did attempt to groom Najmul Hossain Shanto as a future captain through the high-performance unit but the left-hander failed to seize the

opportunity.

Mehedi Hasan Miraz was also deemed as another prospect who showed potential when he led the Bangladesh Under-19 team to the semifinal of the ICC Under-19 World Cup in 2016, but he too failed to live up to expectations since making his international debut, although his recent form could make him the most suitable candidate.

"Ideally there should be a vice-captain in the team but the fact is they have to be consistent performers, regular members at first. Disappointingly, we haven't got any despite trying a few players in the past," former captain and current selector Habibul Bashar said.

"We are still thinking about this and at the moment Miraz can be a good prospect. But from my experience you won't realise who can be a good captain until given the responsibility," Bashar added.



While the Bangladesh players were enjoying a rest day after having confirmed the series, the Sri Lankans players and coaching staff were in training yesterday with the aim of salvaging some pride in the third match of the ODI series on Friday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Pistol coach Young reappointed

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Shooting Sport Federation (BSSF) yesterday appointed South Korean coach Kim Il Young as the pistol coach of the national shooters for up to 2024 Paris Olympics at a programme at the BSSF Shooting Complex in Gulshan.

Young, who had earlier trained the Bangladeshi shooters twice -- for three months in 2016 and for 17 months in 2018-2019 period -- has been given

responsibility for three more years to hone the skills of pistol shooters.

Young signed the contract in presence of BSSF president Major General Ataul Hakim Sarwar Hasan and BSSF secretary general Entekhabul Hamid Apu following seven-day quarantine upon his arrival on May 14.

The veteran coach will conduct training for only Shakil Ahmed for Tokyo Olympics and then he will start fresh training programme for selected pistol shooters.

## Cured of cancer, Navarro heads to Roland Garros

REUTERS



Former world number six Carla Suarez Navarro has confirmed her participation at the French Open, which starts on Sunday, a month after she said she had been cured of cancer.

The 32-year-old Spaniard said in September that she was diagnosed with early-stage Hodgkin's lymphoma and would need to go through six months of chemotherapy.

"It makes me tremendously excited to be able to participate in Roland Garros," she said on the website of the Spanish tennis federation.

"I have been working these last few months to give myself the opportunity to compete one last time in Paris."

"I am looking forward to jumping on to the court and feeling again how special this tournament has always been for me."

The two-time French Open quarter-finalist, known for one of the best backhands in the women's circuit, had planned to compete at last year's U.S. Open but withdrew a week before the Grand Slam was to begin.

She revealed her diagnosis a week later, saying doctors told her she had a small, curable lymphoma that was detected at an early stage.

"Tennis has given me many things and I have always wanted to say goodbye on a court," she said.





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## ELECTRIC RAIL FEASIBILITY STUDY

# No headway in six years

Planning Commission sits today with fresh move

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

Bangladesh Railway's initiative to introduce electric train service in the country has not seen any progress over the last six years, thanks to indecision on selecting the route to be converted for electric traction.

More than 70 percent of neighbouring India's huge railway network has electric traction system. But Bangladesh is yet to launch the system, which is considered cost-effective and environment friendly.

The BR has recently revived the initiative to convert its two sections --Narayanganj-Dhaka-Chattogram and Tongi-Joydebpur -- for electric traction. It has submitted a fresh proposal to the Planning Commission to carry out feasibility study on introducing the system on these routes.

As per the proposal, the feasibility study would be completed by August next year at a cost of Tk 15.55 crore, according to BR officials.

Planning Commission is scheduled to hold a meeting on the proposal today, with its member (physical infrastructure) Mamun Al Rashid in the chair.

A railway electric traction system supplies electric power to locomotives and thus trains do not require any on broad fuel. An overhead electricity line has to be installed along the railway track to transmit energy to electric locomotives.

The BR operates diesel-powered broad-gauge and metre-gauge trains across its 3,019km railway network.

On the other hand, 45,881km railway line of Indian Railways, which

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



**BRTC buses were illegally parked on both sides of the main road opposite the Kamalapur BRTC bus depot. Due to this, other vehicles were struggling to navigate their way through. The photo was taken yesterday.**

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQUE

## Two journos, Somoy TV CEO sued under DSA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two journalists and an official of Somoy TV have been sued under the controversial Digital Security Act over airing a report on corruption allegations against a Noakhali court official, Mohammad Alamgir.

Alamgir, najir (sheriff) of Noakhali District Judge's Court, filed the case with Chattogram Cyber Tribunal on May 11 against six people, including the private TV channel's Senior Reporter Afzal Hossain, Senior News Editor Manwar Hossain and Managing Director and Chief Executive Officer Ahmed Jobaer.

The three other accused are: Md Jahangir Alam from Dhaka's Green Road area, Mashior Rahman from Bagrakosa village in Sherpur, and Subel Ahmed

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

## Souls founder Ronny Barua passes away

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

After fighting lung cancer since early 2020, renowned musician, designer, theatre personality and founding drummer of revolutionary pop rock band Souls, Subrata Barua Ronny passed away yesterday at 5:00am at a hospital in Dhaka.



He was 65 years old. Eminent musician and former Souls member, Naquib Khan, confirmed the news.

After independence, Ronny started a choir group named Prantik Shilpi Goshthi in Chattogram, where artistes covered songs by the Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra.

Inspired by Chattogram's then popular band Lightnings, he started

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



### PRAYER TIMING MAY 27

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha  
AZAN 4-05 12-45 5-00 6-43 8-05  
JAMAAT 4-40 1-15 5-15 6-47 8-35

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## ROAD TO FREEDOM

THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

### Bangladesh legislators plead for recognition

MAY 27, 1971  
SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

#### FUND FOR EAST PAKISTANI REFUGEES

Pledges of \$2.5 million by the United States and \$2.4 million by Britain were the first by governments for a fund for East Pakistani refugees in India, the office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees announced today.



UNHCR added that nearly \$7 million had already been pledged to aid East Pakistani refugees.

#### PLEA FOR RECOGNITION

A Bangladesh parliamentary delegation pleaded for immediate recognition of the Bangladesh government at a meeting of the MPs in New Delhi yesterday. The delegation

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



## C'NAWBAGANJ LOCKDOWN

### Mango traders incur losses

OUR CORRESPONDENT, C'Nawabganj

Farmers and traders of Gopalbhog mangoes are incurring huge financial losses because of the ongoing seven-day lockdown in Chapainawabganj.

According to the farmers and traders, the ongoing lockdown caused an unexpected shortage of customers in the local markets and barriers in the transportation of the produce.

The breed of mangoes started ripening and it is not possible to keep those on the trees any longer. If the situation remains the same, the farmers and traders will face a huge financial loss, they added.

Johnny Ali, a mango trader, said he purchased around 200kg of Gopalbhog mangoes yesterday morning but was unable to sell even a kg because of buyers' absence in the markets.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

## Seals helping scientists learn about melting glaciers

CNN ONLINE

Known as the Earth's "thermostat," Antarctica plays a vital role in regulating the planet's complex climate system.

Scientists are investigating how environmental changes in Antarctica will impact the rest of the world, but the continent's remote location and hostile climate, with winter temperatures that plummet to well below -100°F, make it an incredibly challenging environment for humans.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6



## Indian variant now in 53 territories

Says WHO about the Covid-19 type

AGENCIES

The coronavirus variant first detected in India has now been officially recorded in 53 territories, a World Health Organization report showed yesterday.

Additionally, the WHO has received information from unofficial sources that the B.1.617 variant has been found in seven other territories, figures in the UN health agency's weekly epidemiological update showed, taking the total to 60.

The report said B.1.617 had shown increased transmissibility, while disease severity and risk of infection were under investigation.

Globally over the past week, the number of new cases and deaths continued to decrease, with around 4.1 million new cases and 84,000 new deaths reported -- a 14 percent and two percent decrease respectively compared to the previous week.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

## Bangladeshis travelling to Israel will be punished

Warns foreign minister

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday warned that legal action will be taken if any Bangladeshi citizen travels to Israel.

"We don't recognise Israel. Anyone [Bangladeshi] going to Israel has to face punishment," he told reporters after the handover of pharmaceutical products for the people of Palestine to its Ambassador to

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6



**Devotees pray at the Dharmarajika Buddhist Monastery in the capital's Bashabo on the occasion of Buddha Purnima, the largest religious festival of the Buddhist community. The photo was taken yesterday.**

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

# সন্ত্রাসবাদকে 'না' বলুন

### প্রকৃত ধর্ম প্রচারক ও উগ্রবাদী রিক্রুটার এর মধ্যে পার্থক্য

প্রকৃত ধর্ম প্রচারক	উগ্রবাদী রিক্রুটার
১. ধর্ম প্রচারের সকল কার্যক্রম প্রকাশ্যে করে।	১. ঘাপটি মেয়ে থাকে ও গোপনে প্রচারণা চালায়।
২. ব্যক্তির অসহায়ত্ব ও দুর্বলতা লাঘবে ধর্মের শিক্ষা দেয়।	২. ব্যক্তির অসহায়ত্ব ও দুর্বলতার সুযোগে তার প্রতি অতি-সহমতি প্রকাশ করে নিজ উদ্দেশ্য বাস্তবায়ন করে।
৩. ধর্মের মৌলিক ও প্রায়োগিক শিক্ষাক্রমের উপর তরুত্ব আরোপ করে।	৩. ধর্মের রাজনৈতিক ব্যবহারের উপর তরুত্ব আরোপ করে।
৪. ধর্ম চর্চার উত্থক করে সুনামার্জিক হওয়ার উপদেশ দেয়।	৪. শর্টকাট উপায়ে পারসোনালিক প্রাক্তির পোড দেখায়।
৫. ধর্মের প্রকৃত ব্যাখ্যা সম্বলিত বই, অডিও-ভিডিও বা আদর্শ মানুষের সন্ধান দেয়।	৫. উগ্রবাদে জড়িত ব্যক্তি বা গোষ্ঠির অতি-ভিত্তি বা বই এর সন্ধান দেয়। সাধারণত এরঙ্গের সফট কপি বা লিংক শেয়ার করে।
৬. দেশীয় বা বৈশ্বিক সন্ত্রাসী গোষ্ঠি এবং তাদের কর্মকাণ্ডকে ধর্ম বিরোধী বলে এগুপো থেকে দূরে ধাক্কার উপদেশ দেয়।	৬. সন্ত্রাসী কর্মকাণ্ডকে অবশ্য কর্তব্য বলে প্রচার করে এবং তাদের অনুসরণ ও সমমনা দলে যোগ দিতে উপসাহ প্রদান করে।

### উগ্রবাদে জড়িত হওয়ার নির্দেশকসমূহ (Indicators)

- হঠাৎ বদলে যাওয়া, পুরানো বন্ধুদের এড়িয়ে চলা, পুরানো শখ বা পেশার পরিবর্তন করা।
- শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানে অনিয়মিত হওয়া ও ক্লাসে অমনোবোপিতা।
- পারিবারিক ও সামাজিক আচার-অনুষ্ঠান বর্জন এবং বিশ্বেদনমূলক কর্মকাণ্ড থেকে দূরে থাকা।
- পারিবারিক অন্যান্য সদস্যদেরকে ধর্মীয় আচারের বিষয়ে ক্রমাগত চাপ প্রয়োগ করা।
- ইন্টারনেটে গোপনীয়তার সাথে উগ্রবাদী প্রচারণা অনুসরণ করা।
- বাজলি সংস্কৃতি ও গণভঙ্গকে ধর্মের প্রতিপক্ষ হিসেবে দাঁড় করানো।
- ভিন্নমতাবলম্বীদের প্রতি ঘৃণা প্রকাশ এবং কথায় কথায় তাদেরকে কাকের, মুরতাদ, তাতত বা নাস্তিক বলা।

### সহিংস উগ্রবাদে জড়িত হওয়ার নির্দেশকসমূহ (Indicators)

- ধর্মীয় বিষয়ে গোপন আলোচনা সভায় যোগদান বা আয়োজন করা।
- সামাজিক যোগাযোগ মাধ্যমে পুরনো ইতিহাস মুছে ফেলা এবং ছদ্মনাম ব্যবহার করে উগ্রবাদী প্রচারণা অনুসরণ এবং তা প্রচার করা।
- পারিবারিক সদস্যদের প্রতি নিজের বক্তব্য কনডে বাধ্য করানোর জন্য গৃহ ত্যাগের হুমকি দেওয়া।
- ধর্মের জন্য সহিংস কর্মকাণ্ডে অংশ গ্রহণ করার অগ্রহ প্রকাশ করা এবং এর জন্য চেষ্টা অব্যাহত রাখা।
- অস্ত্র-বিশ্কারক সংগ্রহ ও তৈরি চেষ্টা করা।
- 'কবিত শহীদ' হয়ে শর্টকাট উপায়ে পারসোনালিক প্রাক্তির আশায় গৃহ ত্যাগ করা, ছদ্মনাম ও ভুল পরিচয় ব্যবহার করে বাসা ত্যাগ নিয়ে দেশে আত্মগোপন করা বা বিদেশে চলে যাওয়া।

আপনার সচেতনতাই পারে উগ্রবাদ রুখতে

উগ্রবাদ সংক্রান্ত বিষয়ে কাউন্টার টেরোরিজম এন্ড ট্রান্সন্যাশনাল ক্রাইম ইউনিটকে (CTTC) প্রয়োজনীয় তথ্য দিতে Hello CT Mobile Apps ব্যবহার করুন। এই Apps এর মাধ্যমে নিজের পরিচয় গোপন রেখে তথ্য প্রদান করা সম্ভব।

কাউন্টার টেরোরিজম এন্ড ট্রান্সন্যাশনাল ক্রাইম ইউনিট, ডিএমপি | অর্ধায়েনে ৪ বাংলাদেশ পুলিশের সন্ত্রাস দমন ও আন্তর্জাতিক অপরাধ প্রতিরোধ কেন্দ্র নির্মাণ প্রকল্প