

1,358 New cases in 24hrs



7,96,343 Total cases



12,511 Deaths



7,36,221 Recoveries



3,529,934 Deaths



169,867,839 Total cases

NAZRUL'S PHOTO GOOF-UP

# National poet's family to file defamation suit against Robi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam's birth anniversary was celebrated worldwide on May 25, with tributes pouring in from individuals, organisations and corporates alike.

However, one "tribute" on telecom giant Robi Axiata Limited's Facebook page angered many, including Kazi Nazrul Islam's family.

In a post commemorating the national poet, the picture that they used was actually of Nobel Laureate Rabindranath Tagore.

Khilkhil Kazi, the national poet's granddaughter, told The Daily Star yesterday that she is going to file a defamation suit against the telecom company for their "ignorance".

"I refuse to believe that this was a simple mix-up," she said. "Whichever agency or individual was involved in making the post not only had to be unaware of both our national poet and Rabindranath Tagore, but the post had to be approved by officials of Robi who were in charge of the page. This is insulting to both legendary figures in Bangla literature."

Khilkhil, a noted singer and organiser, said even the song lyric used in the post had errors in it. "This is a serious crime, and I will file a defamation case against Robi Axiata Limited," she said, adding that she had a meeting with her lawyer later that day to discuss the issue further.

The singer also expressed anguish at telecom companies profiting by using Kazi Nazrul Islam's work without paying royalty.

"None of these telecom companies pay any kind of royalty to our family, even though they have been using his work for years."

Even though the telecom company removed the post from their social media, screenshots of it had already gone viral. However, the company and its affiliated agencies are allegedly working towards silencing the scandal.



"People have contacted my niece, Zoya, and her office and told her to remove the post that she made regarding the issue," says Khilkhil Kazi. "I am sure that they also contacted others who criticised their actions. They did not even have the decency to call me directly and apologise. Nonetheless, they will be held accountable."

Robi Axiata Limited has published an official apology on their Facebook page, saying that the post was made by their affiliated agency.

"We have always been respectful towards our National Poet, Kazi Nazrul Islam, and Bangladesh's art and culture. We are deeply sorry for this mistake," they wrote.

"This was just an unfortunate mix-up, and we did give our official statement on social media," said Shahed Alam, chief corporate and regulatory officer of Robi Axiata. "Regarding the case, any citizen is well within their rights to file for defamation."

Ashraful Islam, media manager of Robi Axiata Limited, told The Daily Star that they have already made their official statement, and they have nothing more to add.

# Govt plans to ease age bar

FROM PAGE 1

"I think we can observe the situation till next week and then we may go for a decision."

Arsalan suggested that the universities can reopen in phases and students be inoculated accordingly.

"First public universities, then private universities and then colleges. But this plan depends on the availability of vaccine," he added.

A good number of teachers and staffers have already been vaccinated.

Dipu Moni said the government has a plan to inoculate 1.3 lakh university students.

Educational institutions have remained closed since March last year due to the pandemic. Last week, the government extended the closure till June 12.

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

Dipu Moni also said that if the current Covid situation improves, the government will reopen educational institutions on June 13.

The government has already approved the use of Chinese Sinopharm vaccine and is expecting to sign a contract soon to purchase 1.5 crore doses. Once the deal is signed, the country is expected to get 50 lakh doses of vaccines a month from June to August.

Apart from this, under the Covax facilities, a global vaccine alliance, Bangladesh will get 1.06 lakh Pfizer vaccine shots tomorrow.

Health officials said Pfizer vaccine doses will be administered mostly in the capital, considering the lack of facilities to store those outside the city.

China has already gifted Bangladesh five lakh doses of Sinopharm vaccine and promised to give another six lakh shots.

The vaccine doses are being administered to medical students.

Seeking anonymity, a top health official told The Daily Star that the inoculation of university students is likely to begin once the first consignment of the Chinese vaccine arrives.

The government suspended administering the first dose of the AstraZeneca vaccine on April 26 soon after India temporarily banned export of Covid vaccine.

Bangladesh purchased three crore doses of AstraZeneca vaccine from Serum Institute of India and was supposed to receive 50 lakh jabs per month for six months from January to June.

Serum delivered the first consignment of 50 lakh doses in January, but shipped only 20 lakh in February. No other shipment has been made since then as the Indian government banned export of vaccine to meet its domestic demand.

# UN honours

FROM PAGE 1

Saiful Imam Bhuayan from Congo; LCPL Mohammad Abdulla Al Mamun from the Central African Republic; SGT Mohammad Ziaur Rahman from Congo; SGT Mohammad Mobarak Hussain from Congo; SGT Mohammad Ibrahim from the Central African Republic; LCPL Mohammad Saiful Islam from Congo; and Washerman Nurul Amin from South Sudan.

Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations, Ambassador Rabab Fatima received the medals on behalf of Bangladesh.

The Permanent Mission will make necessary arrangements to send the medals to the family members of the deceased peacekeepers.

Defense Advisor to Bangladesh Permanent Mission to the UN Mission also attended this virtual ceremony.

"I pay my deep homage to all the brave men and women in blue helmets who lost their lives while serving under the UN flag, and express my heartfelt condolences to their families and friends," said Ambassador Fatima in a condolence message given on the occasion.

She also said that Bangladesh lost many of its valiant soldiers in the line of their sacred duty for world peace. "This sacrifice, however, has never deterred us from responding to the UN's call for duty; rather reinforced our resolve to continue serving the cause of peace."

She called upon the international community to honour the memories of the fallen peacekeepers through its pursuit for peace and by ensuring a world free from suffering.

The medals were virtually awarded by the UN Secretary-General António Guterres in presence of the respective Permanent Representatives of the 44 countries at the event.

The theme for this year is "The Road To A Lasting Peace: Leveraging The Power Of Youth For Peace And Security".

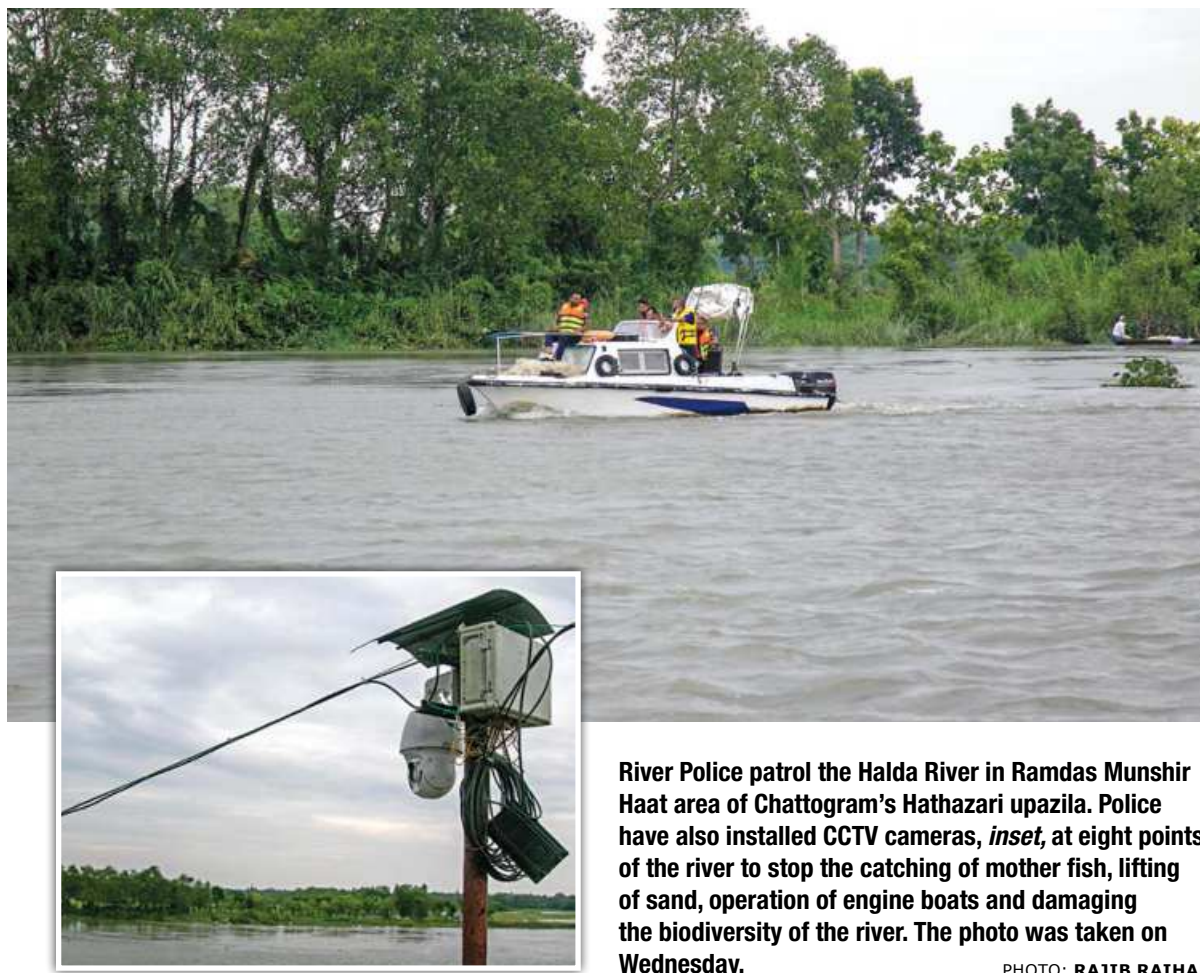
The UN Secretary-General also laid a wreath at the Peacekeepers Memorial Site in the North Lawn of the UNHQs in honour of all peacekeepers who have lost their lives while serving under the UN flag over the past seven decades.

Bangladesh is currently the top contributor of uniformed personnel to UN peacekeeping operations and around 7,000 peacekeepers are deployed in nine peacekeeping missions currently.

So far, 159 peacekeepers from Bangladesh have lost their lives while serving in the UN peacekeeping operations, according to the Permanent Mission.

Each year, the United Nations observes the International Day of the UN Peacekeepers on the UN headquarters premises.

However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the event was held virtually this year.



River Police patrol the Halda River in Ramdas Munshir Haat area of Chattogram's Hathazari upazila. Police have also installed CCTV cameras, inset, at eight points of the river to stop the catching of mother fish, lifting of sand, operation of engine boats and damaging the biodiversity of the river. The photo was taken on Wednesday. PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

# Big blow to fish farmers

FROM PAGE 1

Bagerhat. The target for fish production in this district in the current financial year is 33,000 tonnes, he added.

The fisheries officer, however, claimed that the damage of fish and shrimp enclosures would not affect the production target, saying fish did not die; rather it went from one place to another.

Meanwhile in the Sundarbans, several water vessels, watchtowers, jetties, crocodile sheds, foot rails and other structures were damaged by tidal waves and storms, inflicting a loss of around Tk 60 lakh, say forest officials.

Water of canals and rivers adjacent to the forest rose five to six feet on Wednesday. Besides, there was a strong wind. These inflicted infrastructural damage, said Joynal Abedin, assistant forest conservator of Sundarbans East Forest Department under Sharankhola range.

The disaster also damaged wildlife. Four bodies of deer were recovered after the storm, he added.

In Khulna, some 36 villages of Koyra upazila were inundated after embankments were breached. Locals are repairing embankments at different points to stop gushing of water into the localities, said SM Shafiqul Islam, chairman of Koyra upazila parishad.

Koyra upazila is surrounded by Kabodak and Sakbaria rivers. There are around 155km embankments in the upazila. Of these, around 4km was breached at 25 points.

"We have already repaired four points, but 21 points are yet to be repaired," said Shafiqul.

Abul Hossain, superintendent engineer of Water Development Board in Khulna, told The Daily Star that they already distributed geo-bags to local chairmen to repair embankments. The chairmen were repairing the dams with the help of locals, he said. He added that they already engaged workers at different points to repair the dams. "We are assessing the damage caused by the disaster." Contacted yesterday afternoon, Enamur Rahman, state minister for disaster management and relief, said 27 upazilas of nine districts were affected by the cyclone. Dams broke at 51 points in different districts and around 9,000 cattle were also affected. The government has already sent 16,500 packets of food for the affected people, he added.

# A lot of work to be done

FROM PAGE 1

fifties but it was never enough for Bangladesh with the required run rate climbing all the time.

Skipper Tamim, at the post-match conference, said that despite winning the series the Tigers will need to improve a lot in the coming days.

"I would say we were lucky enough to win the first two games. Our batting hasn't been up to the mark and we need to work on this aspect. Our bowling was good in the first two games but once again we lacked consistency with the ball and were shaky in our catching and fielding in the third game. So there is still a lot of work to be done," Tamim said.

For Sri Lanka, though, it was the best performance all around and skipper Perera led from the front by scoring his sixth century after electing to bat first.

Perera, alongside Dhanushka Gunathilaka, scored 82 runs for the opening wicket, and despite Gunathilaka's departure for 39 off the bowling of Taskin Ahmed, Perera kept the scoreboard ticking.

The left-hander was dropped three times and made full use of those let-offs. He was first dropped on 66 by Mustafizur Rahman off Shakib Al Hasan before being dropped on 79 by Afif Hossain. The easiest chance, though, was graced by Mahmudullah at mid-on off the bowling of Rahman, with the batsman one short of his century.

Perera was eventually dismissed by Shoriful Islam for 120 off 122 balls -- his innings featuring eleven fours and a six. Bangladesh did manage to pick up wickets at regular intervals but the early platform laid by the openers helped the visitors to continue the momentum. Dhananjaya de Silva's unbeaten 55 off 70 balls guided the visitors to the big total.

Taskin was the pick of the bowlers for the hosts with four wickets for 46 runs in nine overs.

per litre in Bangladesh, he said.

Soybean oil now sells for \$1460 per tonne in the international market, Biswajit added. He said they have to pay the government an import duty of Tk 28 to Tk 30 for each litre of soybean oil which was Tk 15 previously.

"The soybean oil that we are selling now was bought earlier. At that time, the price in the international market was \$1260-1270 per tonne."

He said it would be possible for the processors to reduce the prices if the government withdrew the import duty.

processors for the steep rise in prices.

Aminul Islam, a low-income consumer in Dhaka, said the oil price hike came as a "third blow" to the low and middle-income people as they faced two waves of the pandemic.

Nazrul Islam, a private service holder, said he was finding it very difficult to run his family due to price hike of essentials. "How can I buy edible oil at such a high price? Is there no one to look into the matter?" he questioned.

Seeking anonymity, an official at a private company said the current edible oil

# Edible oil gets pricier again

FROM PAGE 1

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# Unchanging pictures, unending wait

FROM PAGE 1

She was at a human chain organised by "Mayer Daak", a platform of families with members who have been victims of enforced disappearances.

Hridi is now nine years old and a student of class 4. Each year, this newspaper has been watching her get a year older, but making the same demand for whoever had caused her father's disappearance to return him back to her.

"I don't even remember my papa," said Hridi, who would have been less than two when Parvez was picked up.

Hridi is not the only child who has been coming back year after year.

Eleven-year-old Lamia Akhter Mim has also been coming back for the last eight years. Her father Kawsar Hossain, a driver who was 22 when he was picked up allegedly by law enforcers from his house in West Nakhhalpara on December 4, 2013.

According to Mayer Daak, Kawsar's mother passed away earlier this year in

# 2 suffer

FROM PAGE 1

A special team has been sent to track her down and bring her to Bengaluru. Once she is back, her statement will be recorded by a magistrate.

A 3:45 minute video clip of four men and a woman torturing and sexually abusing the 22-year-old woman has been doing the rounds on social media for the last few days.

Bengaluru police in a statement on Thursday said that on the basis of the video clip and the questioning of the accused, a case has been registered under charges of rape, assault and other provisions with Ramamurthynagar Police Station.

Karnataka Home Minister Basavaraj Bommai yesterday told reporters that the victim's name has not been mentioned on the first information report (FIR), adding that the state police has submitted the information to a local court. He added that a probe has been ordered by the state government "without any interference".

Kamal Pant, commissioner of police in Bengaluru city, on his official Twitter handle wrote, "The victim who is also a Bangladeshi was brought to India for trafficking and was tortured and brutalised due to a financial matter."

The other two men were identified as Mohammed Baba Sheikh and Hakeel. The identity of the female suspect has not been confirmed.

Police in Dhaka said they identified the victim and one of the perpetrators as Bangladeshi and that Bangladesh police were yet to be officially informed of the arrests.

Mohiul Islam, assistant inspector general of National Central Bureau (NCB), yesterday said, "The NCB, which is linked to the Interpol, tries to bring back the accused from abroad by maintaining communication with its counterpart. However, the Delhi NCB has not officially informed us about the arrests. We have contacted them and started the process of bringing them back to the country."

Deputy Commissioner Md Shahidullah of Tejgaon division said a case under the human trafficking act and the pornography act has been filed against Ridoy and several unnamed others with Hatirjheel Police Station.

It initially seems like the suspects are part of an organised human trafficking ring, he said, adding that police would investigate whether the suspects and the victim entered India illegally.

# 31 more die, 1,358 test positive for Covid in a day

Bss, Dhaka

Bangladesh yesterday reported 1,358 new Covid-19 cases, while the coronavirus claimed 31 more lives.

The tally of infections has surged to 7,96,343 as 1,358 new cases were confirmed in 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday, said a press release of Directorate General of Health Services.

With the 31 deaths, the total number of fatalities from the pandemic rose to 12,511.

Around 14,606 samples were tested in 24 hours at 497 authorised medical laboratories across the country.

The recovery count rose to 7,36,221 after another 1,064 patients were discharged from hospitals during the period.

The DGHS statistics showed of the people infected from the beginning, 92.45 percent recovered, while 1.57 percent died.

Ten out of the 31 died in Dhaka division alone, said the DGHS release.

Eighteen of them were men and 13 women. One was below 10 years, one between 11 and 20 years, four were in their 30s, five in their 40s, seven in their 50s and 13 were above 60 years, the release added.

Bangladesh recorded the highest number of Covid-19 fatality on April 19 this year when the virus killed 112 people in a day.

The country recorded 7,626 Covid-19 cases on April 7 this year, the highest daily spike since the outbreak of the pandemic, the release said.

# Three US officers charged with killing of Black man in custody

AFP, Los Angeles

Two officers in the US state of Washington were charged with the murder of a Black man who died in police custody as he pleaded that he couldn't breathe, and a third was charged with manslaughter, prosecutors said Thursday.

Manuel Ellis died in Tacoma in March 2020, in a case that became a touchstone for protests in the Pacific Northwest, and which bears similarities to the killing of George Floyd by Minnesota police that sparked nationwide outrage two months later.

Ellis died after "felonious assault and/or unlawful imprisonment" by two of the officers, while a third "continued to hold Ellis in the prone position and to apply pressure onto his back" despite hearing Ellis say he could not breathe, a prosecutor statement says.