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Your Right to Know

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Put 8 districts on lockdown now

DGHS recommends; infection rate there over 30pc for a week; IEDCR chief says community transmission of Indian variant on

MOUJIB AHMED SUJAN

Health officials yesterday recommended immediate "strict lockdown" of eight districts that have witnessed an average of over 30 percent Covid-19 positivity rate for a week.

In Chapainawabganj, seven individuals, who have not travelled to India recently, tested positive for the Indian variant of the coronavirus, leading researchers to believe that the variant is being transmitted in the community.

The local administration in Chapainawabganj already enforced strict restrictions on mobility until Monday. The other districts recommended for "lockdown" are Naogaon, Rajshahi, Natore, Kushtia, Jashore, Khulna and Satkhira.

"Considering the latest situation, we recommended that the Cabinet Division enforce strict lockdown in the districts. The Directorate General of Health Services will send the recommendation to the Cabinet via the health ministry," Abu Jamil Faisal, member of the Epidemiology and Public Health Committee of the health directorate, told The Daily Star last night after the committee held a meeting.

Meanwhile, the chief of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) yesterday said the Indian variant of coronavirus has been transmitted in the community as 13 new cases of the variant have been detected in several districts.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

POSITIVITY RATES YESTERDAY

- Satkhira **66%**
- Chapainawabganj **34%**
- Khulna **17.8%**
- Kushtia **16.89%**
- Rajshahi **22%**



Farmers drying paddy on the concrete floor at a mill in Nimtoli area of Munshiganj before the husk and the bran layers are removed to produce the country's staple food, rice. Officials said the growers have been blessed with a remarkable harvest this year.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



Will maintain friendship with all to move forward

Says prime minister

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said Bangladesh has to maintain friendship with all as the government wants to turn the country into a developed and prosperous one.

"We want to build Bangladesh as a developed and prosperous country. I think Bangladesh has to move forward maintaining friendship with all to this end," she said.

The premier was addressing a function at Shenakunja at Dhaka Cantonment

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Sri Lanka's economic plight a caution for Bangladesh

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON

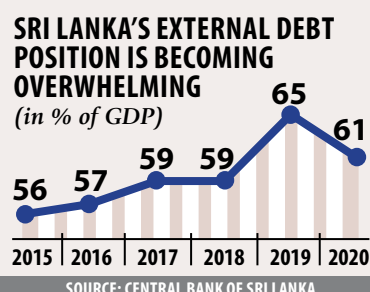
That Bangladesh is in a position to bail out Sri Lanka, a middle-income country by the World Bank's classification since 1997, by extending up to \$500 million -- is a nice lift to the country's morale.

But this episode is also a cautionary tale for Bangladesh: if the government does not get its act together now, the country could very well be in Sri Lanka's position in a few years.

The Achilles heel of the two economies is the same: low tax base, overreliance on a single item for exports and insubstantial foreign direct investment.

What Bangladesh has on its side is time.

It is still a least-developed country, meaning it has access to concessionary loans from multilateral and bilateral lenders like the World Bank, the



International Monetary Fund, the Asian Development Bank and the Japan International Cooperation Agency.

The loans have a protracted tenure of 25-40 years as well as a reasonable grace period and interest rate of less than 2 percent.

A casualty of a quarter-century-long

civil war, Sri Lanka relied much on such foreign debt to build its infrastructure -- an economical practice, for the most part.

But at the turn of the century, following its graduation to a lower-middle-income country in 1997, Sri Lanka's access to such loans had dwindled, meaning it had to look elsewhere for funds.

In 2007, Sri Lanka issued its maiden international sovereign bond (ISB) -- worth \$500 million -- and increasingly started to turn to this commercial borrowing channel.

The ISBs have a repayment period of 5-10 years, carry interest rates of upwards of 6 percent and no grace period.

To compound matters, there are principal payments: the total

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

GANG-RAPE ON BUS Cops arrest six after rescuing the victim

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

A Dhaka court yesterday placed five men on remand, three-day each, in a case filed over gang-rape of a woman on a running bus in Savar's Ashulia.

Dhaka's Senior Judicial Magistrate Shahzadi Tahmida passed the order after the investigation officer of the case Inspector Mohammad Ziaul Islam produced the five before the court with a five-day remand prayer, according to court sources.

The accused rapists put on remand are Mohammad

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

HUMAN TRAFFICKING TO INDIA Young female TikTok users targeted

MUNTAKIM SAAD

Saima [not her real name], 15, led a regular teenage life of this generation, making videos on popular mobile app TikTok, before she was trafficked to India with the promise of a better job.

She was one of the victims of Rifatul Islam Ridoy, 26, popularly known as Ridoy Babo on TikTok, who lured her to the South Indian city Bengaluru promising her a well-paid job two months ago, along with four other girls, through Sathkhira border.

Saima, who used to work at a shopping mall in Bangladesh, thought that she would get a better job in India. After going there, however, she found that they were trafficked to India for sex work.

As they refused to be a part of the trade, the gang members tortured them and forced them into sex work. After a month and half, three of them were able to flee the Indian state and return home recently.

After a video clip of a 22-year-old woman being tortured and sexually assaulted went viral on social media, Indian police on Thursday arrested Ridoy Babo, along with five other Bangladeshis from Bengaluru.

Bangladesh police then began investigation and found a transnational racket, involving some Bangladeshis, trafficking some young girls using TikTok and forcing them into sex work in India.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Engineer sued under DSA for FB post

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police yesterday arrested a diploma engineer from Chattogram's Banskhalhi upazila in connection with a case filed under the Digital Security Act (DSA) after he made a Facebook post over "SS Power I Plant" at the upazila's Gandamara union.

The arrestee is Shahnewaz Chowdhury, 37, of the upazila, said police sources.

Humayun Kabir, assistant superintendent of police (ASP) of Anwara Circle police, told The Daily Star, "Shahnewaz was held from his house after Faruk Ahmed, chief coordinator of the power plant, filed a case with Banskhalhi Police Station, accusing the engineer of tarnishing the power plant's image."

According to the case statement, Shahnewaz, on Wednesday, wrote on his Facebook "[Deaths]

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



Migrant workers eager to go to join their workplaces in Saudi Arabia waiting in front of the Saudi office at the capital's Sonargaon hotel. The government will pay up to Tk 25,000 for each of the workers' mandatory week-long quarantine in hotels of the Gulf country, which is some relief for the cash-strapped workers.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

LSD mailed to Bangladesh

Detectives say syndicates used postal service to bring them in from the Netherlands for 4 yrs

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

The hallucinogenic drug called lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) was being smuggled into Bangladesh from the Netherlands using the postal service for the last four years.

A drug syndicate used to smuggle LSD blotting paper by stashing those inside books as they look like stamp or colourful paper.

At least three syndicates are involved in selling the drug in Bangladesh.

Officials of the Detective Branch of police disclosed these to The Daily Star yesterday. They found this information during their probe into the death of Dhaka University student Hafizur Rahman.

Hafizur slit his throat himself after taking LSD on the campus on May 15, his friends told detectives during interrogation.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2

MIGRANTS QUARANTINE IN SAUDI ARABIA Govt decides to share cost of hotel stay

Up to Tk 25k will be given to each worker from wage earners' welfare fund

RASHIDUL HASAN and JAMIL MAHMUD

The government has decided to pay up to Tk 25,000 for each Bangladeshi worker's stay in hotel in Saudi Arabia for their seven-day on-arrival institutional quarantine.

"The money will be provided from the wage earners' welfare fund," Expatriates' Welfare Secretary Ahmed Munir Saleheen told The Daily Star over phone yesterday.

The lion's share of the fund comes from the Bangladeshis working in different countries across the world. The fund is looked after by a board of members from the expatriates' welfare ministry with the secretary in the chair.

Secretary Saleheen also said they were working to vaccinate all migrants leaving so that they no longer needed to stay in quarantine.

The development came nine days after Saudi Arabia issued a travel advisory on May 20 for non-restricted countries, including Bangladesh, making it mandatory for workers to stay in hotel quarantine for seven days.

The advisory caused huge sufferings to the migrant workers and casted uncertainty over their joining work in Saudi Arabia.

Meanwhile, an inter-ministerial meeting will be held today to discuss different issues,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

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Experts urge alert after four mild tremors jolt Sylhet

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

After repeated mild tremors in Sylhet yesterday, experts warned the possibility of a major earthquake at Dauki Fault Line and urged all to stay alert.

At 10:36am, people of Sylhet city experienced the first tremor. Before they could recover from the shock, another tremor -- stronger than the first one -- jolted Sylhet at 10:50am and then the third one at 11:30am.

The residents of the country's northeastern city became panicked after experiencing the fourth one at 1:58pm. They also experienced several aftershocks.

The Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) couldn't pinpoint the accurate location of the earthquakes as the seismic activities were recorded only in one seismic station in Sylhet as it needs data from three stations.

Sayed Ahmed Chowdhury, meteorologist of BMD in Sylhet, said, "Among the earthquakes, the one at 10:50am was of the highest magnitude, 4.1 in Richter scale."

"We were able to measure aerial distance of the epicentre, toward the north

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Students under Pragatishil Chhatra Sangathan Samuha yesterday demonstrated in front of the capital's Raju Memorial Sculpture, demanding a roadmap for opening educational institutions, ensuring vaccination for students, teachers and staffers, and health insurance for them.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

'No pressure to reopen educational institutes'

Says Dipu Moni; students continue demands of resumption

STAR REPORT

Education Minister Dipu Moni yesterday said there is no pressure from larger portion of students and guardians to re-open educational institutions.

She came up with the remark at a time when the demand for re-opening is getting louder.

There are some pressures from different quarters in this regard but not from the majority of students and guardians, said the minister while addressing a meeting commemorating the death of former law minister Abdul Matin Khasru at Jatiya Press Club.

"I get messages regularly over the issue. Most of the messages request not to open educational institutions right now. We have information that movements are going on at different places. But we cannot pose health risks on people. Campuses will be re-opened only when Covid-19 situation will be brought under control," she said.

Meanwhile, some progressive student bodies and Bangladesh Jatiyabadi Chhatra Dal yesterday demanded immediate re-opening of educational institutions, maintaining proper health guidelines.

The student bodies announced the demand at a rally at the base of Raju Sculpture at Dhaka University in the afternoon.

They also demanded that the government declare a roadmap to reduce session jam and students' drop-out rate, which might be created due to the closure.

Their other demand was to ensure vaccination for all students. Bangladesh Chhatra Federation general secretary Zahid Sujon

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Situation worsened due to lockdown constraints

Finds research conducted by BIGD

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although domestic violence was pervasive in Bangladesh even before the pandemic, the situation has worsened due to lockdown-induced constraints in access to justice for survivors of domestic violence, found latest research.

The pandemic is responsible for limiting survivors' access to formal institutions during the "lockdown". Movement restrictions and halt of public transport made it extremely difficult for women to travel outside their homes and reach out for help, the in-depth research mentioned.

It also pointed to courts being shut and NGOs providing legal aid having to close their physical spaces.

Although local authorities became burdened with relief distribution, and police were implementing lockdown measures, they were eventually able to respond to women seeking assistance, it said.

The findings of the research titled "Access to Justice for Survivors of Domestic Violence During Covid-19" was presented at a webinar yesterday, jointly organised by Brac Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), Brac University and the Rule of Law Programme of GIZ Bangladesh, and was supported by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, and the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO).

The research was conducted by BIGD in collaboration with Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), Brac Human Rights and Legal Aid Services (HRLS) and RDRS Bangladesh, and was commissioned by the Rule of Law Programme, which is supported by law ministry and home ministry.

According to the research, many government and non-government

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

COP26 chief Alok Sharma due in Dhaka next week

UK MP's visit to spotlight climate discussions ahead of UN summit

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

UK MP and COP26 president-designate Alok Sharma will be visiting Bangladesh next week. As part of his tour to Asia, Sharma will look to strengthen support for climate priorities ahead of the UN climate change summit in Glasgow this November.

Apart from Bangladesh, he will also visit Vietnam and Indonesia, said a statement of the UK Cabinet Office.

The visit is likely to take place on June 2 or 3, a diplomatic source said.

"Meetings with senior leaders will focus on climate ambition, including a clean energy transition and efforts to help communities deal with the worst effects of climate change," the cabinet office's statement said.

Alok Sharma's visit follows commitments from G7 nations to end all new finance for coal power by the end of 2021 and increase support for countries vulnerable to climate change.



SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

'Democracy only in mind, not in action'

Speakers stress strong institutions, freedom of speech

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Strong institutions are vital for ensuring economic development and carry forward the practice of democracy in the country, said speakers at a webinar yesterday.

They also said suppressive acts like Digital Security Act-2018 should be scrapped to ensure freedom of speech, which is a fundamental element of democracy.

Centre for Governance Studies in collaboration with Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Bangladesh organised the webinar titled "The Future of Liberal Democracy in Bangladesh after the Covid-19 Pandemic".

Presenting the keynote paper, Dhaka University Professor Shantanu Mojumder said self-censorship has turned out to be the "new normal" for different entities like civil societies, journalists and rights defenders in fear of arbitrary use of DSA.

He reprimanded the role of politicians during the pandemic saying that the bureaucrats were in charge of all the pandemic management activities and official involvement of politicians weren't

there much.

He also criticised the role of the parliament terming its activities "rhetorical and dysfunctional" and said political parties themselves do not practise democratic norms, which is an ominous sign for democracy.

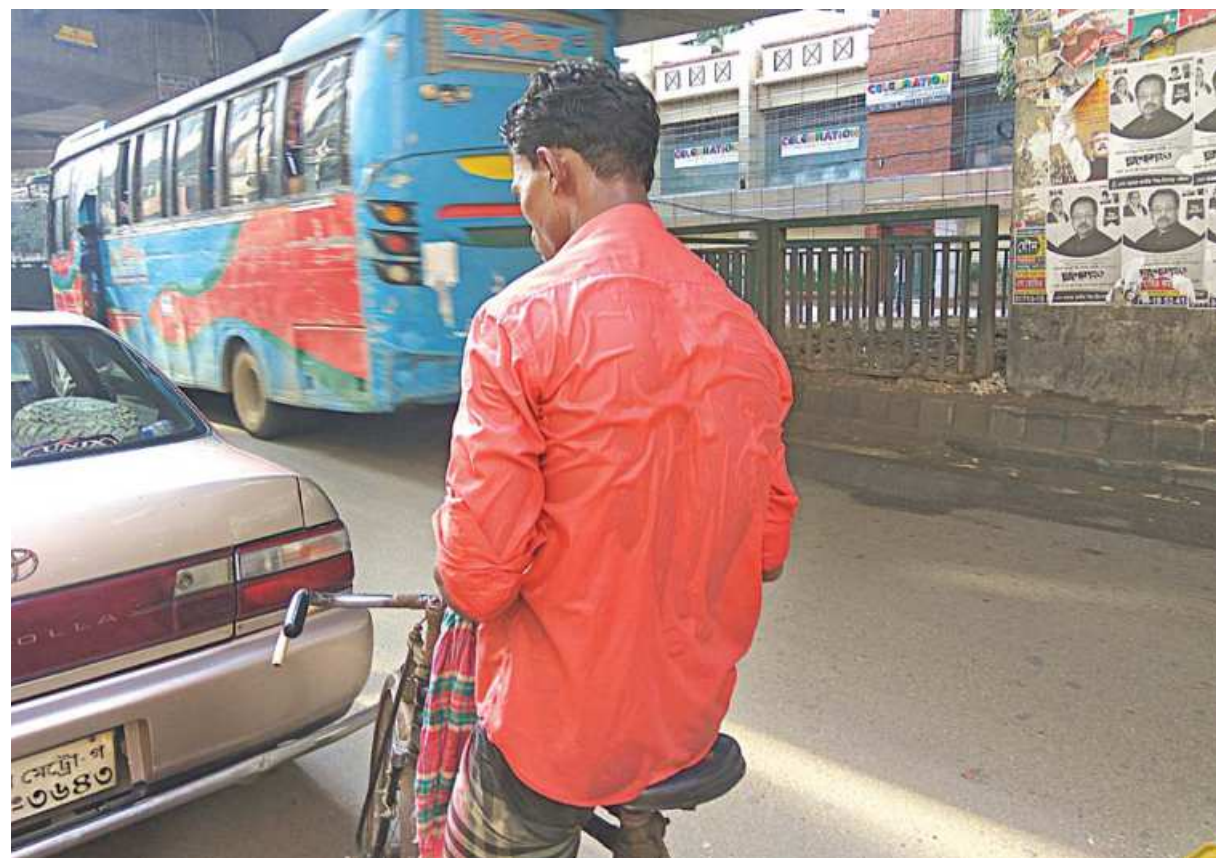
Eminent academic and historian Prof Dr Syed Anwar Husain said, "We have the democratic system in our mind, but we do not have the democratic spirit in our actions. Democracy doesn't mean being elected to power and remaining in power for some time."

He said in a democratic system there should be a government and a strong opposition party. However, there's only the government that actually play its part in Bangladesh.

"No university in Bangladesh functions as per democratic norms and rules, moreover, there's corruption. It permeates the whole fabric of society. Corruption and democracy can't go together," he added.

Questioning the role of democratic organisations like the Election Commission

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



While cyclone Yaas battered the coasts as it made landfall, it brought a much-needed respite for dwellers of the capital, with a cloud cover and gusts keeping the heat away. The scorching, humid weather has returned well and truly, as is evident from the rickshaw-puller's shirt entirely drenched in sweat. The photo was taken yesterday from Moghbazar area.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Three of a family suffer burns in city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three of a family, including a child, sustained burn injuries in a fire at their tin-shed house in Dhaka's Mohammadpur area early yesterday.

The injured are Md Sohul (35), his wife Laboni Akter (25) and their son Morsalin (2).

They are undergoing treatment at the Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery. Their condition is critical.

Neighbours rescued them after hearing their screams when the fire originated around 2:45am at Nobodoy Housing area. Fire officials suspected that the fire started from a burning mosquito coil in a room where gas accumulated from a leak.

Rupa Akter, a neighbor of the victims said, "As we rushed to the spot hearing their screams, we saw the couple on fire, trying to douse it, standing in front of the house."

"They managed to come out of their room but their son was still inside. Fire officials later rescued him," she added.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Oikya Parishad slams 'poor' allocation for religious minorities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad yesterday condemned and expressed serious discontent over the poor allocation for religious minorities in the Annual Development Programme (ADP) in the proposed budget of the upcoming fiscal.

Oikya Parishad, a representative body of the country's religious and ethnic minorities, issued a press statement terming the poor allocation as a continuation of stark discrimination against the community.

The religious affairs ministry received Tk 15,054.03 crore under the ADP for the next fiscal's budget, of which Tk 290.08 crore is allocated for the projects related to religious minorities, reads the statement.

Of the Tk 290.08 crore, Tk 200 crore was originally allocated in 2017 and each budget mentioned the figure with the fresh budget, as the works under project have not been completed yet.

In budget, special allocations for religious majority community were made for development of their religious establishments and institutions, but no such allocation is made for Hindu, Buddhist and Christian communities, the organisation said.

They demanded Tk 5,000 crore allocation to eradicate the discrimination these minority communities are facing over the years. They also demanded of a separate ministry for religious minorities, similar to what exists in India and Pakistan.

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CoronaVac 'reduces mortality by 97pc'

AFP, Montevideo

The CoronaVac vaccine reduces coronavirus mortality by 97 percent, according to early results of the immunization campaign in Uruguay, which relies heavily on the Chinese jab.

In people who had received two doses, it reduced infection with the coronavirus by 57 percent and intensive care admissions by 95 percent, said a report by the health ministry of the South American nation.

Compared to other vaccines in use, there have been few scientific publications on the efficacy of CoronaVac, produced by Chinese firm Sinovac, and widely divergent reported results.

Coronavirus is nevertheless widely used in China and in some two dozen other countries.

Chile reported last month that early results from its immunization campaign showed CoronaVac to be 67 percent effective at preventing symptomatic Covid-19 and 80 percent at preventing death.

Trial results with CoronaVac in Brazil showed efficacy of about 50 percent in preventing symptomatic infection, while Turkish data said it was more than 80 percent effective.

Uruguay, which started vaccinating on March 1, has used CoronaVac in more than 80 percent of cases.

It has reserved the Pfizer-BioNTech jab for older people, health workers, and people with other illnesses.

The Pfizer shot, the results showed, was 75 percent effective at preventing infection, 99 percent effective at preventing illness requiring ICU admission, and 80 percent effective at preventing death.

CoronaVac is a traditional type of vaccine, using inactivated virus to trigger immunity, while Pfizer uses RNA messenger technology.



A demonstrator gestures as motorcycles that are impounded for violating traffic regulations are seen on fire at the municipal yards, in Popayan, Colombia, on Friday. Colombia will begin "the maximum deployment" of military personnel in the western province of Valle del Cauca and its capital, Cali, President Ivan Duque said on Friday, after four people died in protests to mark a month of anti-government demonstrations. The protests started on April 28 to oppose tax reform but have since expanded to include wide-ranging demands.

PHOTO: REUTERS

NEWS IN BRIEF

Roadside bomb kills three Afghan university teachers

A roadside bomb hit a bus carrying university staff in northern Afghanistan yesterday, killing three teachers and wounding 15 others, police said on Saturday. The incident took place in Charikar, the provincial capital of Parwan. The bus was carrying teachers from Al-Biruni university, said a spokesman for the provincial police. Some of the wounded teachers were in critical condition, said an official. No group claimed responsibility for the incident.

Republicans block probe of US Capitol riot

Republicans in the US Senate on Friday derailed a bipartisan inquiry into the deadly assault on the Capitol by Donald Trump's supporters, despite a torrent of criticism the lawmakers were playing down the violence. Democrats and some moderate Republicans had called for a commission to probe the events up to and including Jan. 6, when hundreds of supporters of Trump stormed the Capitol, fighting with police, urging violence against lawmakers and delaying the formal certification of Biden's election victory. The violence left five dead including a cop. The measure mustered a 54-35 vote which fell short of the 60 votes needed to advance the legislation in the 100-member Senate. The 35 no votes were all Republicans. Six Republicans voted in favor of the commission.



Covid storm engulfs Everest

Mount Everest guide Buddhi Bahadur Lama has spent days isolated in a tent after testing positive for coronavirus, as an outbreak that climbers say is putting lives at risk sweeps base camp. He is one of four in his expedition team thought to have contracted Covid-19 at the foot of the world's highest mountain, along with a growing number of others. Dozens of suspected Covid cases have been flown out of the area and at least two companies have cancelled expeditions after team members tested positive. However authorities in Nepal have yet to acknowledge a single case at the mountain, with the stakes high for the country's tourism industry. The country is reporting an average of 8,000 cases a day and the health system has been overwhelmed.

Lanka faces marine disaster

Sri Lanka faces an unprecedented pollution crisis as waves of plastic waste from a burning container ship hit the coast and threaten to devastate the local environment, a top environment official warned yesterday. Thousands of navy ratings using mechanical diggers scooped tonnes of tiny plastic granules on the beaches that had come from the Singapore-registered MV X-Press Pearl that has been smouldering on the horizon for ten days. Sri Lanka's Marine Protection Authority (MEPA) said the microplastic pollution could cause years of ecological damage to the Indian Ocean island. The ship, said to be carrying 278 tonnes of bunker oil and 50 tonnes of gasoil, isn't leaking oil yet.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

POST-COUP CRISIS IN MYANMAR

NUG to 'demolish' junta

Signs agreement with Chin rebels, parades new armed force

AGENCIES

A shadow government in Myanmar seeking to reverse the February 1 coup has joined forces with a rebel group to "demolish" junta rule, it said Saturday.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military overthrew Aung San Suu Kyi and her National League for Democracy government and launched a brutal crackdown on dissent.

A group of ousted lawmakers later set up a shadow "National Unity Government" which has sought to bring anti-coup dissidents together with Myanmar's myriad ethnic rebel fighters to form a federal army to challenge the junta.

On Saturday, the rebel Chin National Front signed an agreement to "demolish the dictatorship and to implement a federal democratic system" in Myanmar, the NUG said in a statement.

They pledged "mutual recognition" and to "partner equally" the statement added, without giving further details. A CNF spokesperson could not immediately be reached for comment.

The group -- which represents the mainly Christian Chin minority in western Myanmar -- signed a ceasefire

with the country's military, also known as Tatmadaw, in 2015.

In recent years its fighters have dwindled.

"The CNF has no real military strength, so this move is symbolic," Richard Horsey, senior advisor on Myanmar to the International Crisis Group, told AFP.



"But [it is] nevertheless significant as CNF has been quite prominent in the peace process, due to its well respected political leaders in exile."

Several of Myanmar's rebel armed groups have condemned the military coup and the use of violence against unarmed civilians.

Some are also providing shelter and even training to dissidents who flee into their territories.

But the more than 20 outfits have long distrusted the ethnic Bamar majority -- including lawmakers affiliated with Suu Kyi's government.

On Friday, the NUG released a video it said showed the first batch of fighters from its "People's Defence Force", formed to protect civilians, completing their training.

Around a hundred recruits were shown marching across flat ground surrounded by jungle. None appeared to be carrying weapons.

"Let all Burmese people be freed from military slavery," the recruits were heard shouting together.

More than 800 people have been killed by the military, according to a local monitoring group, though the coup leader has given a much lower civilian toll.

The junta has classified the NUG and the People's Defence Force as "terrorists", meaning anyone speaking to them -- including journalists -- can be subjected to charges under counter-terrorism laws.

Coup leader Min Aung Hlaing has justified his February 1 power grab by claiming electoral fraud in November elections won by Suu Kyi's NLD party.

US nuclear secrets exposed in Europe

AFP, Washington

US troops charged with guarding nuclear weapons in Europe used popular education websites to create flash cards, exposing their exact locations and top-secret security protocols, according to the investigative site Bellingcat Friday.

To familiarize themselves with things like which shelters in various locations had "hot" vaults with live nuclear bombs, with security patrol schedules, and with identification badge details, the soldiers created digital flash card sets on apps like Chegg Prep, Quizlet and Cram.

"By simply searching online for terms publicly known to be associated with nuclear weapons, Bellingcat was able to discover cards used by military personnel serving at all six European military bases reported to store nuclear devices," wrote Foeke Postma, the author of the Bellingcat article.

They found one set of 70 flashcards on Chegg, entitled "Study!", which noted the exact shelters containing nuclear weapons at Volkel Air Base in the Netherlands.

"How many WS3 vaults are there on Volkel ab," said the question side of one virtual flash card, referring to the military term for weapons storage and security systems. "eleven (11)" it read on the answer side.

Another card from the same set indicated that five of the eleven vaults were "hot" with nuclear bombs while the other 6 were "cold," and specified which vaults.

A set of 80 cards on the Cram flashcard site detailed hot and cold vaults at Aviano Air Base in Italy, and revealed how a soldier should respond in activating them based on the different level of alarms they receive.

Other cards exposed secrets at bases in Turkey, Belgium and Germany. Some detailed the location of security cameras; others gave the secret "duress words" that a soldier, perhaps seized by attackers, would say over a phone to indicate he had been taken prisoner.

The flashcards Bellingcat discovered were publicly available as far back as 2013, and some were being used as recently as April 2021.

Bellingcat said those it had viewed appeared to have been removed after it contacted NATO and the US military for comment before it published its article.

SEARCHING FOR LEADERS

Deputy Managing Director

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- Age not exceeding 55 years as on 30 June 2021.

Age limit / academic requirement may be relaxed for highly deserving candidate.

COMPENSATION PACKAGE: NEGOTIABLE

Interested candidates, who meet the requirements of the position, are encouraged to apply with their CV, clearly mentioning the role in cover letter and recent passport size photograph to the General Manager, Human Resources Division, Pubali Bank Limited, 26 Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka -1000. **The deadline for receiving applications is 30 June 2021.**

Only short-listed candidates will be called for the interview.

The Bank reserves the rights to accept/ reject any application(s) without assigning any reason whatsoever.



A tale of pandemics: when and how do they end?

KAZI MD SHAIMUL REZA

The end of pandemics in recorded history has seldom been a singular point; it has been a gradually progressing, complicated and chaotic process to say the least.

When we say "end", we do not necessarily mean "eradicate", which entails permanently bringing the global incidence of the said infection to zero. The sole disease we eradicated is smallpox, a bygone menace with a whopping 30% mortality rate. Multiple factors contributed to this exceptional success.

The disease's innate nature to produce obvious symptoms led to earlier detection and isolation of cases. The intensive worldwide vaccination campaign by the World Health Organisation (WHO) using a vaccine conferring lifelong protection substantially tilted the scales in our favour. So did the absence of an animal reservoir transmitting the virus.

When the deadliest pandemic in history, the horrendous 1918 influenza pandemic, the misnamed Spanish Flu, swept through the globe, it infected nearly 500 million and killed between 20-50 million. In four separate waves, it ravaged the world till 1920.



As time wore on, the virus mutated to become less lethal and morphed into the relatively benign seasonal flu. As it circulated worldwide and infected nearly one-third of the then global population, people eventually grew immune. And at one point, the virus ran out of enough susceptible hosts that it could infect to create a pandemic-level impact. Restrictions like social distancing, mask-wearing were put in place even back then to decelerate transmission.

The H1N1 influenza A virus, which caused this pandemic, persisted and kept making comebacks; its descendants went on to cause newer pandemics. Of them, the (H1N1) 2009

pandemic, informally labelled as Swine Flu, is one of the recent past. Being a novel flu virus with genetic materials from humans, birds and pigs in unique combinations, it briskly spread because people did not have pre-existing immunity to it. While most infections were mild, they still caused around 100,000-400,000 deaths in 2009.

Winding back centuries, we were outright helpless in the throes of the three plague pandemics; the Black Death of the fourteenth century causing over 50 million deaths in Europe is one spine-chilling history. Caused by a bacterium named Yersinia pestis, it spread by the bite of rat fleas and

respiratory droplets of infected humans. While easily treatable with antibiotics today, Congo, Madagascar and Peru continue to be the most endemic countries for the plague.

Experts opine this pandemic will end gradually. While the eradication of the virus is unlikely, its transmission can be controlled to the point it no longer poses a pandemic-level threat and instead, settles down to an endemic disease with sustained, baseline-level transmissions or seasonable outbreaks. It is the stage when the catastrophe being unleashed now becomes far less disruptive. Of course, different countries will reach this milestone at a different

pace.

This is the first coronavirus pandemic ever, that too caused by a novel virus. Unlike the influenza viruses causing the previous pandemics of this century, coronaviruses spread more easily, make people stay contagious for longer and cause more serious infections and deaths.

The immune landscape of the world population will be a cardinal determinant. As more people become immune, the collective defence against the virus rises and the virus runs out of susceptible hosts and slows down. The bright side is that we have several available effective vaccines, which will immensely help us in actualising this goal eventually. But without their equitable distribution globally, prospects of optimism are bleak; while countries like the United Kingdom have vaccinated around 60% of their population with at least one dose, most African countries could only vaccinate less than 1% of theirs so far.

We have so much to do in terms of fostering the political goodwill that tackles vaccine nationalism. We also have to innovatively resist the variants that could evade immunity.

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DID YOU KNOW?



Long working hours increasing deaths from heart disease and stroke

STAR HEALTH DESK

Long working hours led to 745,000 deaths from stroke and ischaemic heart disease in 2016, a 29% increase since 2000, according to the latest estimates by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) published in Environment International recently.

In a first global analysis of the loss of life and health associated with working long hours, WHO and ILO estimate that, in 2016, 398,000 people died from a stroke and 347,000 from heart disease as a result of having worked at least 55 hours a week. Between 2000 and 2016, the number of deaths from heart disease due to working long hours increased by 42%, and from stroke by 19%.

The study concludes that working 55 or more hours per week is associated with an estimated 35% higher risk of a stroke and a 17% higher risk of dying from ischemic heart disease, compared to working 35-40 hours a week.

Governments, employers and workers can take the following actions to protect workers' health:

- Governments can introduce, implement and enforce laws, regulations and policies that ban mandatory overtime and ensure maximum limits on working time;
- Bipartite or collective bargaining agreements between employers and workers' associations can arrange working time to be more flexible, while at the same time agreeing on a maximum number of working hours;
- Employees could share working hours to ensure that numbers of hours worked do not climb above 55 or more per week.

HEALTH bulletin



Latest global data estimates nearly 8 million deaths from smoking in 2019

The most comprehensive data on global trends in smoking highlight its enormous global health toll. The number of smokers worldwide has increased to 1.1 billion in 2019, with tobacco smoking causing 7.7 million deaths - including 1 in 5 deaths in males worldwide, published in *The Lancet* recently.

Of particular concern are the persistently high rates of smoking among young people, with over half of countries worldwide showing no progress in reducing smoking among 15-24-year-olds. 89% of new smokers become addicted by age 25. Protecting young people from nicotine addiction during this critical window will be crucial to eliminate tobacco use among the next generation.

In half of countries, reductions in prevalence have not kept pace with population growth, and the number of current smokers has increased. The ten countries with the largest number of tobacco smokers in 2019, together comprising nearly two-thirds of the global tobacco smoking population, are China, India, Indonesia, the USA, Russia, Bangladesh, Japan, Turkey, Vietnam, and the Philippines.

Published ahead of World No Tobacco Day (31st May), the authors call on all countries to urgently adopt and enforce a comprehensive package of evidence-based policies to reduce the prevalence of tobacco use and prevent initiation, particularly among adolescents and young adults.

Pins and needles: an uncomfortable experience

DR OPURBO CHOWDHURY

Pins and needles, called paraesthesia in medical science, is an uncomfortable experience. More or less, everyone endures this kind of situation. It happens if nerve sensation in the blood vessels does not function correctly.

When you have pins and needles, some parts of the body pinned like thorns, sometimes the legs or hands are numb or tingling. It appears when a part of the body is pressed somewhere for a long time. It can be for a few minutes or a few seconds. The feeling goes away when the blood supply to the blood vessels and the nerves' sensation become normal.

Even if such a momentary occurrence in the body is not fatal, it must be understood that there are severe problems in the body behind it, if it has happened repeatedly or for a long time. Then it is essential to find out the reason more than the experience of pinned irritation. It is more on hands and feet. Sometimes it can happen on the back, thighs, buttocks, even on the neck, shoulders.

Pins and needles are caused by diabetes, Raynaud's phenomenon, sciatica, multiple sclerosis, radiation, medicines, chemotherapy, etc. It can emerge if there is pressure anywhere in the spinal cord. It is more developed in arthritis. Taking many antibiotics and seizure drugs can result in pins and needles. Autoimmunity can also raise pins and needles.

There are thousands of blood vessels all over the body to supply blood to the body. There are two types of blood vessels: the artery and



the veins. There are many nerves in the blood vessels to control blood flow. The function of the nerves is to regulate the constriction and relaxation of the blood vessels.

If you are sitting on the body part for a while, obstructing the nerves and blood vessels to conduct its function. On the one hand, the blood vessels cannot deliver proper oxygen; on the other hand, the blood vessels are staved off from sending sensations. After a while, when the pressure shifts, the oxygen supply to the blood vessels of that part suddenly rises, the nerve comes out of its sensation barrier and signals the brain. The brain suddenly stops and mistakes the sudden return sensation and gives feelings

like pin or thorn. And what we feel in that is the pins and needles.

Consult a doctor if the phenomenon repeatedly takes place, even if there is no risk of death for pins and needles. It refers to underlying problems that are happening in your body. The doctor will initially confirm by the description of the problem, history, and physical examination. MRI, X-ray and blood tests are done if it repeatedly happens in any part of the body for a long time.

Pins and needles go away on their own. The only treatment is to find out the reason why it is frequently happening.

The writer is a physician in the UK. E-mail: opurbo.chowdhury@gmail.com



Successful brain tumour removal in Evercare Hospital Chattogram

Evercare Hospital Chattogram had successful neurosurgery for a brain tumour of a 42-year-old woman in the port city, says a press release.

Providing insight on the patient's ailment, Dr Md Anisul Islam Khan, Senior Consultant and Coordinator, Neurosurgery Department at Evercare Hospital Chattogram, said, "Since the patient had been suffering from the effects of the tumour and the accompanying complications for quite some time, it was the best-case scenario to conduct the high-risk surgery to remove it."

Evercare Hospital Chattogram is the largest and first-ever state-of-the-art tertiary care multidisciplinary hospital in the port city, claimed the hospital authority. Since its inauguration, the hospital is redefining healthcare in Chattogram and achieved some remarkable milestones for the healthcare services in the city.

[f](#) [t](#) /StarHealthBD



The thyroid is a butterfly-shaped gland located in front of the lower neck, known as the master gland regulating body metabolism

More than 5 crore population of our country suffer from some kind of thyroid disorders, of which 3 crore are not even aware of it!

Mother-Baby-Iodine: The Importance of Iodine on the Woman and her Baby

Thyroid disorders can cause infertility, abortion or miscarriage in women, or they can give birth to mentally or growth retarded babies. The extent and consequences of iodine deficiency disorders on women of reproductive age, especially pregnant and lactating mothers, are known to affect children during their first 1000 days of life from conception.



World Thyroid Day
25 May 2021
International Thyroid Awareness Week
25-31 May 2021

Plot 15 Road 71
Gulshan Dhaka 1212

Appointment
02 22 22 62 466 | 10666

Enforced disappearance can no longer be ignored by the state

It is against all democratic norms and the spirit of our Liberation War

THE picture of forlorn children holding pictures of their fathers forcibly disappeared for six or eight years or more, as was published yesterday, are heart-breaking reminders of this abhorrent practice that has only resulted in unease and lack of public trust towards the government. According to Human Rights Watch, from January 2009 to July 2020 at least 572 people have been forcibly disappeared by security forces and law enforcement agencies. The victims included members of opposition parties, journalists and bloggers. How is this acceptable in a free, independent country whose constitution guarantees every citizen's protection? How can such total lack of accountability of state agencies be acceptable in a democracy?

The number of victims and the way these incidents take place are similar in nature and indicates a systemic practice rather than sporadic acts of individual state actors. This makes it all the more frightening.

In most cases family members have alleged that the victims were picked up from their homes or the streets by plain-clothed members of the police or other law enforcing agencies such as RAB. When the family members asked about them at the offices of these agencies, officials have denied having them in custody. There have been cases of law enforcers refusing to take the case. In such circumstances what are family members supposed to do? Who will they go to?

Those who are lucky are "returned" though these victims usually say very little, if at all anything, regarding what happened to them during the days they were missing. Photojournalist Shafiqul Islam Kajol was "found" near the Indian border in the middle of the night, 53 days after his disappearance. Since then he has been slapped with many cases including one under the draconian Digital Security Act.

The UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances has expressed its desire to visit Bangladesh in relation to two cases of enforced disappearances and mentioned that it is aware that such cases have been reported for the last several years. The group has been examining such disappearances in various countries and how the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, can be implemented.

But we do not need international bodies to tell us how contradictory this phenomenon is to the spirit of our Liberation War and to democracy. Even the Supreme Court in February this year, referring to those who have disappeared and remain missing, demanded to know: "who will take responsibility for the incidents?"

The culture of complete impunity of the law enforcement agencies involved, the blatant inaction of the state, even denial that such incidents are taking place, have left ordinary citizens living in fear and despair. It is reminiscent of Chile's repressive regime of Augusto Pinochet, infamous for such enforced disappearances of those perceived as a threat. Is that what we want our country to be compared to? The government can no longer shy away from its responsibility to investigate these disappearances and hold the concerned agencies accountable for every one of them. The state must do everything in its power to find those who remain missing from forced disappearance whether recently or for years. It cannot continue to deny that people have been forcibly taken by members of the law enforcement agencies. This practice of enforced disappearance must come to an end, once and for all.

KSA-bound workers to get vaccines, aid for hotel quarantine

A good decision that could have come sooner

WE commend the expatriates' welfare ministry's decision to provide Tk 20,000-25,000 as aid for unvaccinated migrant workers who have to quarantine at hotels upon their arrival in Saudi Arabia. It is also reassuring to know that the vaccination of our remittance workers will get more priority than before, so that they may avoid the expensive institutional quarantine required by KSA and other countries.

According to a new travel advisory by the Kingdom (effective since May 20), Bangladeshi migrant workers will have to quarantine themselves in hotels upon arrival, for a week and at their own expense. Such a length of hotel stay would cost each worker Tk 65,000. For 40,000 such workers, the total cost would be around Tk 260 crores, as per the former vice president of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (Baira). Needless to say, the ministry's decision to provide financial aid to these workers (and to compensate those who have already flown to KSA and are paying for the hotel quarantine themselves) could not have come at a better time.

While we appreciate this prompt move by the authorities, we also believe any sufferings of the migrant workers could have been avoided had the government put them on its priority list of Covid-19 vaccine recipients beforehand. As per the current travel advisory from Saudi Arabia, those who have been fully vaccinated at least 14 days prior their arrival would not be required to quarantine at a hotel. Baira itself had urged the government to prioritise the vaccination of migrant workers as they were set to fly there for their jobs. Due to this lack of foresight in planning the vaccine priority list, at least 1,000 migrant workers had failed to book hotels in KSA and missed their flights between May 25-28. Though it is refreshing to see the authorities trying to right this wrong, we would urge them to have more foresight in the future when it comes to protecting the country's migrant workers. It is often disheartening to see the government praising remittance workers' enormous contributions to our economy and simultaneously displaying their disregard for these workers when it comes to serious issues such as vaccination against Covid-19. From here on, we hope to see the authorities be prompt in their responses to such crises, so that our valuable remittance workers can be prioritised and protected, not just compensated.

Should vaccines be considered 'global public goods'?

AN OPEN DIALOGUE



ABDULLAH SHIBLI

Bangladesh as it struggles to find more vaccines for the nation of 160 million people. As is well-known, Bangladesh and Beximco Pharmaceuticals Ltd had signed a deal last year with the Serum Institute of India (SII) to procure 30 million shots of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine, but SII halted delivery of these doses after providing only 10.2 million units, because of its high domestic demand amid severe Covid-19 infections in India.

A legitimate question to ask: Why couldn't have Bangladesh procured millions more of these life-saving jabs from other countries or in the open market to meet its growing demand? A related question is, if Bangladesh, India, South Africa and other developing nations have installed but idle pharmaceutical manufacturing facilities, what is preventing them from mass-producing vaccines created by Pfizer, Moderna, or AstraZeneca, and why do they have to wait for months to get a response from COVAX on this matter?

The answer to these questions is complex, but the simplest way of looking at it is: Covid vaccines are private goods and are sold to the highest bidder or only to those who can pay the going price. More on that in a minute.

It has been known for some time that many third-world companies, including pharmaceuticals in Bangladesh, are already locally making vaccines against hepatitis, flu, meningitis, rabies, tetanus, and measles. Abdul Mukhtar the MD of Incepta said he fully appreciates the extraordinary scientific achievement involved in the creation of Covid vaccines this year but wants the rest of the world to be able to share it and is willing to pay a "fair price" for the blueprints and technical know-how.

Like Mukhtar a few others around the globe, including the WHO, have been asking pharmaceutical companies to voluntarily share or pool the knowledge that they gained to facilitate universal and speedy access to vaccines.

WHO director-general, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, told the health ministers from its 194 member states on May 24 that more than 75 percent of all vaccines had been administered in just 10 countries. At the current rate of vaccination, only 30 of the world's population would have been inoculated

by the end of 2021. He warned no country should assume that it's "out of the woods", as long as the virus and its variants spread elsewhere. WHO data shows that high- and upper-income countries with 53 percent of the world's population have secured 83 percent of the world's supply of vaccines. Low- and lower-income countries, meanwhile, make up 47 percent of the population and have received just 17 percent of the vaccine supply.

So, the 64 Billion Dollar question is: how to accelerate vaccination in the face of a global shortage of vaccines? If we have idle vaccine-making plants all around the globe, what stands in the way of greater production and supply? The shortest answer, as stated earlier, is that vaccines are private commodities. One could next ask, why can't vaccine be considered a "global public good"? A public good is one like air and national

one consumer's usage does not preclude the use of another. "Nonexcludability", on the other hand, means that the cost of keeping nonpayers of the good from enjoying the benefit of the good is prohibitive. A good example of a public good is sunshine.

At first glance, Covid vaccines developed by Moderna, Pfizer, or AstraZeneca are not public goods since each of these vendors are making these products for commercial gains and billions of people are excluded since there aren't enough supplies. Therefore, they are not public goods in the sense Samuelson or other modern economists use this concept. However, one could make the case that in the current pandemic situation, vaccines can be categorised as "global" public goods, since vaccination benefits everyone and the social cost of exclusion is very high. In addition, vaccine exclusion could be costly and mean the difference between life and

overwhelming interest in ensuring these will be universally and cheaply available."

The obstacles that stand in the way of implementing a policy that considers vaccines as GPGs are many but two of them stand out: i) the patent or intellectual property (IP) rights of vaccine developers; and ii) lack of technical know-how for the production and distribution of vaccines. Vaccines and all Covid-related medicines and technologies are protected under the WTO agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS). A patent waiver was proposed jointly by India and South Africa at the WTO meeting in October last year for a temporary waiver of TRIPS, and the objections were fast and furious. Pfizer's partner BioNTech is a German firm, and Angela Merkel, the German Chancellor, said, "The protection of intellectual property is a source of innovation and it must remain so in the future."

In addition, ensuring adequate raw materials and supplies is essential for scaling up vaccine production, but global Covid-19 vaccine supply chains are complex and fragile, and have experienced shortages as production has scaled up. The US has invoked the Defence Production Act over a dozen times in the last year to increase access to raw materials and capacity for domestic manufacturing purposes.

India and South Africa both are large producers of generic drugs, but they have less expertise and capacity to make complex biologics like mRNA vaccines. A recent incident at a US plant in Baltimore raised the alarm about the potential hazard of licensing vaccine manufacturing facilities in an unregulated environment. "And above everything, patient safety must always come first," an AstraZeneca spokesperson said.

Governments and health experts have offered two potential solutions to the vaccine shortage: One, supported by WHO, is a patent pool modelled after a platform set up for HIV, tuberculosis, and hepatitis treatments for voluntary sharing of technology, intellectual property and data. But no company has offered to share its data.

Another proposal that has not gained currency yet, is to ask President Biden to move toward a government purchase of patent rights under "eminent domain" after which the US, as owner, would coordinate worldwide distribution.

In the meantime, some countries and companies plan to do their own bilateral vaccine donations, bypassing COVAX. "These bilateral arrangements run the risk of fanning the flames of vaccine inequity," said WHO's director-general.

Dr Abdullah Shibli is an economist and works in information technology. He is also Senior Research Fellow, International Sustainable Development Institute (ISDI), a think-tank based in Boston, USA.

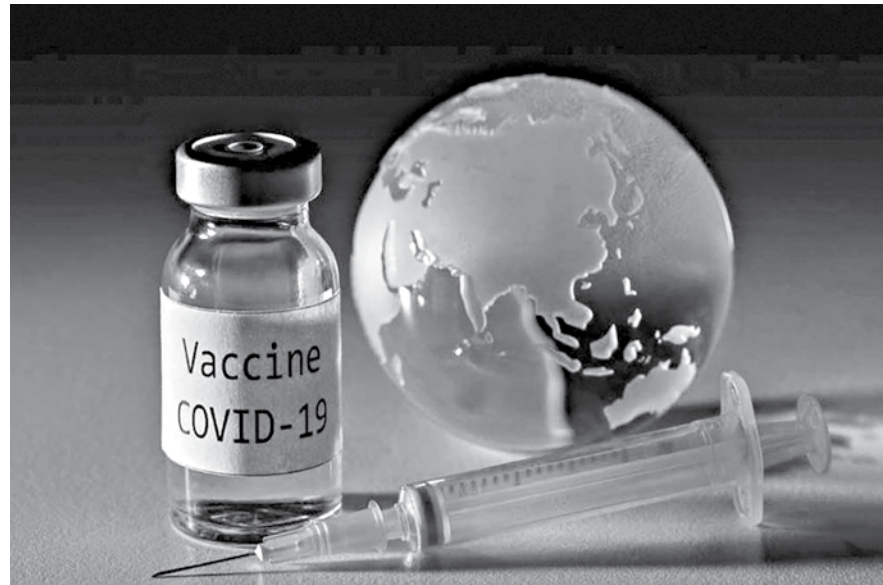


PHOTO: AFP

defence which allows each of us—often within a geographical boundary—to enjoy the product free and without excluding anyone else.

UNESCO first called for COVID-19 vaccines to be considered a global public good (GPG) last year in February 2020. Earlier, in 2006, the International Task Force on Global Public Goods came up with a list of six possible GPG candidates but did not include vaccines. In contrast, Ursula Von der Leyen, head of the European Commission, used the phrase "global common good" to describe the vaccines.

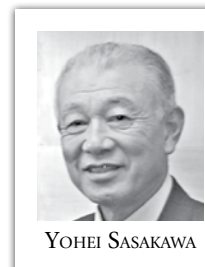
The technical conditions for "public goods" were first formulated by the Nobel Prize-winning economist Paul Samuelson who in the 1950s clearly enunciated two necessary conditions. First, consumption of the item is non-rivalrous, and second, it is nonexcludable. Let me elucidate. Non-rivalrous consumption implies that

death.

The concept of GPG focuses on goods that are public in the most general sense of the term. A GPG used by a person in Bangladesh does not reduce the amount that someone else in the USA can consume, or the positive externalities are so extensive that private firms could not expect to capture or receive all of the social benefits. Here are some examples of global public goods that have been discussed in the literature: Biodiversity and the natural environment.

For Covid-19, it would be a stretch to consider a biomedical innovation such as a diagnostic test, drug or vaccine as a GPG. As a practical matter and in the context of this pandemic, there is a strong case to create policies to facilitate a diversity of manufacturers and provide for open licensing of intellectual property rights for drugs and vaccines effective against the virus, since the "world has an

Leprosy must not be forgotten amid the Covid-19 pandemic



YOHEI SASAKAWA

THE 74th World Health Assembly (WHA) takes place from May 24 to June 1. This year's gathering is likely to be dominated by Covid-19, but here I want to talk about a different disease—leprosy—and a resolution that was adopted at the WHA exactly 30 years ago.

This resolution called for the elimination of leprosy as a public health problem at the global level by the year 2000, with elimination defined as a prevalence rate of less than 1 case per 10,000 population. It was a landmark resolution for the time.

Leprosy, also known as Hansen's disease, is a chronic infectious disease caused by the bacillus *Mycobacterium leprae*. It mainly affects the skin and peripheral nerves and is said to be one of the oldest diseases in human history.

Today an effective treatment exists in the form of multidrug therapy (MDT) and with early detection and treatment, the disease is completely curable. But if treatment is delayed, leprosy can cause impairments to the skin, nerves, face, hands and feet, and lead to permanent disability. Together with deep-seated fears and misperceptions about the disease, this has subjected persons affected by leprosy as well as their family members to severe discrimination, which regrettably continues to this day.

And, amid the coronavirus pandemic, we can see parallels between the discrimination and hostility toward Covid-19 patients, their families and health personnel that has been reported in different parts of the world and society's attitudes toward leprosy.

Following the 1991 WHA resolution, elimination of leprosy as a public health problem was successfully achieved at the global level by the end of 2000, and almost all countries, including Bangladesh, have replicated that success at the national level. Unfortunately, this does not mean

that leprosy has disappeared.

Each year, around 200,000 new cases of leprosy are reported to the WHO, with Bangladesh accounting for over 3,600 cases in 2019, the fifth highest total.

There are still endemic areas and scattered hot spots of leprosy in many countries and there are some 3-4 million people living with visible impairments or deformities due to leprosy. Meanwhile, the persistence of stigma and discrimination

As regards the front wheel, the WHO recently published its new Global Leprosy Strategy 2021-2030, which includes the ambitious targets of zero leprosy patients in 120 countries and a 70 percent decrease in new cases detected globally by 2030. In order to achieve these targets, there will need to be commitments and financial support from governments; this is not something the WHO can achieve on its own.

the resolution are fully implemented.

Over the past half-century, the dedication of a great many people has brought us a step closer to a world without leprosy, but our work is not yet done. In Bangladesh, the government has committed to achieving zero disability, zero discrimination and zero disease due to leprosy by 2030, following a National Leprosy Conference held in 2019, attended by Prime Minister Sheikh



A 14th century painting depicts two leprosy patients denied entrance to town.

PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

can inhibit people from seeking treatment.

Since becoming the World Health Organization (WHO) Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination in 2001, I have visited some 120 countries and observed the situation on the ground for myself. This has led me to think of leprosy in terms of a motorcycle: the front wheel symbolises curing the disease, and the back wheel represents eliminating discrimination. Unless both wheels are turning together, we will not reach our ultimate goal of zero leprosy.

Concerning the rear wheel, I have worked hard to have leprosy recognised internationally as a human rights issue since the early 2000s when I first approached the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. One result has been the resolution on elimination of discrimination against persons affected by leprosy and their family members, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2010. But the real measure of success will be when principles and guidelines accompanying

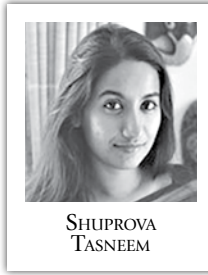
Hasina.

Especially now, during the Covid-19 pandemic, it is important that we do not lose sight of leprosy and that we continue to build on the progress we have made. Recalling how countries decided 30 years ago to unite in a fight against leprosy, let's redouble our efforts to vanquish a disease that has been a common enemy of humankind for millennia.

Yohei Sasakawa, WHO Goodwill Ambassador for Leprosy Elimination.

Our students deserve better policies

What exactly is our long-term plan for recovering learning losses?



SHUPROVA TASNEEM

THE prolonged school closures in Bangladesh has put us at the top of yet another unpalatable list—according to UNICEF, we have had one of the world's longest full closure of educational institutions due to the pandemic.

Its data also suggests that, after Brazil, Bangladesh has the most number of students who have missed almost all classroom instruction time since March 2020. We are one of the few countries in the world that have not even partially opened schools during the course of the pandemic, for over an entire year. Research suggests that 5.92 million primary and secondary students in the country are facing learning losses as a result. An Education Watch report also detailed how almost 70 percent of students are not participating in distance learning.

Against this backdrop, one had hoped that the joint press conference by the two education ministers, held on Wednesday, would give the country's students some much-needed relief by providing a concrete roadmap to the resumption of education in Bangladesh. Their announcements, however, were at best confusing, and at worst—incoherent, out of touch and devoid of any empathy for the students of Bangladesh. After 14 long months of school closures, our students deserved better than the confused plans that have been put forward.

Let us start with the conflicting statements. It was suggested at the press conference that educational institutions might open on June 13 and in fact, current school closures have been extended to June 12 only. So will schools be opening then? Unlikely, since the education minister also said the ministry will be relying on the suggestions of the National Technical Advisory Committee on Covid-19, which has recommended reopening educational institutions once the infection rate drops below five percent, which has again been on the rise for the last several days.

This also begs the question—if the ministry has been relying on the committee's recommendations, why did they not start planning to open schools when the positivity

rate started nearing five percent in January this year? Government data suggests that on January 12, the positivity rate was at exactly five percent. By January 19, the seven-day rolling average positivity rate was also five percent—meaning that by then, the average positivity rate had been at five percent for a week. It wasn't until late March that the positivity rate started climbing again. So why then, were students not given the opportunity to go back to school, at least for a month or two? For children who are at high risk of being pushed into child labour and/or child marriages, especially due to the economic crisis that the poorest families are facing

of Secondary and Higher Education recently published guidelines on the health and safety measures that will be followed in this scenario, which includes measures to physically distance, the division of classes into smaller groups and the use of masks by all. As commendable as these suggestions are, how feasible are they, especially since, according to the Obhimbabok Oikya Forum (a platform of guardians), there can be more than 80 children in one classroom? Will temporary classrooms be set up elsewhere? Will teachers' capacity be improved, will teaching assistants be hired? No information has been shared on how these plans are actually going to be

resume, but when they do, SSC students will attend around 360 hours of schooling over 10 weeks, and HSC students will attend around 500 hours of the same over 14 weeks, and then they will get exactly 336 hours to absorb this information (assuming they don't take time to eat, sleep or relax over the two weeks of preparation time), after which they will sit for the most important exams of their adolescence, on which hinges their chances of getting into universities, following their ambitions and keeping their families happy/solvent.

I wonder if the officials who came up with this plan went through such intensive and continuous work hours while formulating it. Perhaps they might have come up with a better plan if they did. However, given the very real impacts the pandemic is having on the mental health of young people—coupled with the report from a youth organisation in March this year suggesting that suicide rates have gone up by a staggering 44 percent in Bangladesh in 2020 when compared to 2019—one feels a little more time should have been spent on making provisions that actually take the well-being of students into account.

What is truly disappointing is that nothing was said in the press conference that we haven't already heard before. The authorities have had a year to think about how to safely reopen educational institutions, and this is the best that they could come up with, despite experts putting forward multiple short- and long-term recommendations regarding the situation. The most obvious of these has been the idea of opening schools in different districts in phases, depending on the local coronavirus situation.

According to regional data from the IEDCR, 41 percent of all Covid-19 cases are in Dhaka (given the population density of this area, this isn't a surprise). The worst district after Dhaka is Chattogram, with around six percent of cases, followed by Cumilla and Narayanganj (both at 1.9 percent). This means that every other district in the country holds less than two percent of total cases, and if you compare it to data from December 2020, you'll find that the situation really didn't change much in terms of district-wise distribution of Covid-19. Given this scenario, it is absolutely baffling why children across the country—especially those in remote/rural areas who are most

affected by the digital divide—are being held hostage simply because we are unable to get the coronavirus under control in the urban centres.

It is clear that there is a pressing need for decentralisation of education policy. The two ministries must end this one-size-fits-all approach and involve relevant stakeholders—schools, educators, local administration, NGOs, policy experts and most importantly, students and their families—to come up with a coherent learning recovery programme that goes beyond the bare minimum and actually comes up with approaches tailored to different localities and their contexts. At present, the government has no idea what the learning levels of SSC/HSC examinees even are. It is folly to come up with examination schedules without actually getting them back into classrooms first.

And beyond exams and learning recoveries, we must devise methods to get children who have already been lost to child marriage and employment during the pandemic, back into school. It is extremely concerning that, despite economic inequalities being further entrenched during the pandemic (CPD estimates over 16 million people have been further pushed into poverty), we are not seeing any real effort from the authorities to ensure this is not reflected in soaring rates of school dropouts.

When the health and safety restrictions were eased around August last year, most of our usual activities resumed. It was not just offices and markets that opened up—weddings were attended, holidays were planned, and life went back to relative normalcy for most adults. So why then, did we shut our children out of their classrooms? What does this say about the value we place on education in this country? Through our desire to protect our children during the pandemic, have we inflicted greater long-lasting damage on their intellectual development and psychological well-being? As the main government bodies in charge of the education of our younger generations, we hope the two education ministries are pondering these questions as seriously as they ought to.

Shuprova Tasneem is a member of the editorial team at The Daily Star. Her Twitter handle is @shuprovatasneem.



Nayeem, a student of class-III, smiles as he carries his basket of cigarettes and betel leaves on the streets of the capital's Mugda. With his school closed since the start of the outbreak, the eight-year-old has been selling his wares on the streets to contribute to his family's income.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

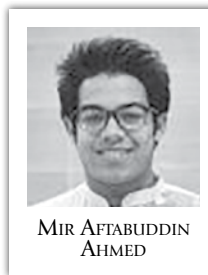
during the pandemic, any opportunity to make up for learning losses (and access the school meals initiative) would have been a welcome change.

This brings us to the next suggestion put forward in the press briefing regarding the plan for reopening schools. According to a report in this daily, if/when schools do re-open, 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. The Directorate

implemented.

If you are worried that not enough concern is being shown for our primary/secondary students, the ministry's plans for SSC and HSC students almost beggars belief. After over a year of being kept out of classrooms, the plan is that SSC and HSC students will attend 60 and 84 days of class respectively, six days a week, and then be given two weeks to study for their exams (with shortened syllabuses). So we still don't know when these classes will actually

Self-censorship and the media: Where are we heading?



MIR AFTABUDDIN AHMED

FUELLED by draconian legal measures and administrative harassment against seasoned *Prothom Alo* correspondent Rozina Islam, the journalistic community is fuming at the humiliating and hasty actions of the health ministry—and by definition, frustrated at the supposed inaction of the government and the judiciary to address what in reality, is nothing less than an embarrassing move to stop a journalist from doing her professional duty. Senior newspaper editors have penned columns terming the arrest of Rozina Islam as a direct attack on the media—we unitedly share their concerns. Citizens have taken to social media to remind each other of the corruption unearthed by investigative reporters like Rozina during the pandemic. With the health ministry being at the centre of these graft scandals, questions naturally arise regarding the intention behind prosecuting Rozina—we share these apprehensions unanimously as well. The question which arises as a result is this: is Bangladesh drafting its eulogy of a free media?

Rozina Islam is out on bail—yet she is in no way a free citizen. Across television talk shows, media forums and international organisations, one central concern is increasingly being expressed—the increasing usage of legal architectures that stem from the colonial era and a parallel environment of suppressing press freedom, which is widespread in Bangladesh. Whenever issues of concern are raised through the media, the state has developed a tendency to crush vocal opposition—usually citing national security concerns. The Digital Security Act for example, has been this government's primary Achilles Heel over the past couple of years—receiving

criticism even from its most ardent supporters. In the first five months of 2020, 400 cases were filed and 353 arrests made under the purview of this legal instrument.

Rozina Islam's employer *Prothom Alo* performed an in-depth analysis of 197 such cases and reported that a high majority of these were filed based on certain vague accusations—specifically for making adverse remarks, defamation, sharing distorted images, spreading rumours and conspiring against the state. In a recent column for *The Daily Star*, academic CR Abrar cited the *Prothom Alo* report and stated that “in 80 percent of instances, the plaintiff was either leaders or activists of the ruling party or police”. Abrar further pointed out that of “the 197 cases, 88 were filed by Awami League MPs, union council chairs and activists of youth, student and volunteer wings of the ruling party, and 70 more were filed by the police”—so either there is an egregious misuse of political power taking place, or if we are to believe the government, there are widespread anti-state activities being carried out against what is perhaps the strongest political regime this country has ever seen. I leave it up to the readers to decide which is true.

The current circumstances with Rozina Islam in my opinion, is symbolic of the systematic degradation of press freedom and journalism in Bangladesh—and as a result, while we condemn her detention, harassment and persecution by state authorities, we are reminded of the sobering fact that her situation is but part of a wider state mobilised censorship of the press. From the highest level of the government, to ministers, ruling party MPs to civil servants running the bureaucracy, there is a tacit message given towards non-state actors—if you cannot be with us, do not condemn us. If you cannot support us, do not criticise us. In a nutshell, the state has promoted self-censorship on part of the media by perpetuating an environment of judicial harassment and allowing for security forces as

well as grassroots Awami League activists, to tap into oppressive legal tools to nullify civic opposition. This perhaps has been expressed most aptly, by the harassment carried forth by health ministry officials against Rozina Islam.

Perhaps it is a good idea to take a step back, and define what the role of free media is in developing the foundations of a thriving democracy. The press and news media is often referred to as the Fourth Estate—through indirect social influences, the Fourth Estate has the unequivocal capacity of advocacy and the inherent ability to frame political issues. Checks and balances are crucial in a political system to ensure equal distribution of power, opportunity, information and wealth—and the media acts as a guardian to ensure accountability from those wielding authority on behalf of the people. If you have an absence or deficiency in sustainable democratic exercises between political parties and in the wider public system in a society for whatever reason, the media steps in to do the role of a de facto challenger which ensures that the government of the day does not become tyrannical or dictatorial—guaranteeing that the mandate and consent of voters are considered in policymaking. Therefore in no way, should the media be an ally of either this government or of any other regimes in principle—that simply is not their role. Yes they support, yes they remind, yes they stand with you during periods of national crisis—but they are not your unwavering and unquestioning friend. And they should not be punished for not being so.

In the recent past, there has been an inclination by sycophants of the ruling party to invalidate accusations made against the government, by suggesting that the media should not put their energy in solely criticising the government—but should simultaneously market the successes of this regime. I disagree—the party in power has its army of marketing strategists who have

successfully and to the fullest of their abilities, been able to promote the developmental agendas and achievements of the government. They have done so in a relatively protected digital and political space, free from political harassment and state persecution—on the other end however, with each passing day one sees a smaller space for formal dissent to take place. It is here where today's media should ideally step in—and remind the government of their failures. And failures

In the recent past, there has been an inclination by sycophants of the ruling party to invalidate accusations made against the government, by suggesting that the media should not put their energy in solely criticising the government—but should simultaneously market the successes of this regime.

will continue to be present—we are not a utopian wonderland and Rozina Islam's investigative pieces on *Prothom Alo* and the kind of journalism she represents, provides the country and its government to mend what is wrong and progress. And therefore the space and opportunity for free thinking and dissent, cannot and must not be side-lined by any political regime.

No political expert in Bangladesh will suggest that the media in its totality, is acting as a vessel on behalf of Awami League's

political rivals—neither is it accurate to suggest that media personalities are fully immune from having their own skeletons. However, a cautious media which is being harassed using this country's judicial system, is practicing self-censorship in its publications—this, no editor, senior reporter or average citizen will deny. That should be our primary concern as readers and supporters of a free press. It is not a matter of national pride to see Bangladesh being ranked 152nd out of 180 countries in the 2021 World Press Freedom Index—neither is it acceptable to see a senior female journalist who has championed transparency, accountability and the concept of open government, be harassed for doing her professional job.

Rumours have circulated regarding the so-called sensitive information that Rozina Islam supposedly acquired on her phone prior to being arrested. I end this piece by asking a series of questions in this regard—if this document was so confidential, why was it left unprotected in the room of a mid-level health ministry official? On the basis of what law was Rozina kept in a confined space by health ministry officials for close to six hours and harassed by civil servants? Who gave who the right to seize Rozina's cell-phone? What message is the state giving to Bangladeshis during their Golden Jubilee celebrations by tapping into the Official Secrets Act for the first time in the country's independent history, to make a reactionary case against a journalist? And of course—should Rozina Islam be provided monetary compensation for being harassed by the very officials that she is trying to hold accountable, at a time when corruption in the health ministry is rampant? If the contexts centring around Sagor-Runi, Mushtaq Ahmed, Kajor and most recently Rozina, does not concern us as citizens, what will?

Mir Aftabuddin Ahmed is a Toronto-based Banking Professional and a regular contributor for *The Daily Star*. Email: aftab.ahmed@alum.utoronto.ca

QUOTABLE Quote

STELLA MCCARTNEY
fashion designer (1971—)

Everyone can do simple things to make a difference, and every little bit really does count.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Break-away group
- 5 Mailbox part
- 9 Bars on cars
- 11 Easy two-pointer
- 13 Shrek's love
- 14 Singer Cara
- 15 High trains
- 16 Lease signers
- 18 Staggering
- 20 To date
- 21 Fabric workers
- 22 Peas' places
- 23 Count start
- 24 "Fifth Beatle" Sutcliffe
- 25 Close
- 27 Flag features
- 29 Musical ability

DOWN

- 1 Less dangerous
- 2 Driven out
- 3 1967 Peaches & Herb hit
- 4 Top rating
- 5 Police trap
- 6 Old Italian coin
- 7 1986 Madonna hit
- 8 Like some windshields
- 10 Mocking work
- 12 High homes
- 17 USN rank
- 19 Easter lead-in
- 22 Sch. Orgs. symbols
- 24 Accent
- 25 Elite Navy group
- 26 Cuban capital
- 27 Slump
- 28 Digestive aid
- 30 Targets
- 31 Like some jackets
- 33 Take in
- 37 Pod unit
- 40 Pharaoh symbols

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THURSDAY'S ANSWERS

CLIP RACER UNITE MAN BIGGUN BALL NED TINA BAG BRIAR LEONE ESSES

SPORT TONER ARENA BUGEYED AWED REDD TERN BEGOFF MAE THETA SAGES MAST

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

NADAL, DJOKOVIC chase history

AFP, Paris

Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic will set their sights on more Grand Slam history at the French Open as Roland Garros embraces a new but eerily empty era of night time tennis.

A 14th title in Paris for Nadal would take him to a record-setting 21st major, surpassing the mark he shares with Roger Federer who has already written off his hopes of adding to his lone success in the French capital back in 2009.

Djokovic, the champion in 2016, can move to 19 Grand Slam titles with victory.

That would make the world number one the first man in over half a century to win all four majors on multiple occasions.

Only one of the sport's 'Big Three' will make the June 13 final after the draw placed top seed Djokovic, third seed Nadal and eighth-seeded Federer in the same half of the draw.

That means Djokovic is scheduled to face Federer in the



Men's champion Rafael Nadal wears a broad grin as he stands next to his own statue at the Roland Garros ahead of the French Open while his great rival Novak Djokovic (bottom) happily obliges to be in a selfie with Federico Coria after vanquishing the Argentine in a preparatory tournament. (R) Meanwhile, women's champion Iga Swiatek was in jolly mood during a training session.

PHOTO: INSTAGRAM



quarterfinals before a potential semifinal blockbuster with Nadal.

"I see it as completely normal. I'm not worried about it. I have a lot of work in front of me to play a potential match versus Djokovic," said Nadal, who has already won

clay court titles this season in Barcelona and Rome.

At last year's delayed Roland Garros, Nadal swept past Djokovic in straight sets in the final.

It was Nadal's 100th win at the tournament against just two losses since his 2005 title-winning debut. Nadal, who defeated Djokovic in the Rome final, starts his campaign against Alexei Popyrin of Australia, the world number 62.

Giving Djokovic hope, however, is the knowledge that he was responsible for one of Nadal's losses in Paris, in the 2015 quarterfinals.

He is also a four-time runner-up although three of those defeats in the championship match came against the Spaniard.

Only two men have previously managed to win all four of the Slams on more than one occasion - Roy Emerson and Rod Laver of Australia. Laver's achievement came back in 1969.

Djokovic tackles 66th-ranked

Tennis Sandgren of the United States in his first round match while Federer, playing the tournament for the first time since 2019, begins against a qualifier.

Federer, with his 40th birthday fast approaching, remains the sentimental favourite but his priority will be an assault on Wimbledon where he has been champion eight times.

"I'm not so sure in the last 50 years of the French Open, somebody just rocks up at nearly 40 years old, being out for a year and a half, and wins everything straight," said Federer after losing his only clay court match this year in Geneva last week.

Of the chasing pack, two-time runner-up Dominic Thiem is low on form and confidence.

A run to the Madrid semifinals was followed by a straight sets defeat to Cameron Norrie in his Lyon opener.

World number two Daniil

Medvedev has yet to win a match at Roland Garros in four attempts.

In Rome, he fell at the first hurdle and half-jokingly pleaded with the referee to disqualify him such is his dislike for clay.

World number five Stefanos Tsitsipas is the most likely man to upset the odds of Nadal or Djokovic again taking the title.

The 22-year-old Greek won the prestigious Monte Carlo clay court title in April, had match point before losing the Barcelona final to Nadal and then lifted the Lyon trophy.

He has beaten Nadal on clay in Madrid in 2019 and stretched Djokovic to five sets in the 2020 French Open semifinals.

This year's Roland Garros will be the second taking place under the shadow of the coronavirus.

Just over 5,000 fans a day will be allowed on site until June 9 when that figure rises to 13,000.

Swiatek serene as questions linger over rivals

Afp, Paris

Iga Swiatek heads into the French Open trying to become the first player since Serena Williams at Wimbledon in 2016 to successfully defend a women's Grand Slam singles title, with injuries and poor clay form clouding the hopes of several of her chief rivals.

Following her victory in Rome, culminating in a ruthless 46-minute takedown of Karolina Pliskova, Poland's first Grand Slam singles champion returns to Roland Garros just seven months on with a far greater weight of expectation.

Swiatek, who turns 20 next week, was the lowest-ranked woman, then 54th in the world, to win the French Open, shifted from its traditional May-June slot last year due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Like Jelena Ostapenko in 2017, it was her first title at tour level. Unlike the Latvian, who has struggled to reproduce her best tennis regularly, Swiatek appears better equipped to stay at the top.

She entered the top 10 for the first time last week, but has to face close friend Kaja Juvan of Slovenia in her opener in Paris.

"We are friends, but on court everybody is equal. I'm actually good at forgetting that I'm playing against my best friend," Swiatek said Friday.

In theory, this French Open could be the chance for Naomi Osaka to step up on clay.

However, all seven of her career titles, including her four majors, have come on hard surfaces.

The Japanese star was knocked out early in both Madrid and Rome. Her best performance at Roland Garros in four attempts is the third round.

Her preparations have been overshadowed by her decision to boycott all press conferences at the tournament, fearing their effects on her mental health.

The 23-year-old's gesture was lambasted as a "phenomenal mistake" by French tennis chief Gilles Moretton.

Osaka begins against Romania's 63rd-ranked Patricia Maria Tig.

Ashleigh Barty vacated her Roland Garros title after skipping much of the 2020 season citing health and travel risks.

The world number one has won three titles this year and reached the Madrid final, but an arm injury at the Italian Open forced her out of the quarterfinals and cast doubt over her fitness in Paris.

"I think coming back to the site here at Roland Garros is obviously pretty special, pretty cool," said Barty who tackles Bernarda Pera of the United States in the first round.

"A lot of it I don't remember and feels like it was such a long time ago. It's certainly a clean slate for us this week."

As for Serena Williams, now 39, she has won just one of three matches on clay this month having returned after nearly three months away following the Australian Open.

The American remains on 23 Grand Slam titles, one behind Margaret Court's all-time record, and has not gone beyond the last 16 in Paris since losing the 2016 final to Garbine Muguruza.



'There are no big or small teams in this format'

SPORTS REPORTER

With the upcoming edition of Dhaka Premier League set to begin from tomorrow, star all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan, who will lead Mohammedan Sporting Club this season, is willing to shift focus fully from international cricket to the domestic T20 competition.

The star all-rounder has also chosen to skip the Pakistan Super League despite being snapped up by Lahore Qalandars in last month's auction.

"Obviously our first target will be to gain momentum from the first game and then gradually move forward match by match because it's a long tournament. It will be very important to win the first game because T20 cricket is all about momentum. There are no big or small teams in this format. Whoever plays better cricket will win," Shakib said during the unveiling of Mohammedan's jersey at a city hotel yesterday.

Among others featuring for Mohammedan this season are Taskin Ahmed, Shamsur Rahman, Abu Hider, Abu Jayed and Shuvagata Hom.

In the context of historic sporting

rivalries, Shakib was asked whether he is looking forward to the big match against Abahani.

"I am sure all the club officials and fans, not just me, are waiting for the clash against Abahani. We are all excited. But our main goal is to get those two points from each game regardless of the opponent we play," he said.

Shakib also addressed his below-par performances with the bat in the three-match ODI series against Sri Lanka, with the left-hander scoring just 19 runs in three games and picking up three wickets.

"You have all witnessed what I did in the series. Obviously it did not go the way I expected but it can happen in cricket. I have to make sure that I don't repeat that again."

The star all-rounder also believed a maiden ODI series win against Sri Lanka was something the Tigers could be proud of.

"It feels good to win a first-ever series against Sri Lanka but it would have been great if we could have won the series 3-0. Having said that, if Sri Lanka also played their best cricket the result would have gone the other way. But overall we all should be proud of the result and should move forward from there," he added.

A mixed but encouraging bag

SPORTS REPORTER



The 2-1 ODI series win over Sri Lanka was not only Bangladesh's maiden bilateral ODI series win against the nation, but also managed to vault the Tigers to the top of the ICC ODI Super League. The Tigers' think-tank was seeking improvement in quite a few areas before the start of the series but despite the result, there are still aspects which Bangladesh will really want to work on. Here, the Daily Star tries to assess the Tigers' performance in all three departments in the just-concluded series against Sri Lanka.

OPENING FAILURE

As in the past, the Tigers' batting department remained the biggest cause for concern in all three games against Sri Lanka. The openers are yet to add a 50-plus partnership in their last nine games, including the series against Sri Lanka when they put on 5, 15, and 2. Bangladesh are also yet to find a settled opening partner for Tamim Iqbal, with Liton Das continuing his poor run in the series with scores of 0 and 25 before being dropped for the third

game. Naim Sheikh, who replaced Liton for the third ODI, also failed to utilise the opportunity and scored just one.

OFF-COLOR SHAKIB

A lot was expected of Shakib Al Hasan, who returned to his usual number three position against

of Bangladesh's batting department across the three games. In fact, the wicketkeeper-batsman waged a lone battle to secure the series victory.

The right-hander was the top run-getter in the series with 237, which included one hundred and a fifty. Mushfiqur rescued the Tigers twice

that Bangladesh could post enough runs on the board. Mahmudullah also played his part and scored two fifties in three games.

FIELDING WORRIES CONTINUE

Prior to the start of the series, skipper Tamim stated that they wanted to improve fielding and catching, which have been below-par over the past few series. Although the fielding was decent in the first two games, the Tigers were again guilty of dropping catches in the third and final ODI. Fielders dropped three chances to send back Lankan skipper Kusal Perera, who went on to register a century and win his side the game.

BOWLERS JOIN THE PARTY

Bangladesh's bowling department has remained the most consistent area of the team throughout the series, successfully defending scores of 257 and 246. Off-spinner Mehedi Hasan Miraz was the most successful bowler for Bangladesh with seven wickets and he jumped to second position in the ICC's ODI Bowlers Rankings. Apart from Miraz, pacers like Mustafizur Rahman and Taskin Ahmed showed good skill alongside young Shoriful Islam, who made his ODI debut in this series.

TOP THREE RUN-GETTERS FOR BANGLADESH

Player	Match	Runs	HS	Avg	100	50
Mushfiqur Rahim	3	237	125	79.00	1	1
Mahmudullah Riyad	3	148	54	49.33	0	2
Tamim Iqbal	3	82	52	27.33	0	1

TOP THREE WICKET-TAKERS FOR BANGLADESH

Player	Match	Overs	Wkts	BBI	Avg	Econ
Mehedi Hasan Miraz	3	30	7	4/30	15.14	3.53
Mustafizur Rahman	3	25	6	3/16	16.16	3.88
Taskin Ahmed	3	26	4	4/46	33.75	5.19

Sri Lanka after a phenomenal performance in the 2019 ICC World Cup. But the star cricketer failed to live up to the billing, scoring 15, 0 and 4. Although the star cricketer was economical with the ball, he managed to pick just three wickets in as many games.

MAJESTIC MUSHFIQUR

Mushfiqur Rahim was the anchor

alongside Mahmudullah Riyad, when Bangladesh were struggling on 99 for four and 77 for four in the first two ODIs respectively. In the first game, Mushfiqur scored 84 off 87 balls before registering his eighth ODI hundred in the second game. Mushfiqur was the last batsman to be dismissed for the Tigers but not before he ensured



BOOTERS BEGIN TRAINING IN QATAR

All 23 members of the national football team along with the coaching staff tested negative in Covid tests yesterday, following their arrival in Qatar on Friday. The team had a gym session at the hotel in the morning before getting to the university ground for a practice session. The booters, who are currently bottom of their group, will play their three remaining World Cup qualifying matches on June 3, 7 and 15 against Afghanistan, India and Oman respectively.

PHOTO: BFF

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SHAH CEMENT

Vicious cycle on with drug cases rising

Petty peddlers keep returning to the trade

SHARIFUL ISLAM

Twelve years ago, a case was first filed against Kamal after he was arrested with 10 yaba pills.

Since then, the resident of Geneva Camp in Mohammadpur, a notorious drug hotspot in the capital, has been charged with a total of 18 narcotics cases.

A habitual drug peddler, Kamal (whose real name has been withheld) claimed that the system leaves little scope for rehabilitation.

For that first case, Kamal's impoverished family had to borrow Tk 10,000 from a local lender at a high interest rate to pay the lawyer's fees and other expenses to bail him out of jail.

"I had decided to give up yaba peddling after coming out on bail in the first case and worked hard to pay back the loan," he told The Daily Star recently.

But, around nine months later, a police officer put 20 yaba pills in his pocket and arrested him, he alleged.

Another case was filed against him and again his family borrowed money to get him out of jail. He was able to obtain bail after one month of his arrest.

Five days after getting out of jail the second time, Kamal said he was arrested again with 15 yaba pills in his possession.

He said he first entered the illegal trade after losing his job as a sales assistant at a fish shop in Mohammadpur.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



The DND canal in Narayanganj's Shiddhirganj has been turned into a landfill, blocking the canal entirely. Local influential people have built shops and other structures on the almost 1.5km long stretch. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN



Today Zia's 40th death anniversary

UNB, Dhaka

The BNP is observing the 40th death anniversary of its founder and former president Ziaur Rahman across the country today.

The party and its associated bodies have drawn up a 15-day programme to observe the death anniversary with due reverence.

The programmes began yesterday and will end on June 12.

The events include arranging virtual discussions, holding photo exhibitions and free medical camps, wearing black badges, publishing posters and supplements in newspapers and distributing food among the destitute.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

500 meters of Kuakata beach goes into sea

Yaas damages 56km of embankment in Patuakhali

STAR REPORT

About 500 metres of Patuakhali's Kuakata beach, the lone tourist attraction of the district, was washed away due to the tidal surge caused by recent Cyclone Yaas.

Around 56 kilometres of the district's different flood control dykes have also been damaged. Water Development Board (WDB) said it would need Tk 53 crore to repair these dams.

Water was flowing 74 cm above the danger level in the main rivers like Andhar Manik, Ramnabat and Payra rivers on May 26. But the water started to recede, our Patuakhali correspondent said.

Mohammad Halim Salehee, executive engineer, Patuakhali WDB, said 56 km of different embankments, including seven km of the most vulnerable dam in Laluar

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

ROAD TO FREEDOM
THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

Transcript of Dhaka massacre

MAY 30, 1971

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

EVIDENCE OF TERROR ATTACK ON DHAKA

Evidence became available which appeared to confirm that the Pakistan Army's operations in Dhaka on March 25 were part of a well-organised plan devised to terrorise the inhabitants into submission. The evidence was a transcript of monitored radio messages passed between army units during the early hours of the attack. The transcript was now in the hands of the provisional government of Bangladesh, and copies were to be sent to the secretary general of the United Nations and all heads of government.

Here are some extracts from messages exchanged between control, the headquarters of General Tikka Khan, the military governor, and army units.

Control: Well done. What do you think would be the approximate number of casualties at the university?

88: Wait. Approximately 300. Over.

Control: Well done. Three hundred killed? Anybody wounded or captured? Sitrep (situation report). Over.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



6 AL activists shot during infighting

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

At least six Awami League activists got shot yesterday evening in a reported clash between factions of the party in Companyganj, Noakhali.

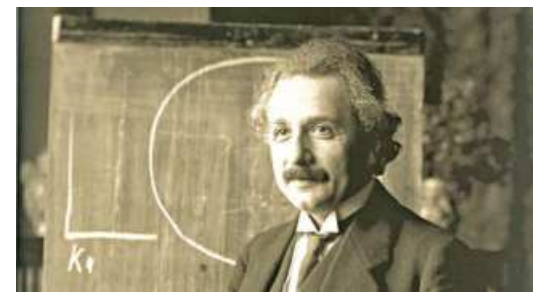
Police said Sabuj, 40, Jisan, 23, Sani, 27, Delwar Hossain Suman, 27, Didar, 35, and Kanchan, 50, who are Quader Mirza's men, sustained bullet injuries and were taken to different hospitals.

According to police, Bashurhat Municipality Mayor Abdul Quader Mirza's men were marching in processions at different unions in Companyganj and Bashurhat municipalities around 7:00pm.

"When Quader Mirza's

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

Einstein's E=mc2 letter fetches \$1.2m



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A handwritten letter penned by Albert Einstein which includes his famous $E = mc^2$ equation has fetched more than \$1.2m (£850,000) at auction.

The letter is one of only four known documents containing the equation in Einstein's own hand and the only one in a private collection, according to Boston-based auctioneers RR Auction.

The rarity of the handwritten calculation set off

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Doctor dies of post-Covid complications

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Golam Mortuza Harun, former president of Bangladesh Medical



Association (BMA), Chattogram chapter, died of post Covid-19 complications at a hospital

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



PRAYER TIMING MAY 30

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



People living in Muradpur intersection area of Chattogram city have to cross this dangerous trench by walking on planks. A lengthy work on the drainage there has forced the people of the neighbourhood take the risk every day. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Vietnam detects hybrid variant

Says the new Covid strain, a mix of Indian and UK variants, can spread faster by air

AGENCIES

Vietnam health minister Nguyen Thanh Long yesterday said the country has detected a new variant of the coronavirus, a mix of the Indian and UK Covid-19 variants that spreads quickly by air, online newspaper VnExpress reported.

After successfully containing the coronavirus for most of last year, Vietnam is now battling an outbreak that is spreading more quickly.

Nearly 3,600 people have been infected in 31 of its 63 cities and provinces since late April, accounting for more than half of the country's total infections.

"After running gene sequencing on newly detected patients, we have

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

Covid origin search 'being poisoned by politics': WHO

AGENCIES

The World Health Organization has warned that efforts to uncover the Covid-19 pandemic's origins were being hampered by politics, insisting scientists needed space to work on solving the mystery.

"We would ask that we separate the science from the politics, and let us get on with finding the answers that we need in a proper, positive atmosphere," WHO

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

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এসেনসিয়াল ড্রাগস্ কোম্পানী লিমিটেড

৩৯৫-৩৯৭, তেজগাঁও শিল্প এলাকা
ঢাকা-১২০৮।

শোক বার্তা

আমরা অতীব দুঃখের সাথে জানাচ্ছি যে, স্বাস্থ্য ও পরিবার কল্যাণ মন্ত্রণালয়ের মাননীয় মন্ত্রী, ইডিসিএল পরিচালনা পর্ষদের মাননীয় চেয়ারম্যান **জনাব জাহিদ মালেক**, এমপি মহোদয়ের মাতা **বেগম ফৌজিয়া মালেক**, বয়সঃ ৮৬ গত ২৭-০৫-২০২১ইং তারিখ বৃহস্পতিবার একটি হাসপাতালে বার্বক্যজনিত কারণে ইন্তেকাল করেন (ইন্না লিল্লাহি ওয়া ইন্না ইলাইহি রাজিউন)। আমরা এসেনসিয়াল ড্রাগস কোম্পানি লিঃ পরিবার মরহুমার মৃত্যুতে গভীরভাবে শোকাহত। পরম করুনাময় মহান আল্লাহর কাছে মরহুমার বিদেহী আত্মার মাগফিরাত কামনা করছি।