



"It's a relationship, you can call it the 'deep and meaningful relationship', whatever you want, the 'indestructible relationship'."
BRITISH PM BORIS JOHNSON ON UK-US RELATIONSHIP



"The Chinese authorities have created a dystopian hellscape on a staggering scale."
AMNESTY SECRETARY GENERAL AGNES CALLAMARD ON UYGHUR ABUSES



"In just over four months, Myanmar has gone from being a fragile democracy to a human rights catastrophe."
UN HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS MICHELLE BACHELET

VIRUS HOTSPOT IN BORDER AREAS

Districts grappling with Covid surge

Health experts say situation may turn into a full-blown crisis if strict preventive measures are not in place now

STAR REPORT

Amid a steady rise in virus infections and deaths across the country, the Covid crisis in the bordering districts has apparently deepened further.

As in the past few days, the hospitals in these districts grappled with an increasing number of patients yesterday. Most of the Covid units at the hospitals had already been at full capacity. Some of them kept turning away new patients.

Health officials said many of the hospitals are ill-equipped and understaffed to tackle the crisis.

They said some hospitals still do not have adequate ICU beds, a central oxygen supply system -- essential to provide uninterrupted oxygen to critical patients -- and other Covid-related treatment facilities.

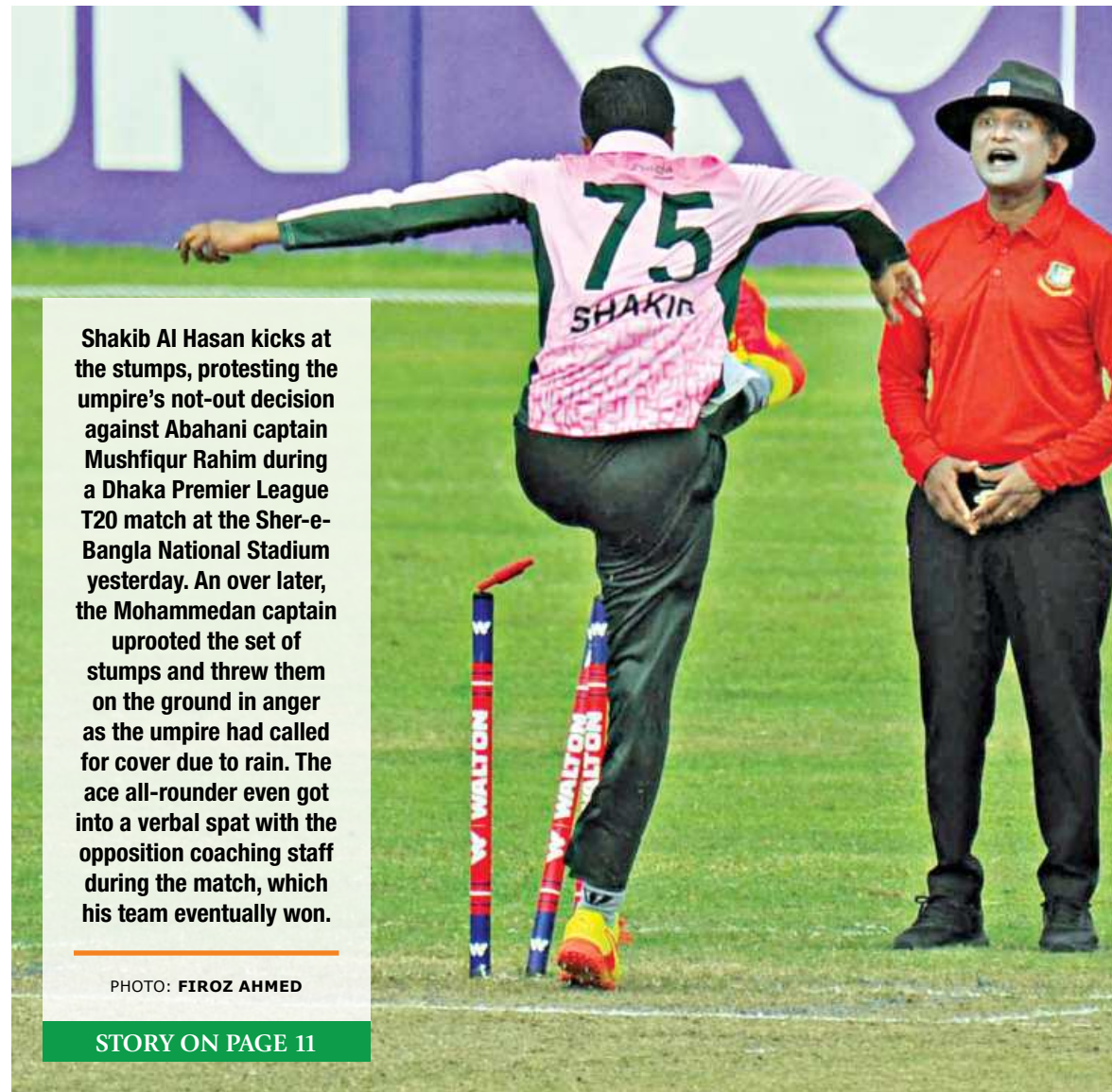
The officials believe the highly contagious Indian variant of the virus is responsible for the deterioration in the situation in these districts that share border with India.

Talking to The Daily Star yesterday, health experts warned that the Covid situation may turn into a full-blown crisis soon if strict measures are not taken right away.

They stressed the need for following the health safety rules strictly.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

- District, upazila hospitals ill-equipped and understaffed
- The highest 15 deaths recorded in Rajshahi district in 24 hours
- Natore, Naogaon districts see more than 50% positivity rate
- No bed available for new Covid patients at Khulna hospitals



Shakib Al Hasan kicks at the stumps, protesting the umpire's not-out decision against Abahani captain Mushfiqur Rahim during a Dhaka Premier League T20 match at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday. An over later, the Mohammedan captain uprooted the set of stumps and threw them on the ground in anger as the umpire had called for cover due to rain. The ace all-rounder even got into a verbal spat with the opposition coaching staff during the match, which his team eventually won.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

STORY ON PAGE 11

The Daily Star IPDC Present

UNsung WOMEN NATION BUILDERS AWARD 2021

The Daily Star, IPDC to host the award ceremony tonight virtually

The virtual gala event will unveil the winners of Unsung Women Nation Builders Award 2021 at 7:30pm today on Facebook and YouTube. The ceremony organised by The Daily Star and IPDC Finance will honour six unsung women for their exceptional humanitarian and courageous activities amid Covid-19 pandemic. The winners will receive Tk 2 lakh each. Keep an eye on The Daily Star's Facebook page and YouTube channel and also IPDC's Facebook page tonight to know the amazing stories of six unsung women.

BORDERING DISTRICTS

Free Covid test for the poor for 3 months

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The health ministry asked its officials in certain districts along the border to test the poor people for coronavirus for free.

The decision is aimed at increasing the number of daily tests in the districts where the positivity rates are higher than the rest of the country.

Officials have also been instructed to supply medical equipment and human resources in those highly affected districts.

"We asked civil surgeons at the bordering districts to make Covid-19 tests free for the poor people over the next three months," Health Minister Zahid Maleque told The Daily Star.

He added that additional medicines, oxygen concentrators, and beds will be sent to the highly infected areas.

Currently, Chapainawabganj, Rajshahi, Natore, Naogaon, Satkhira, Khulna, Lalmonirhat, Kurigram, Joypurhat and some other districts are witnessing a surge in daily new cases.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

ASTRAZENECA VACCINE FROM COVAX

Bangladesh to get 1m doses 'soon'

Foreign minister tells media

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is going to receive 1 million 800 shots of AstraZeneca vaccines under the Covax programme, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said yesterday.

"We are getting 1 million 800 AstraZeneca vaccine soon under the Covax program," he said in a message to the media sent through his press official.

Covax, a worldwide initiative aimed at equitable access to Covid-19 vaccines, directed by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, and the World Health Organization, has however not mentioned the source of the AstraZeneca vaccine that will be supplied to Bangladesh.

This comes as good news for Bangladesh as the country has eagerly been waiting for AstraZeneca vaccines because some 15 lakh people who got the first jab have been in uncertainty about whether they would get the second dose in time.

On May 1, the first consignment of 1,00,620 Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 doses was supplied to Bangladesh. Bangladesh is supposed to receive a total of 68 million vaccine doses from the Covax facility, which is still facing shortage and is not able to adequately supply the low-income and developing countries.

Bangladesh has also been facing vaccine shortage since India halted export of AstraZeneca vaccines since March due to massive rise in infections and deaths there.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Nerve-racking 24 hours

Cases documents narrate madness at Hathazari madrasa on March 26-27

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN, Chattogram

A constable was held hostage at the Hathazari madrasa to force the authorities to release the bodies of four people, killed during the March 26 mayhem, without autopsies, according to a case document.

The document also described the tension between Hefazat-e-Islam and the administration at Hathazari upazila as violence flared up during the protest against the visit of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Md Solaiman, constable (watcher) of Chattogram district police, who was picked up while on-duty and confined to the madrasa for about 24 hours, filed the case on April 21, accusing Hefazat chief Junayed Babunagari and 215 persons.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the case document recently.

At least 11 Hefazat leaders and activists have been arrested so far in the case, now under investigation by the Detective Branch in Chattogram.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

1b Covid jabs for poorer countries

G7 leaders pledge; aid groups, health organisations say pledge falls short

AGENCIES

G7 leaders yesterday opened their first in-person talks in nearly two years, with an expected pledge to donate one billion Covid vaccine doses to poor countries on the agenda in a show of Western democratic cohesion.

The club of leading economies -- Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and United States -- said a joint approach is the world's best chance for recovering from the global health crisis, and tackling climate change.

Welcomed by British Prime Minister Boris Johnson to the beachside summit venue in Carbis Bay, southwest England, the leaders posed for a family photo before opening their first session of talks on "building back better" after the pandemic.

The meeting presents a "huge opportunity" for global pandemic recovery, Johnson told his fellow leaders in opening remarks, as they sat socially distanced and without masks at a round table.

It would focus, he said, on "building back greener, building back fairer and building back more equal", with an emphasis on gender equality.

US President Joe Biden had set the tone, ditching Donald Trump's isolationist stance to ram home a message of resolve by the G7 and Nato against both Beijing and Moscow, as he heads into his first sit-down with Russian President Vladimir Putin next week in Geneva.

"I'm looking forward to reinforcing our commitment to multilateralism and working with our allies and partners to build a more fair and inclusive global economy," Biden tweeted from the G7 in Cornwall.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Thirteen-year-old Tanvir working in dark and dangerous conditions at a factory that produces metal kitchen utensils in Tongi. Amid the Covid-19 pandemic, the number of children working in hazardous circumstances has increased. The photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

ENDING HAZARDOUS CHILD LABOUR

Tk 284cr project in a shambles

Sees only 1.33pc progress till end of deadline, gets extension up to December this year

NILIMA JAHAN

More than three years ago, the government had taken up a project with the aim of eliminating hazardous child labour from Bangladesh by 2020.

It has been more than six months since the deadline has come and gone, but the project named "Eradication of Hazardous Child Labour in Bangladesh (4th phase)" has seen hardly any progress.

According to the latest Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) report, the Tk 284 crore project had progressed just 1.33 percent till end of December last year -- the original deadline.

The deadline of the project, being implemented by the labour and employment ministry with the help of national-level NGOs working on child labour, has now been pushed to December 2021.

But child rights activists are sceptical about the timely completion of the project as progress is still at a very early stage.

For the glacial rate of implementation, project officials blamed the pandemic, although the first cases of coronavirus were detected in the country on March 8 last year -- more than two years after the project was

WORLD DAY AGAINST CHILD LABOUR

initiated in January 2018. Child rights activists blamed bureaucratic wrangles and delay in selecting NGOs for the sluggish progress of the project, which aimed at getting one lakh children out of hazardous labour.

These children work in 38 sectors categorised as hazardous, which include welding, transportation, automobile workshops, tobacco factories and battery recharging shops.

According to the project, one lakh children will be provided six months' non-formal education and four months' skill development training, and a monthly stipend of Tk 1,000.

At the end of that time, the best 10,000 trainees would be provided Tk 15,000 as seed money. A database would also be prepared to track the employment information of one lakh children.

KM Abdus Salam, secretary of the labour ministry, said an initial list of NGOs has been prepared and it will be finalised once the cabinet committee on government purchase approves it.

"The process of sending the list to the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

BANGLADESH UPDATE



2,454
New cases in 24hrs



8,22,849
Total cases



13,032
Deaths



7,61,916
Recoveries



GLOBAL UPDATE

3,791,779
Deaths



175,768,221
Total cases

Lightning killed 177 in last four months

Says a survey based on media reports; most of the victims were farmers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 177 people were killed by lightning strikes, mostly farmers at different parts of the county while 47 others were wounded in the last four months since March.

This was disclosed by Save the Society and Thunderstorm Awareness Forum (SSTF) after a survey carried out from March to June based on information of both print, electronics and online portals.

"At least 122 farmers were killed by lightning strikes while doing work in farmlands while 15 people were killed while they went to collect mangoes under trees during Nor' westerly," said Rashim Mollah, secretary of the SSTF.

According to the survey, 149 people were male and 28 others were female among the dead.

At least 65 people were killed by lightning strikes in the first week of June, according to the survey.

Among the dead, 18 people were killed in Sirajganj, 14 in Jamalpur, 13 in Netrokona, 16 in Chapainawabganj, and 10 in Chattogram, the report said.

"Due to the nature disruption global climate change is going on for which the world is becoming warmer day by day and the number of thunderstorms is also increasing accordingly," said president of SSTF Kabirul Bashar.

He said once upon a time there were many big trees like palm trees, betel nut trees, coconut trees beside roads in rural

areas which would absorb the lightning but the number of these kinds of trees is being reduced drastically over years for which the number of lightning has increased.

The government needs to take initiative to plant these kinds of trees so that it can protect people in rural areas from the strike of lightning, he said.

The SSTF demanded the government to take initiative to inform people through mobile messages just before the strikes as the Met office can know about the possible strike of lightning 15 minutes ago.

Their other demands include giving more allocation on this side as allocation in this sector is very poor, building shelter centres near open fields, farmlands, haor and baor along with necessary anti lightning equipment so that people can take shelter during lightning.

They also demanded to make all the products of the thunder protection system duty-free, government will have to make it compulsory through a gazette notification to set up anti-lightening equipment in every building.

Among others lightning expert Munir Ahmed, Munir Hossain, research fellow of IDEB Research and Technological Institute engineer, Abdul Alim, chief executive of Research Cell of SSTF, and Emdad Hossain Miah, vice president of SSTF, were present at the press conference.



With her broken arm in a cast, an elderly woman lies on a dinghy on the Sandhya river while a younger woman holds an umbrella over her as they return from a hospital in Barishal city to their home in Banaripara.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Districts grappling with Covid surge

FROM PAGE 1

At the same time, the government should immediately increase the number of beds as well as manpower in Covid units and improve facilities in those hospitals to tackle the crisis, they said.

Infectious disease expert Dr Be-Nazir Ahmed said the situation would be dire in the coming days if it is not contained without any further delay.

"We always act late. If we had acted timely, the transmission rates would have been much lower in the districts along the border.

"The goal of our Covid lockdowns does not synchronise with the reality. It is a half-hearted lockdown. So, we have to behave in a way that can help achieve our desired goals," said Be-Nazir, former director (Disease Control) at the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The warning came at a time when the country crossed the grim milestone of 13,000 confirmed deaths from Covid yesterday.

The DGHS reported 43 deaths in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

The number was 40 the previous day and 36 the day before.

Among the 43 deaths, the highest -- 15 -- was reported from Rajshahi which shares border with India.

Also, 2,454 new cases were recorded in the 24-hour period, taking the total number to 822,849, according to a DGHS press release.

The positivity rate was 13.24 percent yesterday. And the overall positivity rate stood at 13.39 percent, it said.

DISTRICTS ALONG BORDER IN PERIL

The Covid transmission has been showing an upward trend in Khulna, Satkhira, Rajshahi, Chapainawabganj, Dinajpur, Naogaon and Natore over the past several days.

The situation in some of the districts is so bad that the Covid-19 units at the hospitals there have no more beds left for new patients. They have stopped admitting patients.

Take the example of Khulna. In the district, the Covid-dedicated hospitals are overburdened. They

suspended admission of new patients.

In Khulna Medical College Hospital (KMCH), 143 Covid patients were being treated till yesterday afternoon. The Covid unit at the hospital has 100 beds, including 61 general beds and 20 ICU beds, said officials there.

"The hospital authorities will resume new admission once beds become vacant," said Dr Suhash Ranjan Halder, residential medical officer of the KMCH.

The positivity rate in the district was 40.67 percent yesterday. Six people died in 24 hours till 8:00am, taking the death toll in the district to 701.

Meanwhile, the authorities have decided to turn the Khulna Sadar Hospital into a Covid-dedicated hospital to treat more patients.

The situation in Rajshahi is also alarming.

At least 15 people -- seven coronavirus patients and eight with Covid symptoms -- died at Rajshahi Medical College Hospital in 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, said hospital sources.

The current positive rate there was 38.34 percent while it was 50 percent in Naogaon, and 39.19 percent in Chapainawabganj, shows DGHS data.

Civil Surgeon of Rajshahi Md Quiume Talukder told The Daily Star that a number of measures, including lockdown, were enforced in the district to curb virus transmission.

As a preventive measure, Bangladesh Railway yesterday cancelled all rail operations from Rajshahi to other parts of the country for the next seven days.

"Operation of all trains from Rajshahi to different destinations will remain suspended from the midnight of June 11 to midnight of June 17," reads a notice issued by BR.

The situation is also not improving in Satkhira.

Despite being under a lockdown, the district had a positivity rate of 52.60 percent yesterday. This forced the local administration to extend the ongoing lockdown till June 17.

Hossain Safayat, civil surgeon of Satkhira, said the ongoing lockdown that started on June 5 was extended to

June 17 as the coronavirus transmission was on the rise.

Authorities of Satkhira Medical College and Hospital said healthcare professionals were struggling to tackle the rush of patients.

"A total of 136 Covid patients are undergoing treatment in the hospital. We could not provide services properly due to an acute shortage of healthcare professionals," said Kudrat-e-Khuda, superintendent of the hospital.

In that 24 hours, one positive patient died while three others died with coronavirus symptoms there, he said.

In the northern bordering district of Lalmonirhat, the positivity rate stood at 40 percent yesterday.

Health officials said out of 1,146 people tested positive, 17 died so far there.

Civil Surgeon Dr Nirmalendu Roy of Lalmonirhat said the infection rate in the district was on the rise and if it continued, the situation would be dire. "The situation will slip out of our hands if people don't follow the health guidelines," he warned.

In Natore, the covid-19 positivity rate is 53.24 percent yesterday while on Thursday it was 33.7 percent. The positivity rate went up despite enforcing a lockdown.

The situation in Kushtia is a bit better, but not something to cheer about.

The positivity rate witnessed a decline -- from 35.09 percent on Thursday to 14.01 percent yesterday.

In Dinajpur, the current positivity rate was around 30 percent, which is a little higher than the Rangpur division's positivity rate of 26.04 percent.

Meanwhile, 15 more Covid beds were added to M Abdur Rahim Medical College Hospital in Dinajpur to treat patients.

At least 83 people were admitted to the hospital in the 24-hours. All were showing acute Covid symptoms. Of them, 46 were suspected Covid patients, said health officials.

Dr Abdul Kuddus, Civil Surgeon in Dinajpur, said they increased the number of beds as the infection rate went up.

Tk 284cr project

FROM PAGE 1

The list was then reviewed by committee is underway. After getting the approval, the NGOs will start working," he said.

Experts and child rights activists said the project could have made a tremendous contribution to the government's objective to get children out of hazardous child labour at a time when children's involvement in such risky work increased due to the pandemic.

According to a recent survey of Manusher Jonno Foundation, some 7,800 out of 30,313 child labourers who were involved in risky jobs have switched to "riskier jobs" in eight districts between July and September 2020.

The report said some 5,600 child labourers migrated in search of a job in the past three months, and 2,400 have been forced to join new work at nominal wages.

Another MJF survey found that many parents, who were unemployed for quite some time, took advantage of the Covid-induced school closure and sent their children to work in the hope of getting some extra money.

More and more children joining work in both formal and informal sectors amid the pandemic also increased violence against them at the workplace, as an MJF study found child abuse in the workplace shot up by 137 percent in July last year, compared to previous years.

SLOW PACE

Project Director Md Monowar Hossain admitted that they are far behind the schedule and blamed the Covid-19 pandemic as a major reason.

"We couldn't work properly in the pandemic."

He said they received applications from the NGOs through Expression of Interest (EOI) in 2019, which were shortlisted by a seven-member committee.

1b Covid jabs for poorer countries

FROM PAGE 1

"Let's get to work." Campaigners said the G7's vaccine donations pledge for this year and next -- including 500 million US doses -- is far too little, too late to end a pandemic that has claimed over 3.7 million lives worldwide.

"If the best G7 leaders can manage is to donate one billion vaccine doses then this summit will have been a failure," Oxfam said, insisting the world needs 11 billion doses.

COVID AND CLIMATE

The co-chair of Covax, the global body charged with ensuring equitable vaccine distribution for poorer countries, said there remains a yawning gap in vaccine supplies globally.

"We've administered somewhere around 2.2 billion doses of vaccine around the world. Seventy-seven percent of those doses have gone into arms in 10 countries only," said Jane Halton.

"If we're going to get all those extra doses, firstly manufactured, then shipped, and then in arms equitably around the world we are going to have to scale up."

The G7 pledges "don't go far enough, fast enough," said Alex Harris, director of government relations for the global public health NGO Wellcome Trust.

"What the world needs is vaccines now -- not later this year."

To date, G7 countries have distributed over 528 million doses to their combined 610 million population: in contrast, African countries, with twice as many people, have distributed just 34 million," he said.

Patrick Watt, public affairs director at Christian Aid, urged "much greater ambition if we're to vaccinate the

world".

He urged leaders to join US President Joe Biden and French President Emmanuel Macron in supporting IP waivers.

Zoe Abrams, executive director of the British Red Cross, said the promise on vaccines was "heartening".

But she added: "While every commitment must be welcomed, more needs to be done, and fast."

The WHO's regional director for Africa said wealthy nations can help poorer countries scale up vaccine drives, urging much-needed help in securing vaccines.

"As we close in on five million cases and a third wave in Africa looms, many of our most vulnerable people remain dangerously exposed to Covid-19," said Matshidiso Moeti.

"Countries that can, must urgently share Covid-19 vaccines. It's do or die on dose sharing for Africa."

But the G7 wants to rise to competing "vaccine diplomacy" efforts launched by China and Russia, with the Biden administration stressing it expects nothing in return for its donated jabs.

The leaders are also expected to outline more help for developing nations to build up infrastructure, as a counterpoint to the debt-fuelled spending by China in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The initiative "will embrace a high standards, transparent, climate friendly, non-corrupt mechanism" for infrastructure investment in the developing world, a senior US official said.

"It will be an alternative to that which other countries, including China, are offering."

Nerve-racking 24 hours

FROM PAGE 1

Four of the arrestees gave confessional statements under Section 164 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, DB Inspector Keshab Chakrabarty told this correspondent on Tuesday.

"So far, Jakaria Noman Fayezi, former publicity secretary of Hefazat, Babunagari's personal assistant Enamul Hasan Farooqi and two others have confessed to their involvement," he said.

"In the confessional statements, they mentioned several persons who plotted sabotage and instigated the attacks [on March 26]."

Police sources said at least eight cases were lodged over the violence but details of all these cases could not be known.

In his case statement, Solaiman said he was on official duty in plainclothes at Hathazari Zilla Parishad Market, in front of Hathazari madrasa, on March 26.

After Juma prayers, around 2:14pm, over a thousand madrasa students started coming out from Al-Jamiatul Ahlia Darul Uloom Moinul Islam Madrasa, popularly known as Hathazari madrasa. All were equipped with bamboo sticks, machetes, iron rods, knives, and other lethal weapons.

A group of students spotted Solaiman and took him to a room on the third floor of the madrasa building.

Three of them asked Solaiman to call the officer-in-charge of Hathazari Police Station and ask him to come over to "beg for mercy". The constable made the phone call accordingly.

Around 2:30am on March 27,

Hathazari madrasa's Assistant Director Mowlana Md Yahya helped him get out of the room but around 200 students again caught him and confined him to another room.

They forced Solaiman to phone senior police officials, asking them to release the bodies of the four who died of bullet injuries during the violence, without autopsies, otherwise Solaiman would be killed.

Solaiman was freed at around 4:30pm on March 27 and he then took shelter with Tribeni intersection's police.

Around the same time, police handed over the four bodies to their family members, without autopsies, from Chattogram Medical College Hospital, sources said.

The Hefazat leaders present at the hospital all along had threatened the authorities that they would go for tough action if the autopsies were done, as they called the procedure disgraceful to the victims.

However, talking to The Daily Star in late April, Chattogram Superintendent of Police SM Rashidul Haque said officials released the bodies "following the request of the families".

The four deceased were identified as madrasa students Nasir Ullah, Rabiul Islam, Kazi Mirazul Islam, and tailor Wahidul Islam.

Witnesses said they were hit with bullets during clashes between Hefazat supporters and police in front of Hathazari Police Station. They were pronounced dead after being taken to CMCH around 4:00pm on March 26.

RUSSIA WARNINGS

Italy sets up cybersecurity agency

AFP, Rome

Italy has created a national cybersecurity agency following warnings by Prime Minister Mario Draghi that Europe needed to protect itself from Russian "interference."

The new agency was approved in a cabinet meeting late on Thursday.

It will need to "protect national interests and the resilience of services and essential functions of the State from cyber threats," the government said in a statement.

Speaking in Brussels on May 25, following a European Union summit, Draghi said urgent action was needed against digital threats.

"We need to strengthen ourselves, we need to strengthen ourselves a lot, especially in terms of cybersecurity, all of us, at national level and at EU level... because the level of [Russian] interference both with spies and with manipulation of the web has become truly alarming," he said.

Earlier this year, an Italian navy captain was caught red-handed by police while selling confidential military documents, leaked from his computer, to a Russian embassy official.

The Italian government tasked the new agency with developing strategies to prevent, monitor, detect and mitigate cyber attacks, and stepping up national defences.

The agency, which according to media reports will employ around 300 people, will be controlled by Draghi and his security services advisor, ex-police chief Franco Gabrielli.

Draghi, a former European Central Bank chief, has been quite active on intelligence matters since he was appointed in February to lead a national unity government.

Bangladesh to get

FROM PAGE 1

The Serum Institute of India supplied only seven million of AstraZeneca vaccines although Bangladesh had a contract of receiving 30 million vaccines in six months since January.

India has supplied 3.3 million vaccines as gifts to Bangladesh. With the vaccine shortage, Bangladesh has been requesting different countries for Covid-19 vaccines, including the US, UK, China, Russia, Australia, Canada and European countries.

China has supplied 5 lakh Sinopharm vaccine as a gift and another six lakh will be arriving on June 13.

Bangladesh has also approved buying 1.5 crore vaccine doses from Sinopharm, but with a government official making the price of the vaccine public, the Chinese side is reportedly unhappy.

Its status is not clear until now.

A foreign ministry official said Bangladesh will also discuss buying Sinovax vaccines from China.

Bangladesh is also in discussion with China and Russia on co-production of vaccine in Bangladesh.

Foreign Minister Momen on Thursday said there will be an announcement on co-production of vaccine soon.

Meanwhile, the White House on June 3 announced that it would supply 7 million vaccine doses to 15 Asian countries, including Bangladesh. The amount or the brand of the vaccine has yet to be known officially, but a diplomatic source said it could be either Pfizer or Moderna.

Free Covid test

FROM PAGE 1

In many of those districts the positivity rate is above 20 percent while the country's overall positivity rate is 13.39 percent.

Hospitals are at capacity in some of those districts amid shortages of oxygen support and other equipment.

"We started sending additional oxygen concentrators, beds, medicines and hi-flow nasal cannula to the highly affected districts and we have also asked officials to let us know what they need," said Farid Hossain Miah, director (hospitals and clinics) at the Directorate General of Health Services.

The minister said since transport workers travel across the country, testing has been made free for them, and they will travel with a covid-negative certificate. Those tests will be antigen rapid tests.

Sheikh Md Hasan Imam, director (admin) at the DGHS, said doctors from various districts were sent in the affected region to run the hospitals, but 20 doctors were sent back to their concerned stations.

Rajshai division has already attached 66 doctors in the districts to tackle the situation, he said.

"We have 100 doctors for the highly affected areas. We will send them where they are needed," he added.

In Satkhira, the positivity rate was 55 percent.

Hussain Shafaat, civil surgeon of Satkhira, said, "We requested for 20 doctors. The DGHS have verbally assured us of sending them. We also need supporting employees."

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Jaguar, the Pantanal, Brazil.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

A Second Look

Before the pandemic I travelled to many countries in search of birds and wildlife. During the dark days of the pandemic I found myself longing for those places. Now, there are many wonderful places that I have not seen. Why, then, do I want to return to places I have already visited? Some are simply worth it. Second time around I know better what to expect. I can catch photographic opportunities I missed before. And I can cover spots I was unable to see the first time.

I knew about the diversity of birds and wildlife that Brazil offers before I went there. But I was unprepared for what I found. I explored two types of habitats there: the world's largest wetland in the Pantanal, and the Amazon rainforest. Birdlife in the Pantanal was memorable. There were colourful macaws and toucans, the gorgeous Sunbittern and myriads of other birds. The wildlife was rich: anteaters, capybaras, tapirs, porcupines, alligators, and the highlight, jaguars. In Amazonia, I was able to see over the tall canopy of the rainforest by climbing research towers in the jungle. Colourful birds such as dacnis, trogons and tanagers played there.

What I saw was just a fraction of the species found in Brazil. I could not cover all the hotspots. For example, the Atlantic forest has a different group of birds. A trail called Trilha dos Tucanos leads one to colourful toucans. Macaws flying over the huge sandstone crater called Buraco das Araras can be photographed from a viewing station. And a return to the jaguars of Pantanal would be delightful.

So it seems to me that Brazil deserves a second look. Madagascar has an enormous

number of fauna and flora species that are not seen elsewhere. There are five or six hotspots of birds and wildlife spread over the world's fourth largest island. Due to the long distances involved, I was able to cover only two of them during my 2017 trip. Next time I would like to visit the other spots and see birds I missed. In the steamy rainforests of north-eastern Madagascar lives a bird with a huge arched blue bill: the Helmet Vanga. Another pretty bird called Schlegel's Asity is found in the western part. In the west-central are the iconic baobab trees of the Avenue of the Baobabs. I want to cover these places on a return trip.

Another reason for revisiting Madagascar is the delicious and inexpensive French food sold everywhere.

Since 1986 I have visited Iceland thrice. Yet I long to see it again. In summer the country hosts thousands of Arctic Terns that nest there before flying off towards Antarctica with their chicks in winter. These birds are vigorous and acrobatic, a delight to watch. Also, the numerous waterfowl in Lake Myvatn in the north-eastern part of the country can be approached closely as they feed and play in the lake's water. The entire country has spectacular landscape, and on cliff faces one often finds colonies of sea birds. The next time I want to see the Gyr Falcon, Iceland's national bird and the largest falcon anywhere. A Puffin up close would also be nice.

So, while there are many places left to see, I would love to have a second look at these countries.

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

'We are failing in vaccine diplomacy'

Alleges GM Quader
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party Chairman and deputy leader of the opposition in parliament GM Quader yesterday alleged that due to imprudent decision of the government, possibility of getting Covid-19 vaccines for country's crores of people has become uncertain.

In a statement, he said although the government is giving hope about getting the vaccine, there's no visible success in this regard. "Bangladesh is failing in vaccine diplomacy in international arena," he added. "The foreign minister said yesterday [Thursday] that many countries have agreed to give us vaccine, but no one could say when they will be able to give us those," he said.

"Under this circumstance, people have lost faith in the government's assurance," he said. "It's not clear whether 15 lakh people who have already taken the first dose of Covid-19 vaccine, will be able to get the second shot," he added.

Quader Mirza files GD against two nephews, lawmaker

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Basurhat municipality mayor Abdul Quader Mirza on Thursday filed a general diary (GD) against 96 persons including his two nephews and a Noakhali lawmaker.

In the GD, Mirza, who is also younger brother of Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader, alleged that those people were hatching conspiracy to kill or abduct or attack him. They were also conspiring to remove him from the mayoral post, he alleged.

Contacted, Abul Kalam Azad, inspector (investigation) of Companiganj Police Station, said he was looking into the allegation. Mirza came to limelight after making comments

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Along with commuters, sellers at the capital's Karwan Bazar kitchen market are finding it hard to deal with the frequent rainy days. Rainwater filled the area again yesterday, forcing buyers to traverse the muddy mess to get their produce. And due to poor drainage, it remained like this for the remainder of the day.

Bangladesh's progress should not be lost

Says ILO country chief on fight against child labour; headway stalls for first time in 20yrs, finds UN global report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Unicef Bangladesh yesterday raised concern over the growing number of children in the country being pushed into child labour, as schools are closed since March last year and poverty levels are rising amid the pandemic.

"Families are struggling to cope and using every available means to survive. We need to prioritise the needs of children and address the wider social issues that enable these harmful practices to continue," said Tomoo Hozumi, Unicef representative in Bangladesh, in a press release about a global report on child labour.

Globally, the number of children involved in labour has risen by 8.4 million in the last four years, with millions more at risk due to Covid-19 impacts, says the new report by Unicef and International Labour Organization

(ILO).

The report "Child Labour: Global Estimates 2020, Trends and the Road Forward", was released yesterday, ahead of World Day Against Child Labour on June 12.

Progress to end child labour has stalled for the first time in 20 years, reversing the previous downward trend that saw child labour fall by 94 million between 2000 and 2016, said the joint release issued yesterday marking the report's launch.

Bangladesh has made significant progress on child labour in recent decades, as data from Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) indicates a 50 percent reduction in child labour from 2003 to 2013. In 2003, 3.2 million children were estimated to be engaged in child labour, while in 2013, this figure had reduced to 1.7 million children.

However, it is alarming to note that in 2013, 1.2 million children were trapped in the worst forms of child labour, which involve hazardous working conditions, it says, adding planning was underway for ILO and BBS to produce an updated survey report on child labour by early 2022.

"Bangladesh must keep the fight against child labour at the top of the agenda, so that progress made in recent years is not lost," said Tuomo Poutiainen, ILO country director in Bangladesh.

The global report points to a significant rise in the number of children aged 5 to 11 years in child labour around the world, who now account for just over half of the total global figure.

"The new estimates are a wake-up call. We cannot stand by while a new generation of children is put at risk," said ILO Director General Guy Ryder.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

ASI fatally run over by microbus

730 litres of homemade liquor seized from vehicle

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

An assistant sub-inspector (ASI) of Chattogram Metropolitan Police (CMP) was killed and a constable injured after a microbus carrying liquor rammed into them in the port city's Chandgaon area when they were on-duty early yesterday.

The deceased is ASI Kazi Md Salauddin from Laxmipur, and the injured is Constable Masud.

Police seized the microbus which was found abandoned with 730 litres of homemade liquor. No one has been arrested in this connection yet.

Inspector (investigation) Rajesh Barua of Chandgaon Police Station said, "ASI Salauddin was on night duty with a team of police in Mowlovipukur Par and C&B areas."

"He had information that a microbus was coming from the hill tracts carrying homemade liquor and was heading towards the port city. So he installed a check-post in Meherazkhan Ghata area around 4am."

"When Salauddin signaled the black microbus to stop, it slowed down. As he stood in front of the vehicle and asked the driver to step out, the microbus rammed him and the constable, and fled the scene," he said quoting the constable.

Salauddin was declared dead at CMCH" said Rajesh.

Drive is going on to arrest the culprit, he added.

Double blow for coastal fishers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

Fishing families in Barishal division are passing hard times. The devastation caused by cyclone Yaas -- that too in the off-season for fishing -- is pushing them to the brink.

This can be particularly seen in Patharghata Sadar Union of Barguna's Patharghata upazila. Most of the 20,000 people of this union are engaged in hilsa fishing, which remains halted since the 65-day ban from May 20.

"After the cyclone hit, our union and those surrounding ours were submerged under three to five feet of water," said Alamgir Majhi, a resident of the union's Padma village. "Until the water cleared, we couldn't eat any cooked food for two to three days."

"I managed to get 70kg of the district

administration's relief rice. This will hopefully last for two months," he added. "But those who haven't got the relief are in even greater misery. Due to the ban, they can't even go to the river and fish their way out."

Pakhi Begum, Alamgir's wife, said they could not get their boat down to the river for fear of the coastguard.

"We can't live just with the help we're given. We can't go down to the river as well. We don't even have the money to repair our homes," she said.

According to Barishal Divisional Fisheries Department, not only Barguna, but the lower areas of Bhola and Patuakhali have been flooded too, leaving the fisher families helpless.

Alauddin Mia of Bhola's Char Fasson upazila said at least a hundred families

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



Top, A displaced family from Bhola's Char Fasson upazila is living in a makeshift arrangement after their homestead got flooded following Cyclone Yaas. In Barguna's Patharghata, out of work anglers are spending time repairing nets.

PHOTO: COLLECTED, TITU DAS

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Bangladesh's

FROM PAGE 3

Child labour is more prevalent among boys than girls at every age, it says, adding the prevalence of child labour in rural areas (14 percent) is close to three times higher than in urban areas (5 percent).

"We are losing ground in the fight against child labour, and the last year has not made that fight any easier," said Unicef Executive Director Henrietta Fore.

To reverse the upward trend in child labour, ILO and Unicef called for adequate social protection for all, including universal child benefits.

Quader Mirza

FROM PAGE 3

against corruption and misdeeds committed by AL men in Noakhali and Feni for the last few months. He also repeatedly criticised his brother Obaidul Quader and his wife.

This made the political situation in Companiganj upazila volatile, triggering multiple deadly clashes between two groups.

One group was led by Mirza and the other by Badal, follower of a lawmaker of Noakhali-4 constituency.

12 Rohingyas

FROM PAGE 12

Elahi Dakkhin Ghat area yesterday morning and forced the Rohingyas to get off from the boat, they said.

Abul Kalam Azad, inspector (investigation) of Companiganj Police Station, said locals suspected the Rohingyas because of their language and dress.

A case would be filed against the Rohingyas and then they would be placed before a court, he added.

Contacted, Rafiqul Islam, officer-in-charge of Bhasan Char Police Station, confirmed that the detainees were residents of cluster-24 of Bhasan Char refugee camp.

Apart from them, a few more fled from the refugee camp. Police were working to trace them, he added.

Earlier, between May 8 and May 23, some 16 Rohingyas fled Bhasan Char.

Of them, 14 were detained by law enforcers and sent back to Bhasan Char.

The government started relocating Rohingyas from Cox's Bazar refugee camps to Bhasan Char in December last year.

A total of 18,347 Rohingyas have so far been relocated in six phases.

Indonesia dengue fever study offers hope in disease battle

AFP, Jakarta

Dengue fever infections dropped dramatically in an Indonesian study where a bacteria was introduced into disease-carrying mosquitoes, offering hope in the battle against an illness that sickens millions annually around the world.

Results of the three-year study, published in the New England Journal of Medicine this week, found that infecting dengue-carrying mosquitoes with a harmless bacteria called Wolbachia led to a 77 percent drop in human cases.

Infections requiring hospitalisation also fell by 86 percent in Wolbachia-treated areas of Yogyakarta, a city on Java island where the experiment was conducted, researchers said.

The study was conducted by the World Mosquito Program at Monash University in Australia and Indonesia's Gadjah Mada university.

"The 77 percent figure is honestly quite fantastic for a transmittable disease and we're very grateful with the result," said Adi Utarini, a public-health researcher from Gadjah Mada university who was a co-lead on the study.



A girl plays with sand during a protest of the Cornwall Climate Youth Alliance in partnership with Fridays for Future and Climate Live, at Gyllyngvase Beach, in Falmouth, on the sidelines of the G7 summit in Cornwall, Britain, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

River erosion may eat up 28sq km area

FROM PAGE 12

prolonged floods last year will have an impact on the erosion this year, the body warned.

Sudipta Kumar Hore, associate specialist of river, delta and coastal morphology division at the CEGIS, said last year's floods were "extreme events".

Such floods leave numerous channels flowing inland, making the banks more vulnerable to erosion in the next monsoon, he said. "That's why the prediction for riverbank erosion is higher this time."

CEGIS developed a tool that uses a series of satellite images to predict the path of erosion by the Jamuna, the Ganges and the Padma.

Since 2004, the methods have been applied to predict river erosion and morphological changes of the Jamuna, the Padma and the Ganges

by officials of different projects of the Bangladesh Water Development Board and Water Resources Planning Organization.

The latest CEGIS report said around 4 sq km of embankment and one and a half km of roads are vulnerable to erosion this year.

"It was observed that erosion predictions made in the previous year showed a good match with the occurrences although there were few locations of slight riverbank erosion where erosion was not predicted.

However, the overall accuracy of this prediction tool is approximately 70-80 percent," the report reads.

This year's report predicted 20 probable vulnerable locations along the banks of the Jamuna, the Ganges and the Padma rivers.

Of the locations, 14 are along the Jamuna, five along the Ganges and

one along the Padma.

The report includes information about the vulnerability of land, settlement and other physical infrastructures at the locations.

Experts say structural interventions to protect properties from riverbank erosion are very costly. As a result, structural measures, combined with non-structural ones like erosion prediction, can be used to reduce the loss and lessen the sufferings of people.

Kabir Bin Anwar, senior secretary of the water resources ministry, said, "We are aware of the situation and have been working on it since April. Cyclone Yaas has damaged some embankments but we have started repairing those."

Departments in the districts concerned are prepared to limit the damage.

Combined entry test for public univs

FROM PAGE 12

Earlier, the primary application process began on April 1 and was supposed to continue till April 15. Later, the time was extended for 10 more days after the lockdown ended.

The 20 universities include Jagannath University, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology, Khulna University, Begum Rokeya University, Islamic University, Hajee Mohammad Danesh Science and Technology University, Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University, Noakhali Science and Technology University, Cumilla University, Jatiya Kabi Kazi Nazrul Islam University, Jashore University of Science and Technology, Pabna University of Science and Technology, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Science and Technology University,

Barishal University, Rangamati Science and Technology University, Rabindra University, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Digital University, Sheikh Hasina University, and Bangamata Sheikh Fojilatunnesa Mujib Science and Technology University.

On December 1 last year, the 20 public universities finalised that they will enroll students through a centralised admission test for the next academic session to reduce hassles of the admission seekers.

Earlier, the University Grants Commission announced that it would go for a uniform admission test for the 2020-2021 academic year.

Five leading universities -- Dhaka University, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Buet), Rajshahi University, Jahangirnagar University and Chittagong University

-- have not taken part in the new system.

Tight competition awaits admission seekers of public universities this year. A record-setting number of students got GPA 5 in the HSC examinations, thanks to the lack of actual exams and the results being reflections of each student's grades in public exams held before.

Last year, for the first time in history, everyone who registered for the HSC cleared the tests as they were not arranged at all due to the pandemic.

Over 1,53,610 students have been awarded GPA-5 under nine general education boards. The number was 41,807 in 2019.

All boards combined, 13,67,377 students -- 7,06,885 boys and 6,60,492 girls -- who registered for the 2020 HSC-level exams from 9,063 institutions have passed the exams.

Khaleda has no post-Covid

FROM PAGE 12

Hospitals in Bangladesh are not enough for her treatment," he said.

"Experts have repeatedly said that she [Khaleda] needs advanced treatment... We keep saying that too."

Asked whether the BNP chairperson, now 76, would go to court seeking treatment abroad, Fakhrul said, "I have said it before. We have answered such questions before. Unfortunately, our biggest loss has been in court. The damage has been done in the court."

"The court has done extreme injustice to Madam Khaleda Zia. No law can punish her in any way. We

have to think carefully before going to the court," Fakhrul also said.

Khaleda was admitted to Evercare Hospital on April 27. She tested Covid-19 positive on April 14 at her home in Gulshan.

She tested Covid-19 negative on May 19.

Fakhrul yesterday blamed the government's "inactiveness" for the surge in Covid-19 transmission in the districts along the border.

"Experts had warned that the Covid situation would turn serious in the bordering areas and we also talked about it, but the government did not take any steps," he said.

Alleging that people in those districts are suffering due to poor medical facilities, Fakhrul said the same things happened in West Bengal of India. "Even after that the government here seems reluctant to protect the people."

"You are protecting those people... thieves and robbers... this is very unfortunate," he added.

Amid the coronavirus outbreak, the government on March 25 last year freed Khaleda from jail through an executive order suspending her jail sentences in two graft cases.

The BNP claims both the cases are politically motivated.

Bangladesh issue will linger

FROM PAGE 12

An early political settlement of the Bangladesh issue was ruled out by Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi today.

She told a press conference at Silchar, Assam that Pakistan might ultimately bow to mounting world pressure to decide on some sort of political settlement with the people of Bangladesh rather than snap all ties with them.

"But a political settlement is not very likely now, though nothing in the world is impossible," she said. As to the recognition of Bangladesh, India Gandhi said a decision about recognition of the provisional government of Bangladesh might be taken after the return of the External Affairs Minister Swaran Singh from abroad.

She hoped, however, that conditions would soon be created for return of the refugees to their homeland.

KAMARUZZAMAN VISITS LIBERATED AREAS

AHM Kamaruzzaman, the home minister of Bangladesh Provisional Government, told reporters today that the Pakistani troops had so far suffered 40,000 casualties -- 13,000 killed and the rest injured -- since the beginning of the liberation struggle.

He said the army was no more sending injured troops back to West Pakistan as the presence of a large number of crippled soldiers might give out the real situation in Bangladesh to people in West Pakistan.

The home minister, who was now touring different liberated areas, said he had found the morale of the Mukti Foj and the people very high everywhere notwithstanding the inhuman atrocities perpetrated by the occupation army. He also visited some of the guerilla training camps.

CALCUTTA MAYOR SEEKS TO HALT REFUGEE INFLUX

The mayor of Calcutta today demanded a cordon around the already overcrowded city "to prevent the further influx of refugees from East Pakistan".

The mayor, Shyam Sundar Gupta, reported that 100,000 refugees so far had reached the city and warned that law and order might be affected if they continued to flow in.

"If they come to Calcutta, how will their bellies be filled?" he asked. "They are hungry people and there is bound to be a security problem as a natural course of things."

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

Trafficked by husband

FROM PAGE 12

Hatirjheel Police Station under the human trafficking act.

She is one of three victims who fled India and returned home recently.

In the case statement, she described a horrid tale of falling prey to human trafficking and being physically, sexually assaulted and raped in the foreign land.

Tania said she and her husband used to live in a rented house in Demra's Kajla.

On January 2 this year, Rony brought Tania to one "Nodi Madam" in Hatirjheel area and introduced her as a "lady officer" of the old age home in Chennai, which is recruiting nurses. She told her that she would go to India on January 6 and if she wanted the job, she had to go with her.

On the evening of January 6, Tania, Nodi along with another girl, who too aspired to work in India, started their journey from Kalyanpur bus stand. The next morning, they reached a house near Sathkhira border, a transit point for human trafficking.

There, Tania saw five-six other girls waiting to cross the border. Around 11:00pm, six of them crossed the border. Five hands were changed to reach a West Bengal house. To get there, they had to walk for six hours.

After 30-40 minutes, a man came with a camera to take their photos to make Indian National Identification Card. At night, they were given Aadhaar cards along with flight tickets to Chennai, reads the statement.

The following morning, Tania was taken to Chennai by air and kept at a house in Pakkam area where she found four-five more girls. After two days, Tania was shifted to another

house where two members of the racket named Beauty and Azharul kept the girls under watch.

"The next day, Beauty and Azharul told me that a guest would visit my room and that I should get ready. I could sense what was going to happen with me...." she said in the case statement, adding that when she wanted to contact Nodi, they stripped her naked, filmed the scene and threatened her to act accordingly.

"They told me that my husband sold me to Nodi for Tk 40,000 and Nodi resold me to them for Tk 70,000," she said in the statement.

There, Tania sought help from a client, hailing from Kolkata, who gave her Tk 20,000. On May 3, when she was sent to a massage parlour for prostitution for 10 days, she fled the place on the first day by breaking a glass of the window. She got a train from Chennai and reached Kolkata.

On May 10, she was able to return to Bangladesh through Sathkhira border.

Earlier, an 18-year-old woman, who was trafficked to India, fled Bengaluru on May 7 and lodged a case with Hatirjheel Police Station on June 1 against 12 members of the gang, including Rifadul Islam Ridoy, 26, also known as Ridoy Babo on TikTok, a popular video-sharing app.

Police are also investigating whether Ridoy's racket has any connections with Tania's trafficking to Chennai.

"We are looking for the husband and trying to trace other members of the gang," Hafiz Al Faruk, additional deputy commissioner (Teigaon division) of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star.

New 'weird' planet with

FROM PAGE 12

The planet, a temperate sub-Neptune sized body with a 24-day orbit, is eight times closer to its star than the Earth is to the sun, but its temperature is similar to our home planet because the red dwarf itself is less potent.

Its atmosphere is approximately 330 Kelvin or 140 degrees Fahrenheit, making TOI-1231b one of the coolest, small exoplanets accessible for atmospheric studies discovered yet. It is possible that there may be clouds present high in the atmosphere, and possibly evidence of water.

"Future observations of this new planet will let us determine just how common (or rare) it is for water clouds to form around these temperate worlds," said Nasa JPL scientist Jennifer Burt, with assistant professor in UNM's Department of Physics and Astronomy Diana Dragomir adding that further study will be necessary to understand precisely how it is composed.

"The low density of TOI 1231b indicates that it is surrounded by a substantial atmosphere rather than being a rocky planet. But the composition and extent of this atmosphere are unknown!" said Dragomir.

"TOI1231b could have a large hydrogen or hydrogen-helium atmosphere, or a denser water vapour atmosphere. Each of these would point to a different origin, allowing astronomers to understand whether and how planets form differently around M dwarfs when compared to the planets around our Sun."

Scientists can do this by investigating whether gas is being blown away and looking for evidence of hydrogen and helium atoms -- something that is usually impossible because their presence is masked by interstellar gas. However, since this planet-star system is moving quickly away from Earth, scientists have hope that it can be achieved.

ফ্ল্যাট বিক্রয়

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Myanmar violence

FROM PAGE 12

HUMAN SHIELDS

"State security forces have continued to use heavy weaponry, including air strikes, against armed groups and against civilians and civilian objects, including Christian churches," she said.

"There appear to be no efforts towards de-escalation but rather a build-up of troops in key areas," she lamented.

The UN rights chief pointed to "credible reports" that security forces have used civilians as human shields, shelled civilian homes and churches, and blocked humanitarian access, including by attacking aid workers.

Delta variant 60pc more

FROM PAGE 12

percent increased risk of household transmission" compared to the Alpha variant first identified in southeast England.

So far there have been 42,323 identified cases of the Delta variant in the UK, according to Public Health England's data, up from 29,892 on June 2.

Double blow for coastal

FROM PAGE 3

in their village had their houses swept away by the cyclone.

Char Kukri Mukri Union Parishad Chairperson Hashem Mahajan said their union got submerged under six feet of water. Many have lost their fishing gears, including nets, and are now living in distress. The situation is similar across different chars of Monpura upazila.

Mostafa Golam Kabir, chairperson of Patharghata upazila, said, "At least half a lakh anglers of the upazila are currently suffering. Houses of at least 500 fisher families have collapsed. More than a thousand homes have been partially damaged too."

"More than a thousand acres of cultivating land have been submerged and a total of 50,000 anglers are in crisis," he added.

Contacted, Anisur Rahman Talukder, Barishal divisional fisheries officer, said fisher families in the division have lost around Tk 95 crore due to the cyclone. "If we can get this money allocated, we can rehabilitate the sector," he said.

According to local anglers, those who have their name on the VGF (Vulnerable Group Feeding) list are eligible to get 70kg rice, but there are many whose names are not on the list.

According to fisheries office sources, out of the 3,63,000 anglers in the division, around 1,46,000 will get their VGF cards soon.

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Subrata Bhunia
Project Manager
Larsen & Toubro Limited,
Pabna

D-78

UK, US tie 'indestructible'

Says PM Johnson after his first meeting with Biden

AFP, LONDON

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson hailed the UK-US relationship as "indestructible" after his first meeting with President Joe Biden ahead of the G7 leaders' summit.

"It's a relationship, you can call it the 'deep and meaningful relationship', whatever you want, the 'indestructible relationship'," Johnson said in a BBC interview broadcast yesterday morning.

"It's a relationship that has endured for a very long time, and has been an important part of peace and prosperity both in Europe and around the world."

During their face-to-face meeting Thursday, the two leaders discussed "about 25 subjects in some detail", including the Brexit-induced disruption in Northern Ireland, he said.

Johnson played down the displeasure of Biden, who is proud of his Irish origins, over London's attempts to reverse the "Northern Ireland Protocol" which seeks to avoid the return of a border with EU member Ireland but which has disrupted trade between the mainland Britain and Northern Ireland.

"Everybody has a massive interest in making sure that we keep the essential symmetry of the Good Friday Agreement," which ended three decades of conflict in the British-ruled province.

"I think we can sort it out," he said.

In his meeting with Biden, Johnson said he also raised the case of British teenager Harry Dunn, who was killed in a road accident caused by the wife of an American diplomat. She quickly left Britain for the United States after the accident, claiming diplomatic immunity.

Biden was "actively engaged in the case", Johnson said.

"As you know, he has his own personal reasons for feeling very deeply about the issue," he said, referring to Biden losing his first wife and one-year-old daughter in a car accident in 1972.

According to Johnson, the difficulty in the case "is that there are limits to what the executive can do with the legal, with the judiciary and the legal system, but both sides are working together."



(L-R) Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, President of the European Council Charles Michel, US President Joe Biden, Japan's Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson, Italy's Prime Minister Mario Draghi, France's President Emmanuel Macron, President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen and Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel pose for the family photo at the start of the G7 summit in Carbis Bay, Cornwall, Britain.

PHOTO: AFP

'A dystopian hellscape'

Amnesty says China's Uyghur abuses 'crimes against humanity'

AFP, London

The repression of hundreds of thousands of China's Uyghur Muslim minority amounts to "crimes against humanity", a report published Thursday by human rights group Amnesty International said.

In a 160-page document that includes testimonies from former detainees in camps in the northwestern Chinese region of Xinjiang, Amnesty detailed what it called "systematic state-organised mass imprisonment, torture and persecution amounting to crimes against humanity".

The report documents what the rights group called "extreme measures" taken by Chinese authorities since 2017 against Uyghurs and people from other ethnic-Turkic minorities.

"The Chinese authorities have created a dystopian hellscape on a staggering scale," Amnesty's secretary general Agnès Callamard said.

"Muslim minorities face crimes against humanity and other serious human rights violations," she added, saying the abuses "should shock the conscience of humanity".

The report documents how, since early 2017, huge numbers of men and women in Xinjiang have been arbitrarily detained.

"They include hundreds of thousands who have been sent to prisons in addition to hundreds of thousands — perhaps even a million or more — who have been sent to internment camps," the report said.

All of the more than 50 former detainees that Amnesty interviewed said they had been detained for conduct such as possessing a religious-themed picture or communicating with someone abroad.

Many detainees described first being taken for



questioning in police stations where they were attached to steel chairs with leg irons and handcuffs.

They said beatings, sleep deprivation and overcrowding were common, and in "extraordinarily regimented" internment camps they had no privacy or autonomy and risked harsh punishments.

"The Chinese government has gone to extraordinary lengths to cover up its violations of international human rights law in Xinjiang," Amnesty charged.

The US government accuses China of waging "genocide" in Xinjiang. Britain has declined to use that designation, but joined the United States and Germany last month in calling on Beijing to end repression of the Uyghur minority.

Beijing has repeatedly denied that abuses take place there, saying they are work camps meant to deter extremism and boost incomes.

"China must immediately dismantle the internment camps, release the people arbitrarily detained in them and in prisons," Callamard said, calling for a UN investigation under international law.

ETHIOPIA'S TIGRAY

Over 30,000 children risk death from famine: UN

AFP, Geneva

Tens of thousands of malnourished children risk dying in hard-to-reach areas of Ethiopia's conflict-racked Tigray region, now hit by famine, the United Nations said yesterday.

"Without humanitarian access to scale up our response, an estimated 30,000 severely malnourished children in those highly inaccessible areas are at high risk of death," UNICEF spokesman James Elder told reporters in Geneva.

He said the UN children's agency was working with other organisations to help address the crisis, but was lacking access to large parts of the region.

"The world cannot permit that to happen," he added.

His comments came a day after the UN said some 350,000 people in Tigray were facing famine, while two million more people were just a step away from those extreme conditions.

"There is famine now in Tigray," UN humanitarian chief Mark Lowcock said Thursday, warning that "every expert you speak to will tell you this is going to get a lot worse".

The UN has said that more than 90 percent of the more than five million people in the Tigray region need emergency food aid, and has urgently appealed for more than \$200 million to scale up its response.

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A Palestinian woman mourns the body of her teenage son at a hospital in Nablus, where he was transported after being injured while taking part in confrontations with Israeli security forces, following a demonstration in the village of Beita, in the occupied West Bank yesterday. A Palestinian teenager died yesterday after the Israeli army shot him during clashes in the West Bank, Palestinian medics and the health ministry said.

PHOTO: AFP

BUS CRASH

20 Muslim pilgrims die in Pakistan

REUTERS, Quetta

A bus crammed with pilgrims coming back from a religious festival crashed in southwest Pakistan yesterday killing at least 20 and leaving 10 others critically injured, officials and a hospital doctor said.

The bus careened off the road into a ditch during the early morning in the Karkh area of Khuzdar district, in Pakistan's southwestern province of Balochistan.

"The bus was overloaded, and passengers were even traveling on the roof of the bus," a Pakistani security official in the area told Reuters after paramilitary forces and soldiers were sent to help the survivors.

"We have received 20 bodies and over 40 injured in Khuzdar district hospital," Dr. Manzoor Zahir told Reuters, adding that the condition of at least 10 of the injured was serious and the death toll could increase.

Deputy Commissioner Khuzdar Bashir Ahmed told Reuters the victims were pilgrims who were returning from attending a religious festival honoring a local Muslim saint, and the victims were from the province of Sindh. Ahmed said all the dead were males.

Traffic and rail accidents are commonplace in Pakistan, partly because of the poor state of roads and track.

At least 56 people were killed on Monday when a passenger train smashed into the derailed carriages of another train in southern Pakistan.

Outcry as Muslim Ilhan Omar likens US, Israel to Taliban

AFP, Washington

US congresswoman Ilhan Omar faced broad condemnation Thursday including from her Democratic Party's leadership after the Muslim lawmaker accused the United States and Israel of "unthinkable atrocities" comparable to those of Hamas and the Taliban.

Omar, who in 2016 became one of the first two Muslim women elected to the US Congress, has antagonized members of her party in the past with comments denounced as anti-Semitic or anti-Israel.

But top Republicans and Democrats alike have seized on her recent criticism of the United States to demand she clarify her remarks, with some calling outright for punishment including being stripped of her House of Representatives committee assignments.

Twelve Jewish House Democrats issued a public letter of disapproval against a member of their own party, writing that "equating the United States and Israel to Hamas and the Taliban is as offensive as it is misguided."

At a House hearing on Monday, Omar -- who was born in Somalia and immigrated

to the United States as a refugee in the mid-1990s -- grilled Secretary of State Antony Blinken over accountability for victims of crimes against humanity.

She then followed up with a tweet that read: "We have seen unthinkable atrocities committed by the US, Hamas, Israel, Afghanistan, and the Taliban."

Amid the firestorm, the six-member House Democratic leadership team headed by Speaker Nancy Pelosi issued a rare public rebuke of a fellow Democrat, even as they acknowledged that criticism of US human rights policy is protected speech.

Top House Republican Kevin McCarthy offered more vehement criticism.

"Rep. Omar's anti-Semitic & anti-American comments are abhorrent," he said.

The 38-year-old Minneapolis congresswoman, who has repeatedly criticized Israel's policies towards Palestinians, pushed back Thursday.

She said her earlier remarks were related to an open case against Israel, the United States, Hamas and the Taliban in the International Criminal Court.



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Local Government Engineering Department
"Technical Assistance Project for My Village-My Town"
LGED, LGED Bhaban, (Level-08)
Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar
Dhaka-1207
www.lged.gov.bd

Memo No. 46.02.0000.982.18.002.21.52

Dated: 09/06/2021

Request for Expression of Interest (EOI)

1. Ministry/Division	Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development & Co-operatives /Local Government Division		
2. Agency	Local Government Engineering Department (LGED)		
3. Procuring Entity Name	Project Director, Technical Assistance Project for 'My Village-My Town'		
4. Procuring Entity Code	Not applicable		
5. Procuring Entity District	Dhaka		
6. Expression of Interest (EOI) for selection of Consulting firm	Consulting firm		
7. Title of Service	Request for Expression of Interest (EOI) for conducting of feasibility/ reviewing study on Rural Waste Management		
8. Eol Ref. No.	Memo No. 46.02.0000.982.18.002.21.52		
9. Ref. Date	09/06/2021		
KEY INFORMATION			
10. Procurement Sub-Method	Fixed Budget Selection (FBS)		
FUNDING INFORMATION			
11. Budget and Source of Funds	GOB		
12. Development Partners (if applicable)	Not Applicable		
PARTICULAR INFORMATION			
13. Project Code (if applicable)	223041300		
14. Project Name	Technical Assistance Project for 'My Village-My Town'		
15. Place of Eol submission	Office of the Project Director, Technical Assistance Project for 'My Village-My Town', LGED Bhaban, Level-8, LGED H/Q, Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207.		
16. Eol closing date & time	Date	Time	
	29/06/2021	02:00 PM	
INFORMATION FOR APPLICANT			
17. Brief Description of Assignment	Study on Rural Waste Management includes the following studies (1-5) covering following assignments (a-g) Study-01 & 02: Feasibility study for adopting project on fecal sludge management and solid waste management in rural areas. Study-03: Develop an innovative business model for village/union based non-bio-degradable waste management Study-04: Develop an innovative business model for effective commercialization of village/union-based bio-degradable waste management Study-05: Develop hat bazar-based management model for bio-degradable/non bio-degradable waste. Assignments in brief a) Review all the past studies, researches and present practices b) Practices of the developing/ developed nations and explore their potential to replicate in Bangladesh c) Selected case studies at Union Level and Growth Center/ Hat Bazar d) Developing effective business models at Union Level and Hat Bazar e) Framework/ guideline development for Union Parishads/ Hat Bazar		
18. Experience, Resources & Delivery Capacity Required	The EOIs would be reviewed on the basis of the following a) Registration of Firm b) Age of firm (years in relevant business) c) Availability of key professionals. d) Turnover of the consultant (financial resources) e) Experience of the firm in similar tasks/assignments (examples of past experience-similar nature and/or complexity) f) Experience of the firm in other works (examples of other experience) g) Support Services [Provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform the services (brochures; description of similar assignments; experience in similar conditions; financial resources; Availability of appropriate skills among staff; etc.)]		
19. Other information	(a) Consulting firm will be selected in accordance with the procedures set out in the PPR-2008. (b) Detailed information may be collected from the undersigned office during office hour.		
20. Association with foreign firm is	Not encouraged.		
21. Project Ref No	Phasing of Service	Location	Indicative start date
MVMT/S-16	-	Selected Upazilas of Bangladesh	30/07/2021
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS			
22. Name of Official Inviting Eol	Abul Monzur Md. Sadeque		
23. Designation of Official Inviting Eol	Project Director		
24. Address of Official Inviting Eol	Level-8, LGED Bhaban, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207		
25. Contact details of Official Inviting Eol	Telephone: +02-58155292, Cell: +8801678054300; Email: monzursadeque@gmail.com; myvillage.mytown@lged.gov.bd		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject any or all EOIs Expressions of Interest must be delivered to the address below in sealed envelope on or before 29 June 2021 during 2.00 PM with clearly mention package number and name. 			

(Abul Monzur Md. Sadeque)
Project Director
Tel: +02-58155292, +8801678054300
monzursadeque@gmail.com, myvillage.mytown@lged.gov.bd



A snippet from last year's Cannes Film Festival



Amitabh Reza Chowdhury



Ashfaque Nipun



Adnan Al Rajeev

Noted filmmakers on Bangladesh's 'Rehana Maryam Noor' making it to Cannes

SHARMIN JOYA

Director Abdullah Mohammad Saad's second feature film "Rehana Maryam Noor" has been officially selected in the *Un Certain Regard* section of the 74th Cannes Film Festival.

Written and edited by Saad, this is the first Bangladeshi film to have been officially selected at the prestigious festival. Previously, the late director Tareque Masud's "Matir Moyna" was screened at the Director's Fortnight segment of the 55th Cannes.

The premise of Saad's film revolves around a college teacher, Rehana, who single-handedly wages a fight for justice on behalf of her daughter and one of her students. Rajib Mohajan, Sydul Haque Khandaker, Adnan Habib co-produced the movie.



Abdullah Mohammad Saad

"Rehana Maryam Noor" was also invited to the Cannes Film Festival in 2020.

However, since last year's festival was held virtually without any categories, the film's team decided to back out.

"When we submitted the film for a second time at Cannes, we followed all the procedures yet again. It is very rare for one film to be selected twice for such a prestigious festival," says Rajib Mohajan.

Berlin-based sales agent Films Boutique will represent worldwide rights for "Rehana Maryam Noor".

On June 3, the Official Selection of the 74th Festival de Cannes was presented by Pierre Lescure and Thierry Frémaux at the UGC Normandie in Paris.

The news quickly started making rounds on social media. People did not shy away from singing praises of the film's crew and cast members. Noted directors shared their



A snippet from Rehana Maryam Noor

thoughts on this historic achievement for Bangladesh, with us.

"I have known Saad from the time that he was assisting filmmaker Wahid Tarek," shares Amitabh Reza Chowdhury. "He is a hardworking and dedicated man. He

was also initially involved with my film, 'Rickshaw Girl'. That is when I saw him working closely. He is one of my favourite directors."

Khelna Chobi's internationally acclaimed film "Live from Dhaka" (2016)

was Saad's directorial debut, which won the Best Actor and Best Director awards at the Singapore International Film Festival and has been screened at various international film festivals around the world.

"I am not personally acquainted with Saad, but I am proud of him. I watched his film, 'Live from Dhaka', and found his style to be unique. He is meant for a global audience," says director Adnan Al Rajeev.

Noted director Ashfaque Nipun is proud of the facts that Saad and him are from Chittagong, and both of them came to Dhaka to make films. "Saad has proved that we do not need to have years of experience for a tremendous achievement. While many Bangladeshi films are being held back by policymakers and various other obstacles, Saad got this breakthrough at such a young age," he adds. "I am also happy that my friend, Kazi Sami Hasan, is a part of this film."

"Rehana Maryam Noor" has an ensemble cast of Azmeri Haque Badhon, Afia Tabassum Borno, Afia Zahin, Kazi Sami Hasan, and Tuhin Tajimul, among others.

EMK Center's virtual exhibition 'Connect with Nature' addresses climate crisis

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Marking World Environment Day, EMK Center kicked off a virtual exhibition, "Connect with Nature", from June 5, showcasing works by prominent artists and photographers.



The exhibition explores the adverse effects of climate change. "Climate Refugees in Bangladesh" is a photography series by Abir Abdullah. The works on display portray the plight of people who were displaced due to flooding and river erosion, which are the primary indicators of global warming. "People in the coastal areas suffer both temporary and long-term displacement

every year. My series aims to intensively document the stories of the coastal population and the tales of their hardships," Abir shared.

Mohammad Rakibul Hasan's "Park Life" is another photo series that depicts the effects of urbanisation on the capital's environment. It focuses on the importance of decentralising Dhaka and increasing the number of green spots to

amplify the city's living standards. "The fate of the existence of vegetation and natural water reservoirs is determined by powerful people. The flora of Dhaka is threatened by desperate urbanisation and industrialisation," Rakibul added.

The other works on display include "Masai", a painting series by Louis Nuyens. The Masai communities, inhabiting East Africa, form a part of a semi-nomadic tribe who are on the verge of cultural extinction. Dry seasons and droughts accelerated by climate change have made their traditional livelihood of cattle-herding difficult, as the animals are starving. Through his work, Louis brilliantly attempts to illustrate the lives of these tribes.

"Aab-E-Hayat" is a photography series by Shehab Rahmanian revolving around the cycle of water and the spontaneous patterns it creates along the way. "As a climate activist, I have been observing natural cycles for the past few years. This series is a part of the documentation of my journey of observations," he added.

The exhibition is open for viewers on EMK Center's website till June 30, 2021.

The author is a freelance journalist. Email: mislammonamee@gmail.com.

A chat with LOVELY DEB



PHOTO: COURTESY

SADIA TAHSIN

Growing up in a musical family based in Sylhet, Lovely Deb was prompted to persuade music from a very early age. Events such as *Mongola* and *Nagarkirtan* acted as a motivational force for her, more so because Lovely's father realised her potential and inspired her.

"My initial journey began in a musical institute named Surbitan, under the guidance of *ustad* Babar Ali Khan, who was also the master of eminent singer, Subir Nandi", shared Lovely, who won a national award from Shishu Academy as a child artist. The achievement acted as an intense motivator for her, opening a gateway into Bangladesh's music industry, *loko geeti* being her principal choice.

The Covid-19 pandemic constructed setbacks for artistes across all industries, with music being no exception. "Mental health plays a crucial role for artists to explore their creativity and alongside hampering their livelihoods, pandemic had ceased everything that singers yearn for: stage performances, live interactions and tours to name a few," remarked Lovely. "A digital platform created solely for artists, which provides them with basic honorarium, could at least keep our country's cultural framework dynamic", she added.

"*Noya Daman*, which is a trending Sylheti song, was first recorded in 1973 at Sylhet *Betar* by singer Iyarunessa Khanom, and I re-recorded it in the mid-90s for a wedding album named *Emon Moja Hoyna*. In 2003, architect Shakur Majid used this song in one of his telefilms, *Boirattie*", she shared. Appreciating the new remake of the song, she asserted, "As long as the integrity of the lyrics and music of a certain song is upheld, remakes are fine. However, remixes or discrediting the originality of the song is unseemly."

On account of the hundredth birth anniversary of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Lovely plans on singing and releasing over a hundred Sylheti songs. The talented singer is also working on a special project, associated with the Sylheti *Dhamail* performances.



Artworks from the exhibition



Half capacity at full tilt the only way to defeat Covid: Minister

Announcement equals implementation, minister insists

FIFTY-FIFTY CORRESPONDENT

The Chapasthan government yesterday said the only way to stop Covid-22 in its tracks is to introduce half-capacity measures in every sphere of life, said sources who heard other sources talking.

When border districts were teeming with new cases of the Beta variant, the government announced that they would extend the ongoing curbs for 10 more days.

"All curbs have to do with half capacity measures," a health ministry circular said.

The curbs include restaurants operating at half capacity, inter-district buses and city buses operating at half capacity, the collective brain cells of the country operating at half capacity, and other half-capacity measures, sources operating at half capacity said.

"We need to keep the economy going, that is very important for an LDC like us. We can't afford lockdowns, but what we can do is keep everything going at half capacity," Transport and Covid Minister Omaigo Bader said at the ministry.

Asked how the government plans to enforce the measures, especially as there have been reports that buses were operating at full capacity, the minister said, "You are underestimating your government. Have you seen the development that we have brought about? When the government says something will be built, is it not built? In the same way, when we announce that things will run at half capacity, that too is being followed."

Answering a question about vaccine procurement and the government relying on just one source for vaccines, Bader said the answer is simple. "At first we were thinking about two sources. But what is half of two? You guessed it."

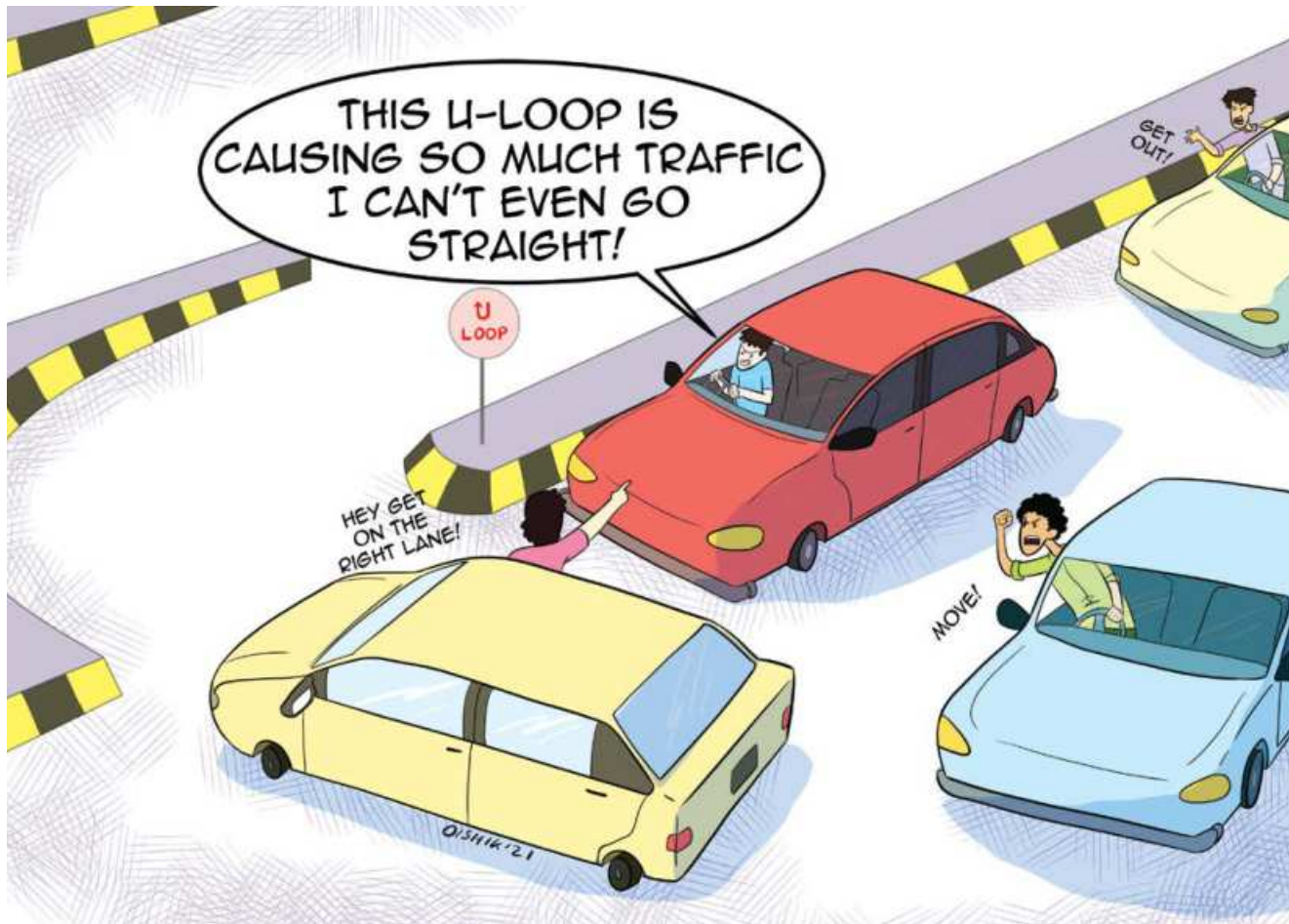
He also said thinking too much reduces our immune response and makes us vulnerable to Covid-22.

"That is what we mean by half capacity all across the board. Government offices will be operating at half capacity, so will law enforcement and hospitals. At home and at work, we also should not think too much about stuff. And what is Covid? It is a virus that lives on us... so if we operate at half capacity, full tilt, Covid's viability will also be halved. It's a no-brainer... anyone with half a brain can grasp it."

As he spoke, a double-decker bus went by his window and the upper level was seen full of people.

The minister also saw it and said, "Before you ask, the lower level is empty, so a full upper level still means half capacity. Boom! Ministered."

He then stepped out from behind the podium and revealed that he was wearing shorts. "Like I said, full tilt. By the way, your reporting should be done at half capacity too."



After U-loop failure, I-turn to revolutionise traffic

CONGESTION CORRESPONDENT

Dhoka's traffic system will see an overhaul after U-loops were shown to be a spectacular failure.

The concerned authorities (not to be mistaken for the authorities concerned) will now introduce a revolutionary new system called the I-turn.

The traffic division of DMP has tapped into what they have known for long – that Dhoka drivers cannot be asked to follow rules.

"What is this U-loop fiu-loop?" asked a furious motorist who had been stuck at the turning point of the U-loop in Manani for an hour.

"This is Dhoka... all of these bideshi things will not work here," he fumed before poleaxing the umpteenth car that was cutting him off from the left to take the turn.

"In theory, the U-loop works, because it provides a big enough space for the cars to take the turn without slowing

"This is Dhoka... all of these bideshi things will not work here," he fumed before poleaxing the umpteenth car that was cutting him off from the left to take the turn.

down much," said a high police official who had just seized a box of cookies. "But it seems that our motorists do not have much understanding of lanes. People in the right lane should turn into the U-loop while people in the left lanes should keep going straight."

He then kept looking at cars crowding near the nearby U-loop and chuckled for a full minute.

"That's fun to watch... But anyway, as I was saying, some ideas don't work here. So, we have decided to revolutionise the traffic system once again."

He said the new system would involve changing the U-loop into an I-turn. That, he said, was more in keeping with Dhokaists' ideals.

"We will narrow the roads, create a bottleneck and let Dhoka drivers do what they do best – challenge each other to take the turn first. If we do it strategically, we can ease congestion in other areas," said another official after the previous one wandered out of the room.

"What we need is to slow things down, who needs to live the fast life anyway?" he asked as he reached for the box of cookies.

Urban solutions: The world's first beach without a sea

MAHBUB ALAM MUNNA

There must be a sea when you talk about a "sea beach", right?

Wrong. Merepour, the capital of Dhoka, is a beach but it is a known fact that the city doesn't have a sea beside it! Yet this amazing area has turned into a beach, a street of water where people enjoy the sights sitting inside vehicles.

For this, a special thanks goes to rain, and the ingeniously blocked-with-garbage drainage system has played a superb supporting role.

"Why do you need a sea for a sea beach when 10 minutes of rainfall can easily do it?" asked a VIP of Merepour.

"We are proud that our unconscionable behaviour has helped Merepour become the first urban sea beach without a sea. We threw our waste on public roads, instead of dustbins. That simple trick helps us make headlines every time it rains: waterlogging!" a proud urban citizen said.

However, the contribution of authorities concerned can never be ignored.

The way the city's cleaning campaign goes on, deserves every bit of appreciation.

Mayor of Merepour said, "We kept no stone unturned to turn our residential area

into a sea beach. People did their part, threw bottles and so on, and we did the rest. That's how our mutual endeavours have earned this prestigious recognition for us."

Entrepreneurs were seen visiting the area with the aim of making some resorts from where customers can enjoy the sights and sounds and smells – people's daily battle with water being a highlight. Boats can easily be sailed from one place to another.

Children who regularly write the essay "A journey by boat" without ever having been on a boat will now be able to write from personal experience.

The last piece of the beach puzzle – the sand – has been generously provided by the march of development and the construction works.

"The benefits are myriad," said a local representative who forgot his visiting card. "We have opportunity for tourism, for education and for just plain good old fun."

Pointing to a child happily swimming beside the pavement, he said, "Thanks to the joint efforts of people and authorities this can also be a low-cost swimming pool where children of the city can learn to swim. Others can enjoy the view right from the windows of multi-storied building."



PHOTO: COLLECTED

Public officials blatantly breaking the rules of service

Those who are breaking the law for personal benefits must be punished

IN a gross violation of service rules, a huge number of civil servants are owning and running businesses on the side, according to a letter by the Anti-Corruption Commission. This is a most unethical thing to do, as it gives rise to clear conflicts of interest. Public servants are getting paid through taxpayer's money and enjoy substantial benefits due to their positions—the fact that they are still breaking the rules of their service in this most egregious manner is unacceptable and unpardonable.

According to the Government Servants (Conduct) Rules, 1979, "no government servant shall, except with the previous sanction of government, engage in any trade or undertake any employment or work, other than his official duties." The reason for this is simple: if public officials, who in many ways get to define the rules of business, or at least have substantial influence over them, get involved in business themselves, then they may easily distort the market in their own favour. When public officials are so blatantly violating the rules of their service, are we to expect that they will not break the rules when it comes to business or distort the market?

Despite discovering that a huge number of government employees are involved in business while enquiring into allegations of people accumulating wealth beyond their known sources of incomes, the ACC only asked the cabinet secretary to make all public servants aware of the rules, but did not ask him for further probes or to take punitive actions against the rule violators. The Cabinet Division, in response, only asked secretaries to make sure that the public servants were aware of the rules. We find both of their actions to be inadequate and objectionable.

Why do we have rules for public servants if they are not to be followed? And why should public servants get a pass when they violate rules, when everyone else don't? Just making public servants "aware" of the rules is not enough—being aware of the rules of their service should be a prerequisite as it is. Action must be taken against the law-breakers to ensure accountability. In regards to that, the ACC should make public which officials are involved in owning or running businesses and how much money they are making in the process, to inform the public what those who are meant to serve them are really up to.

Stimulus schemes failing to reach female entrepreneurs

The government must work harder to remove obstacles in access to the funds

IT is disheartening to know that despite the government's stimulus packages for SMEs owned by women, the funds are not reaching them. Instead, many entrepreneurs are taking loans from microfinance institutions where interest rates are around three times higher than the banks. According to a report by this daily, the government had allocated Tk 20,000 crore for stimulus packages last year, half of which was to be disbursed among people owning cottage industries and SMEs. The government put aside five percent of this stimulus package (amounting to Tk 1,000 crore) for women entrepreneurs only. Another stimulus package amounting to Tk 1,500 crore this January was also set aside with the same intention. The interest rate for taking loans from the second stimulus package was almost half of the first one (four percent only). So why are women entrepreneurs not being able to take advantage of this opportunity?

For one thing, many women entrepreneurs are still not even aware that these funds exist. A recent study by Center for Policy Dialogue (CPD) found that almost 59 percent of women entrepreneurs were completely ignorant about these packages. Even in the case of women entrepreneurs who were aware of the stimulus package provisions, a lack of information about the process of applying for these loans, along with worries about repayment and lengthy processes, were acting as deterrents. There have also been cases of bank officials discouraging them from availing the government loans and making the process more difficult.

While we commend the government for allocating a sizeable sum for female owners of small businesses, it is disappointing to see this continuous disconnect between government policy action and the realities on the ground. We believe it is high time for the authorities to listen to the experts and accept their solutions on how to ensure the stimulus packages reach those who need it the most. One of the suggestions is that cash incentives, rather than loans, would be more effective in easing the burden of women with small businesses in the informal sector. Also, if medium-sized enterprises were exempted from paying VAT for at least three years, they would be able to sustain their industries for the next few years. Finally, concerned authorities have to carry out massive awareness raising campaigns across the nation to let small-scale businesswomen know how to avail government's funds, and banks, especially government-owned ones, must be more efficient in this process. At a time when the global pandemic has forced more than 41 percent of small businesses run by women entrepreneurs to close down (according to CPD), the government must do more to ensure these women do not fall into poverty despite their existing a safety net, simply because of difficulties in access.



BLOWN' IN THE WIND

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

IT reads like a Netflix blurb of a horror movie. A young man took a machete from a street coconut seller, uttered his last words: "please forgive me", and then slit his own throat in front of

Dhaka Medical College Hospital. The body ended up in the morgue as an unidentified corpse, as everyone, including his friends, fled the scene after the outrageous turn of events. Once the mystery was unraveled, we were told that the young man was a student of the oldest university of the country, and at the time of the incident he was under the influence of a mind-altering narcotic substance, LSD. The investigation worm exposed the snake heads involving some top-notch private university students who were using international courier services to smuggle the drug soaked in highly absorbent "blotter papers."

I re-read the paragraph I just wrote and dreaded the combination of sensory information packed in it. All the places mentioned here are closely related to our personal identity: the universities in question and the hospital concerned. These are the physical spaces where we look for prospect and shelter. The places where we live and the experiences that we have define who we are. These physical surroundings with their aura of familiarity play an important role in creating a sense of order, meaning and stability in our lives. They are the sources of our daily activities and cultural rituals, which form the very fabric of our personal and social lives. We associate the university with education that will lead us to prosperity; we associate the hospital as a place that can heal us. But what happens when such realms of familiarity are changed and disoriented? How does it impact the feelings of comfort, predictability and security that we expect from a familiar setting?

You get down from a rickshaw and ask the coconut seller to hand you a green coconut to seek respite from the heat or the chores in hand. You haggle over the price a bit, complain about the price hike as an ever-evolving national plague while instructing the seller to give you a large fruit with sufficient sweet water and tender meat inside; you chide him for holding the mouth of the straw with his dirty hand as you proceed to gulp the fresh water. You have come to the campus

to meet a friend or are here to visit a patient in hospital. Everything gives an impression of normalcy and familiarity.

A group of students are having a chat nearby. You hear a mild heated discussion. One of them is slightly being rebuked for manhandling a disabled rickshaw-puller the day before. The words trigger him—he starts touching the feet of some rickshaw-pullers nearby, asking for their forgiveness, rushes to the coconut

good is his death? What benefits have come out of this self-mutilation? What vision can we derive from this footnote of "tragedy" (the Greek word that literally means a "goat song")?

A ring of drug-dealers is exposed. The police have been prompt in arresting some suppliers. I see these young boys in their handcuffs, accused of peddling. They are no different from the boys I have in my classes. They look normal. It does not

man to try out the blotter paper and lose full control over his senses? The guilt of abusing a disabled rickshaw-puller was heightened by the toxic chemical that was troubling his mind. His death has given us a lesson. Are we ready to learn from it? Or do we brush it aside as an exceptional freak show that has given us a momentary chill?

How about those other students? Did we tell them to be entrepreneurial without being ethical? What prompted them towards the cheap thrills of importing drugs and selling them with a five-time profit margin? What happens when we tell our students that they need to find their own jobs? The system cannot employ all the graduates who will come out of the universities. Start a start-up. Be your own employer. Be innovative. Be creative. Think out of the box. We copy and paste Youtube motivational speeches and chant inspirational mantras for the next generation. There is nothing organic about the skill-sets that we want them to acquire or the knowledge that we want them to have. We simulate, mimic and copy with no knowledge and understanding of the real.

Where did this toxic knowledge come from? Did these students get inspired by popular movies that glorify drugs? Did they watch *Breaking Bad*, *Money Heist* or *Narcos*? How much influence did popular media have on them planning their illicit businesses? Or did they grow up in broken families that lacked empathy or ethics?

If the death of the DU student is caused by mental illness or momentary lapses of reason, the lives of the other students are affected by social illness. Treating this incident as an isolated one will be foolish. Frustrations, anxieties and horror are creeping in and taking over the geographical, architectural and psychological spaces that we consider familiar. These familiar places are creeping us out by the uncanny behaviour of the people that we know. The import of LSD by courier is symptomatic of a subculture that is eating us from inside and turning the users into living-dead zombies. The public suicide of the young man is symbolic of everything that has gone wrong in all our familiar territories. He brought his insides out to expose us to the invisible enemies that we carry inside. We must tackle them head on. There is not much time to lose. Or else the next generation will never forgive us!

Shamsad Mortuza is Pro-Vice-Chancellor of the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB), and a professor of English (on leave) at Dhaka University.

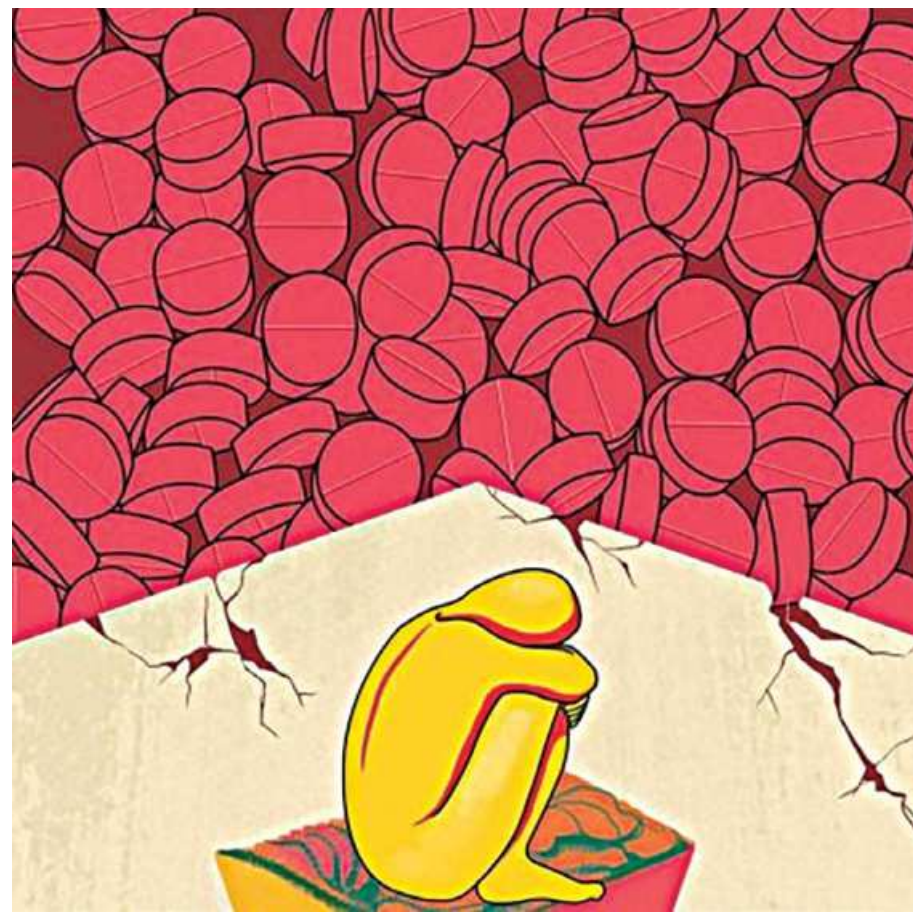


ILLUSTRATION: NAHFIZ JAHAN MONNI

cart, grabs the machete, and butchers himself. You run as the blood of a young man gushes out like the water from a green coconut. Suddenly, the entire familiar landscape becomes unfamiliar, grotesque and morbid. You run and try to erase it from memory. But the newspapers reinforce it, and there is no escape from the violence.

The young man came back from his hometown after the Eid vacation, citing some errands that he had to run in the city. His trip led him to tripping. His eventual death like a sacrificial animal is reminiscent of the fatal cattle that are brought to Dhaka for consumption. What

comfort you to know that these kids go to two different top-ranking institutions. Maybe they come from families that I know, or maybe I am even related to one or two! They are all our children: the one who died, and the ones who are being implicated for supplying the dead with the deadly drugs.

Is there any relationship between the pandemic and the drug use? The pandemic has caused people to become really stressed and isolated. Chances are: many will make unhealthy and unwise decisions. I cannot say it with certainty, as no research has been done in this respect. Was it peer pressure that led the young

Can the G7 finally bring an end to the pandemic?



KAMAL AHMED

YESTERDAY, leaders of the industrialised nations, known as G7, started their first day of discussions at the English seaside county Cornwall—the first meeting since the Covid-19

pandemic started, which has already claimed more than 3.75 million lives and the livelihoods of over a billion people. According to a survey by Gallup in 117 countries, pandemic-induced economic impacts were felt disproportionately on developing countries, where half of their workers lost jobs. Yet, there is no sign of the virus being under control.

Despite the pandemic being one of the biggest and deepest crises the world has been passing through since the beginning of 2020, there seems to be very little action being taken in a globally coordinated way. It is a bigger crisis than the global financial crisis of 2008 following the collapse of the Lehman Brothers, said former British Prime Minister Gordon Brown, who was at that time at the helm of Britain, the fourth largest economy in the world. Last Sunday, ex-PM Brown, appearing on major global TV networks, repeated his call to world leaders for urgent intervention, saying that a global crisis needs a global solution. A week before, on May 3, he also called for underwriting about USD 60 billion for Covid-19 vaccinations in poorer countries by the richest nations. Appearing at a World Health Organization briefing, he said, "By our failure to extend vaccination more rapidly to every country, we are choosing who lives and who dies."

According to the AFP's count, on June 8, more than 2.15 billion doses of Covid-19 vaccines have been injected in at least 215 territories around the world. But the irony is, while US states are offering incentives (like awarding quarter of a million dollars through lottery) among vaccine-takers to encourage reluctant or sceptic citizens, leaders of developing countries are literally begging for the sharing of excess stock. After being overwhelmed by Covid-19, the Nepalese Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli wrote to the UK Prime Minister as chair of the G7 for urgent help. He wrote "Our sherpas are known for sharing their oxygen with

struggling climbers at high altitude. Today, Covid-19 is leaving our country breathless and so we are looking for the "sherpas" of the international community".

According to the BBC, he appealed to PM Johnson saying that the sacrifices of Nepal's Gurkha soldiers serving the UK should make Nepal a priority for UK Covid aid. On that very day, when Nepal sought vaccines for Gurkha soldiers, British health authorities approved Pfizer vaccines for children aged 12 to 15 years. In response to Nepal's plea for help, the British Foreign Office said, "The UK is a leading donor to COVAX, the international initiative to procure and distribute vaccines equitably." Bangladesh's similar request remained unfulfilled as well. Whether vaccinating

has allowed the coronavirus to continue spreading, thus increasing odds of a variant emerging that could render these treatments ineffective.

Pressure on the G7 countries for sharing excess stock of vaccines mounted further following UNICEF's intervention. It said that the UK should commit to make 20 percent of its vaccines available within this month for poorer countries, arguing that the UK will still have enough to vaccinate every adult by the end of July. PM Johnson is expected to announce what portion of doses that are not needed by the UK will be shared with developing nations. The recent announcement by US President Joe Biden to release 25 million doses of its stock was also seen by some observers as a

stepping up the manufacture of vaccines, lowering barriers to the international distribution of those vaccines—as the UK has done with Oxford-AstraZeneca—and ultimately sharing surplus doses with developing countries bilaterally and through COVAX.

However, his plan does not explicitly support the call by rights groups for the temporary waiver of patents on Covid-19 vaccines. Gordon Brown is among more than 200 former heads of governments and civic leaders who have called for a waiver on Covid-19 vaccines so that manufacturing capacities in developing countries can be fully utilised and faster vaccination achieved.

Besides, the summit will have a particular focus on how the group can

Despite the pandemic being one of the biggest and deepest crises the world has been passing through since the beginning of 2020, there seems to be very little action being taken in a globally coordinated way.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

children in richer countries who are less vulnerable than the elderly population in the developing world is morally justifiable—that debate seemed to fail to sway politicians' priorities.

Leaders in Europe and North America are now more concerned about how to save upcoming summer holiday season and how to allow experimental socialising. In some countries, so-called vaccine passports have been introduced for travel and entertainment services. WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus rightly describes it as "a two-track pandemic: many countries still face an extremely dangerous situation, while some of those with the highest vaccination rates are starting to talk about ending restrictions." He warns that unequal distribution of vaccines

sign of a further push at the G7 summit for coordinated action, which has been missing so far since his predecessor Donald J Trump's introduction of the America First policy and his withdrawal from international bodies, including the WHO. US media reports suggest President Biden will announce a doubling of the US contribution of Covid-19 vaccines over the next year. French President Emmanuel Macron, too, has announced that it would donate up to five percent of its vaccine stocks to COVAX, the UN-backed initiative to get vaccines to lower-income countries.

As the G7 chair, PM Johnson is expected to push for a firm commitment to vaccinate the entire world against coronavirus by the end of 2022. His plan outlines that it can be achieved by

lead the global recovery from coronavirus and tackle the climate emergency. As the next climate summit COP26 is scheduled later in the year in the UK, Boris Johnson is expected to say that like the Covid-19 crisis, the climate emergency could spell disaster for the developed world too, even if developing countries appear to be more vulnerable at first, especially since the situation has worsened in the past decade. The impacts of climate change have increased tremendously. In the case of the climate emergency, we are likely to hear the familiar theme, "We are all safe or no-one is safe." However, the immediate test for G7 is whether they can bridge the gap between the "two tracks" of the ongoing pandemic.

Kamal Ahmed is a freelance journalist.

WORLD DAY AGAINST CHILD LABOUR

Prolonged school closures to have repercussions on child protection

UNICEF Bangladesh's Chief of Child Protection, Natalie McCauley, speaks to Afia Jahin of The Daily Star about what drives child labour and how Bangladesh can combat—and eventually eliminate—it, in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic has undone a lot of progress towards ending child labour, globally. What can Bangladesh do to recover some of that progress?

We do have a lot of legislative measures in Bangladesh, but there still need to be reforms in terms of defining the age of the child that is consistent with the Children Act 2013 on the rights of the child. The labour law in 2006 focuses more on formal sectors, while children are mainly engaged in non-formal sectors, so that needs to be brought under the legal system. The government-issued circulars of engagement of children in hazardous labour lists 38 different categories of jobs involving hazardous labour. I think we need to simplify this system. There's also a huge gap in the child protection system and we need to strengthen the social service workforce so that families have access to social workers and can prevent the push and pull factors that lead these children into hazardous labour or to being on the streets.

Domestic labour of children is still widespread but often overlooked. What can be done to stop this form of child labour?

In the domestic sphere, it is mostly girls being employed and there is no regulatory framework to oppose this, because in this particular category of "domestic labour" there is no required minimum age, no fixed payment or working hours, and no union to protect these workers. These children also don't have access to education unless the employer takes initiative for it. Various studies have shown that this is a hazardous form of child labour and it is very risky for children. Many of these child domestic workers, particularly the girls, are experiencing high levels of violence, abuse and exploitation. If they are not compliant they face violence, including corporal punishment, sexual violence and even rape. The government has adopted the Domestic Worker Protection and Welfare Policy 2015, but it does not list it as hazardous work.

Many families send their children to domestic work, mostly due to poverty, but there is also a lack of awareness about the

impact on children of this work. We need to be doing much larger awareness campaigns, strengthening our social protection support (such as cash for families that are in certain levels of poverty), and we need to be ensuring that children are going to school. We also need to empower girls with life skills and other employability skills so that this is not their only option to get out of poverty. You can really understand why a family would think this is the best option because the assumption is that, in that environment, they will be protected. Awareness campaigns can make people understand that this has a lifelong impact on children and they do miss out on other skill sets that would enable them to help their families to get out of poverty. Otherwise, it creates a cycle where they just stay where they are, which is very dangerous.

What are the main challenges when it comes to implementing awareness campaigns about child labour and combatting it on a large scale?

I think we are lucky that there are government counterparts in Bangladesh that are really committed to the cause. UNICEF works with the Ministry of Social Welfare (MSW) and the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs (MOWCA) on strengthening the child protection and the social service systems. We are looking into how we can expand them, but it needs to be a national approach so that every location can have a social worker. At the moment, there are just over 3,500 government social workers and we need around 100,000 if we are going to reach about 68,000 villages across the country, where social/community workers can work at the grassroots levels to prevent much of the damage caused by hazardous child labour.

Unfortunately due to Covid-19, children have been out of school for a long time and it is easier now for them to be pushed into the workforce. I think being out of school for such a long time is going to have a really big impact on their protection, which we will have to deal with. We also need to make sure we have a child responsive social protection system for children who are very vulnerable. Their



Natalie McCauley

families are supposedly receiving cash grants, but we need to ensure that the most vulnerable families are getting them so their children are protected from being pushed into dangerous labour and can eventually go back to school.

Do you think the proposed FY2021-22 budget allocations put enough emphasis on protecting children from child labour?

It is never enough. In any country, this area is not funded to the extent that we would want. But the good thing is that it has at least been more prioritised with time, and it's really great progress that it has started to increase. People are starting to see that not supporting child protection will have long-term development impacts on the country. The outcomes for child labourers will be far more negative and this will cost the country a lot more money when they are in adulthood. The cost of that in percentage of the GDP is much higher than people would imagine. Child protection has to be more than social protection or cash transfer. We have to look at a more systemic approach on how to increase the social service workforce to physically work with families and communities to shift their thinking regarding child labour. However, the recent budget does

not reflect that. There has not been a massive increase in social workers, for example.

In view of the pandemic, how likely do you think it is that the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 8.7 of ending all forms of child labour by 2025 will be achieved?

I think it is definitely achievable in Bangladesh because there is a lot of commitment within the MSW and MOWCA towards these SDGs, and we are looking into how we can extend these systems down to the grassroots levels. At the moment, UNICEF has a partnership with the Department of Social Services to create evidence and formulate policies, strategies and legal measures to make the Children Act 2013 more effective, and this includes ensuring the Act has a budget attached to it as soon as possible. They are also very supportive in strengthening the social service workforce. Last year, social workers took over 180,000 calls on the child helpline, which is four times the number of calls they would usually take in a year. This was not only due to the support of UNICEF but also through the government's commitment to not let any child's call go unanswered. I feel very positive about Bangladesh achieving this target also because the government is always open to any creative solutions that we come up with. The child protection service hubs we put up on streets in various cities (with the DSS and MOWCA) last year attracted thousands of children, many of whom were reunited with their families and taken back home because they had access to help from social workers in the hubs.

What factors do you think drove child labour during the pandemic?

One of the main driving factors was that children were not in school and also did not have access to digital devices (and to online opportunities for education). A lot of people lost their jobs and families were struggling, so they would take any option to earn money and sometimes that would have to be through their children. I do think not having a child protection system that works at the grassroots levels impacts whether someone can intervene. Families resort to child labour due to desperation and not many options

being available to them. They are trying as hard as they can to survive and no one should judge them for that. I have been doing child protection for nearly 25 years now and I have never really met families that want to hurt their children. It's always because they don't know any better. They are always looking for options for survival for their children and for themselves. That is why the help of even one social worker, which does not cost a lot of money, can save a life or change a family's trajectory. What was very helpful during the lockdown was the government recognising these social workers as being essential, which allowed them to continue working during that time.

In general, what areas must Bangladesh work on first and foremost to eliminate the worst forms of child labour?

We have to first look into the industries that produce these kinds of labour. There needs to be a multi-sectoral approach, with the justice, social service and health systems involved. In Bangladesh, though people do not want to talk about it because of how horrifying it is, there is sexual exploitation and abuse of children in child labour. We have to create systems that can respond to this. We have to look at some of the jobs which are not traditionally in the lists of hazardous forms of child labour and try to minimise those as well. It comes down to awareness-building, having people understand the negative long-term impacts on children of child labour, and the need to have a child protection system that reaches the grassroots level—which we don't have here yet. The Children Act 2013 is a really important piece of legislation, but it doesn't have agreed rules or a budget attached to it yet, which has hindered its implementation. We're working with the government now to try and overcome that, which is essential in protecting children. But I really want it to go across that, I've worked in many countries around the world, and the government workers I've worked with here really are committed and they really care. So what we need to do now is to match that with a budget, and we can definitely change the world in the next few years.

Myanmar conflict may bring ethnic groups together



MOKBUL MORSHED AHMAD

WITH the February 2021

military coup, Myanmar once again hit global media headlines. While the military junta continues to clamp down on pro-democracy protestors and the country is wracked with conflict and unrest, how will the changing political situation affect the Rohingya community in Bangladesh and in Rakhine State in Myanmar?

More than one-third of Myanmar's population is composed of ethnic minorities, who inhabit a vast frontier where the country's natural resources are concentrated. They have staged periodic insurgencies against the military, which has ruled the country for most of the past six decades. The National League for Democracy (NLD) is the only nationally popular political force in Myanmar, but it has a recent history of turning a blind eye to the persecution of ethnic minorities, especially in Rakhine. Although the party won a landslide re-election in November 2020, more than one million members of ethnic minorities were disenfranchised during the vote. The British, who colonised what was then known as Burma, called the country "a zone of racial instability".

In Rakhine State, formerly known as Arakan State, there are two major ethnicities: Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims. In 2014, it was estimated that 35.1 percent were Muslim Rohingyas and 63.3 percent were Buddhist, with the rest of the state's

population belonging to other religions. Conflict in the area is rooted in religious and social differentiation between the Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims. Areas of Myanmar where the ethnic groups are a majority, such as Karen State, have not seen the level of religious conflict as in Rakhine, possibly due to the tipped scale—Karen State consists of 84.5 percent Buddhists and 9.5 percent Christians. Therefore, the insurgents' (in this case, the Karen National Liberation Army) major opposition is only the Myanmar government, not any other ethnic groups within the state. While the Rohingya are

fighting for their independence, the Rakhine Buddhists often support the Myanmar army's military operations. In other ethnic areas such as Shan, Kachin and Karen, the Myanmar military mostly conducts operations solo as the ethnic group they are fighting usually comprises a majority.

However, in the midst of all this ethnic conflict, a quiet transformation is under way—a growing acceptance of the nation's ethnic diversity, something that was notably absent during an earlier political transition. With the military's violence unleashed once again, some are acknowledging that

democracy cannot flourish without respecting the ethnic minorities who have endured decades of persecution. For the first time, the Karen National Union has received donations from the majority Bamar people for civilian victims of the Tatmadaw (as Myanmar's military regime is called).

Since the February coup, the Tatmadaw has been trying to present itself as committed to the return of the Rohingya from Bangladesh, possibly to deflect attention from the calls to hold it accountable for crimes against humanity, including genocide. Whatever the Tatmadaw's reasons may be, for the Rohingya, the direct implication of the coup is that their fate is now in the hands of the same military that has been their brutal oppressor for decades. It is important that the UN and Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) consider carefully what the current situation means for Rakhine State's ethnically diverse population, including the Rohingya.

The high risk of a return to violence in Rakhine State raises questions about the possible return of the Rohingya. Approximately one million are in Bangladesh, while half a million remain in Rakhine. Little has changed for the latter group—since 2017, neither the civilian government nor the Tatmadaw has addressed their dire situation. Enforced ethnic segregation, or apartheid—a crime against humanity—remains in place, and freedom of movement is highly restricted. It seems that the conditions for the return of the Rohingya in Bangladesh remain highly precarious, while the prospect of safe and sustainable voluntary return has declined significantly since the coup.

Protesters have crowded the streets throughout Myanmar in recent months in

an overwhelming rejection of the military's seizure of power. This current struggle is between the democratic aspirations of the majority—including ethnic minorities—and the army's desperate attempt to regain its shrinking authority and control during the country's transition to democracy, as a "guided democracy". It is these competing visions of democracy that are playing out on the streets of the country and both sides are preparing for a long battle.

However, the military junta has also dealt a death blow to developing democratic ideals and practices. It foresees a political future where the army is an integral part of the political setup—integrated into the power structure and administration along the lines of Thailand. In fact, the commander in chief sees Thailand as a model—with an important role for the army where their economic interests are protected, a self-sufficient economy, and a "democratic" outlook resisting leftist, socialist or communist leanings. For long, the Myanmar military has been pushing for a state where no interest group will have the dominant role or power, allowing the army to continue to play a critical role. Part of the constitutional change that is likely to be enacted is proportional representation, so that they can have a proliferation of parties in parliament, with the military bloc holding 25 percent of the balance of power. While the army may have their plans, these will not be acceptable to the NLD, and even more likely to be totally rejected by the protesters on the streets.

Mokbul Morshed Ahmad is Associate Professor of the Department of Development and Sustainability, School of Environment, Resources and Development, at the Asian Institute of Technology, Thailand.



PHOTO: REUTERS

QUOTABLE Quote

PABLO PICASSO
(1881-1973)
Spanish painter

It takes a long time to become young.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Learn completely
- 7 Fight memento
- 11 Statue setting
- 12 Words of approximation
- 13 Worked the fields
- 14 Pro—
- 15 Solitary sort
- 16 Maliciousness
- 17 Took in
- 18 Craving
- 19 Goffer's choice
- 21 Lend a hand
- 22 Colombia's neighbor
- 25 Debate side
- 26 Use taction
- 27 Bruce Wayne's

DOWN

- 1 Common street name
- 2 Brass, for one
- 3 Teatime treat
- 4 Took to the garage
- 5 At any time
- 6 Carmine
- 7 Tender spots
- 8 Related to head cases
- 9 Oregon city
- 10 Wandered
- 16 Site
- 18 Took a nap
- 20 Allude
- 22 Kilauea, for one
- 23 Implement
- 24 Squashed circle
- 25 Pollux's twin
- 28 Tricks
- 30 Bitter
- 31 Lion group
- 32 Gave medicine to
- 34 Horse feature
- 36 Pasture grazer

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

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

D	I	S	C	O	C	A	R	E	S
A	R	M	O	R	U	B	O	A	T
N	O	N	E	R	E	U	S	E	
U	N	O	S	R	S	G	E	E	
B	I	T	T	E	E	H	U	D	
E	C	H	O	E	D	P	E	P	S
S	I	S	T	E	R	S			
M	E	A	L	A	M	Y	T	A	N
A	M	I	A	P	P	I	T	A	
N	I	L	P	E	T	M	O	M	
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BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

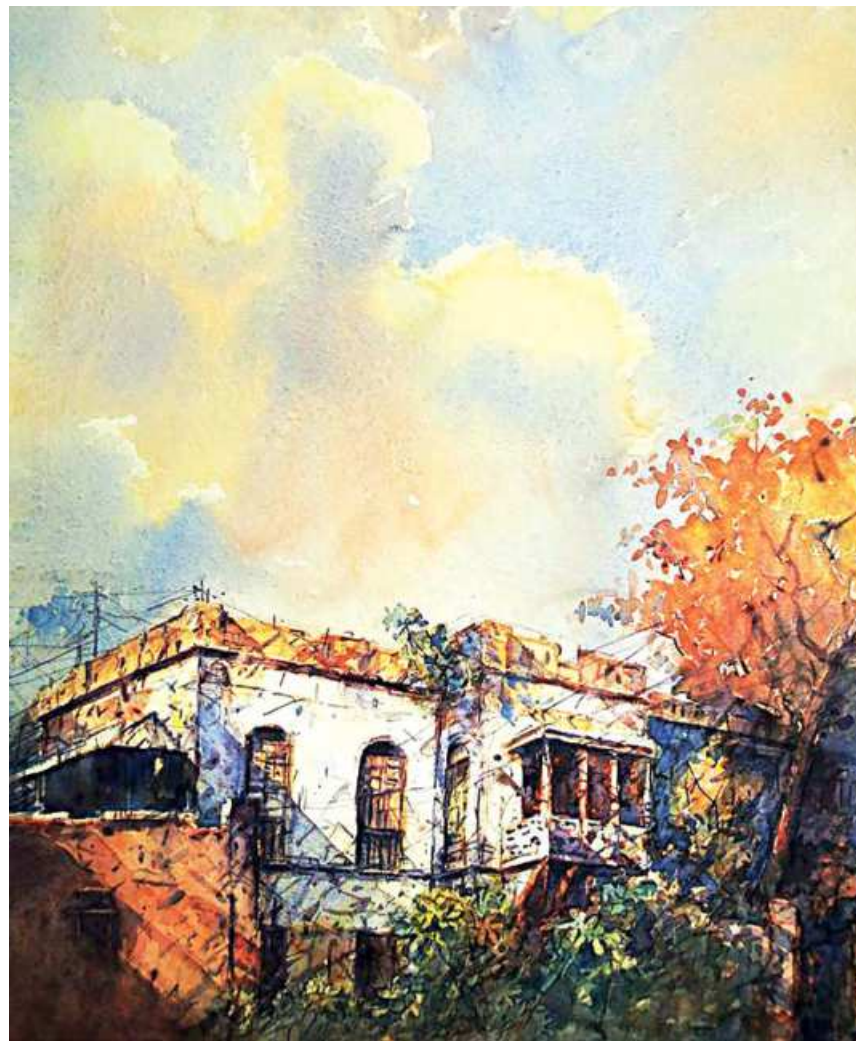
Diasporic Homes

ADIB KHAN

"...the act of imagination is bound up with memory."

—Toni Morrison

Home? Of course, I have a home! In fact I have two—one is a conventional brick-veneered house in a suburb of a Victorian country town in Australia. I have lived here for the past thirty-five years and my attachment to this residence can be attributed to the familiarity of a long-term association. As for the other place . . . well, it is not entirely my doing. The Muses were involved. It is built on the foundation of remembrance and given shape by my imagination. It's not only unusual but very special, an ideal place of sojourn where I can dwell in the utmost comfort and roam freely between 'what was' and 'what is,' without any restrictions or pangs of deprivation. It is also the source of my creative inspiration. In an instant I can conjure up this collage of a rambling, two-storied building in Wari crowded with events and people who influenced me and shaped my formative years in Dhaka. It doesn't seem strange that I meet them in different guises, sometimes as I was and then as I am now. But the people I meet have not changed. Relatives, friends, enemies and acquaintances are blessed with agelessness. They provide drama, relationships, frailties of human nature, glimpses of nobility and mean-mindedness; in other words, the material



For writers belonging to a diasporic community and leading what Homi Bhabha calls 'border lives,' there is a dual consciousness of place—one which is physically located in the present and the other which is elusive and intangible, strewn in the maze of memory. By dabbling in creative writing, an expatriate finds the opportunity to widen and diversify the cultural landscape. The tensions inherent in the awareness of the 'foreignness' of the past and the 'alienation' of the present, coupled with the unsettled dissatisfaction they generate, are often the energising forces of creativity. For those who are paradoxically blessed and burdened with twin lives of polarised cultures, any form of creative exercise is not merely an indulgence in aesthetics or an expression of socio-political concern. The creative process itself leads to a search, discovery and an engagement with parts of the missing self, those elusive but crucial segments of one's past which appear to have gone missing and cannot be verified by the empirical reality of the present, but which, nevertheless, live in memory. For the diasporic voice, any form of creativity is also an attempt to link with and reclaim what has been and how all this gives shape and meaning to the progression in one's life. In the anxiety to discover selfhood as a constant, it is inevitable to find multiple and composite images of identity, thus creating confusion and disappointment about missing the focus on a single vision of selfhood and a lack of anchorage to a specific place and community. Thomas Turino is of the opinion that a human identity evolves as a result of a variety of experiences and interaction with the environment over a person's lifetime. One can, therefore, suggest that the formation of identity is 'hybrid' because it entails engagement with facets of diverse experiences. "Diasporic identities, however," Turino goes on to say, "are dramatically hybrid because of the multiple . . . iconic maps of reality and bases for cultural resources."

For many of us the notion of a "new beginning" may stem from the desperation to escape hardships, war, socio-economic deprivation and situations which are traumatic and stressful in the extreme. The overwhelming desire to seek a better and peaceful life is often the impetus which subdues the fear of dislocation and gives us the courage to confront whatever dangers imperil the travel ahead. Many of us are not capable of projecting our thoughts to the future and perceive the subtleties in the changes which await us.

Often we undertake the migratory journey with stuporous naivety, without pausing to contemplate the implications of a seismic cultural shift. In our eagerness to leave and recreate ourselves in a foreign environment, we pay scant attention to anthropologist Clifford Geertz's claim that "there is no such thing as a human nature independent of culture." In other words, both communally and

individually, culture embodies us in its mesh of socio-political, religious and economic structures. It is a continuum of man's history and determinant of humankind's development, linking our past with humanity's present condition and beyond. The obvious conclusion is that it is impossible to entirely leave behind our indigenous environment which nourished and shaped us and redefine ourselves as brand new entities without the influence of the past. Our irrevocable connection with what may eventually be considered to be a foreign past is through memory. It cannot be obliterated and nor can it be forgotten. Inadvertently we drag the past with us into the new world where we think our troubles will evaporate.

The experience of diaspora is so varied and complex in its emotional, intellectual and physical dimensions that it defies any reductive explanation of commonality which might resonate across cultures. There has to be, of course, a recognition of some of the fundamental generalities associated with displacement. We can say that there is most certainly a reconfiguration of lives in alien cultures characterised by anticipation, excitement, trepidation, loneliness, nostalgia, questions of identity, adoption of new cultural habits and a struggle to come to terms with the unfamiliarity of different lifestyles.

Despite the eventual attunement to a new life rhythm, a migrant is not necessarily always at ease with himself. There can be sudden and periodic bouts of puzzlement and moments of hollowness when one feels as though chunks of selfhood have disappeared. There is a haunting sense of loss and the bitterness of incompleteness which are not immediately identifiable. Alienation begins to creep in as one realises the foreignness of customs and rituals, a lack of the fervour of patriotism and sincerity in the celebratory events of one's adopted country and the exposure to the view that one must be assimilated into the mainstream culture. Introspection lacks clarity because the inner landscape of experiences is weirdly diverse, murky and confused. Among all the unanswered questions, what eventually crops up as one of the most vital is "What is my nation?" Macmorris' famous query in *King Henry V* (Act 3, sc ii) is one which most of us eventually face in response to that feeling that a critical element is missing from our newly found lives. Nothing is palpably wrong and yet everything is not quite right. It is the uncertainty of not knowing where one belongs which compels us to examine the dilemma of diaspora and seek an imaginative respite to quell the agitation.

The abjectness of feeling rootless can often force us to seek security in a past which is often redesigned by the effect of the imagination on memory. Memory is selective because imagination edits, deletes, highlights and bridges those chasms of forgetfulness in the past to suit our needs. "Memory is the mind's own theatre," observed Octavio Paz. "It

invents and erases." On this great stage of the mind, the imagination becomes a leading player as we activate the creativity within us. William Safran suggests that members of a diasporic community have tenacious memories about their homeland with which they continue to "relate personally or vicariously . . . in one way or another, and their ethno-communal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship."

The propensity to remember is a natural and cognitive characteristic in humans. Recalling the past often maps the changes in identity and provides a referential framework for the understanding of who we are and how we arrived at a particular point in the present. Memory, however, is not just about perspectives but also about place situations. Location gives anchorage to events and concretises the images which memory provides. A locality acts as memory's grid and, within that network, there can be loci or even a single locus, "a place easily grasped by the memory such as a house, an inter-columnar space, a corner, an arch or the like," writes Frances Yates. It is usually within a setting that we remember meaningful happenings and events.

There are gaps and holes in what we recall and the manner in which we plug them with inventions of the imagination is almost reflexive. Remembering is an act of creation, a reinvention of a segment of the past by the imaginative manipulation of events and incidents, often for the sake of achieving a desired end. It could be for emotional satisfaction, stress alleviation, identity check or fulfilment of an incomplete or unrequited experience of the past.

For an expatriate, memory is also a crucial aid to the understanding of the necessity and the complexity of the multiple meanings of 'home' and acts as a bridge to a past which can often appear to be remote and inconsistent because of the 'flickering' and 'unsteady' images formulated in remembering. The cultural splintering, which results from an expatriate's experience of dislocation, is usually at the centre of the perception of living in no-man's-land. In an essay, Edward Said quotes Simone Weil's succinct and lucid comment on a fundamental human need. "To be rooted," she said, "is perhaps the

achieved through an art form which one can contemplate and rationalise in an attempt to accept the changes in selfhood. Such expression is not necessarily dramatic. It revolves around the recollection of the past and can take the form of daydreams, imagined sequences of events, snatches of written words, doodling or sketches. Memory becomes a vital part of the process of creating and recreating, censoring and refurbishing and, above all, selecting the perspective of recall. Judy Giles makes the point that "Memory is an act of remembering that can create new understandings of both the past and the present. Memories are an active process by which meaning is created; they are not depositories of fact."

It is a mistake to treat memory and imagination as separate entities working independently to reach conclusions about the diasporic self. Allowance has to be made for both the dynamics of an inextricably changing, symbiotic relationship and the possibility that a free-roaming imagination also entails an ongoing reshaping of memory. The past is not entirely grounded in some unquestionable form of absolutism because memory is not entirely reliable. As Siegfried Kracauer reminds us:

"Memory encompasses neither the entire spatial appearance of a state of affairs nor its entire temporal course. Compared to photography, memory's records are full of gaps." Like Roland Barthes' notion of *punctum*, there are short and sharp points of remembrance which provide no more than patchy, general information. Nevertheless, some of the images are also puncture points which are entrances to what Barthes refers to as "subtle beyond." What memory cannot provide, the imagination does. The liaison between 'fact' and 'fiction' is sandpapered by the artistic craft to produce a seamless product.

Acceptance of the fact that life is marked with imperfections and dissatisfaction is an acknowledgement of the inevitable discrepancy between the ideal and the real. To avoid a despairing self-pity we have to take measures to reconstruct the past as a place of temporary retirement which is not an anathema to the conscience or the emotions. It has to be somewhere which offers sustenance and reassurance that despite the cultural fractures life has been worthwhile and enriching. Of course,



most important and least recognised need of the human soul." To uproot oneself from an indigenous culture, with the assumption that it is easy to be replanted in alien soil, is a fallacy of diasporic thinking.

The awareness of the tension between what memory serves up about the place of beginning and the empirical reality of what is now home is gradual. It is fraught with transient emotional ripples which we try to underplay as part of our public persona to appear balanced and well-adjusted to our new circumstances. In private the anguish over the missing self is less restrained. There are no easy solutions to such an abstract problem. The polarisation between the past and the present and the attempt to reconcile and align them in a linear continuum of the development of one's identity can be the stirrings of creativity. The need for articulation becomes a compulsion and it can be

there are no guarantees that we will not experience doubt, regret, sadness and even anguish. "Man must suffer to be wise," laments the chorus in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. Regardless of whatever wisdom we gather during the ordeal of resettlement, there will remain the uncertainty of whether it was the right decision to uproot oneself from one's indigenous culture. But that is the hefty payment for the richness of experiences to be gained from living simultaneously in two places.

Adib Khan is a Bangladesh-born writer based in Australia, where he did his MA in English Literature and PhD in Creative Writing from Monash University. He has published five novels and won several awards, including the Christina Stead Prize for Fiction and the Commonwealth Writers' Prize for Best First Book. He has also published numerous essays on creativity and the challenges of diasporic living.



for fiction. You see, I have discovered the powers of a sorcerer, a wizard . . . a magus, a storyteller. But alas! If the truth were known I am more of a trickster. Hocus Pocus! And I am away! There it is—my Camelot, Shangri-la, Utopia . . . Call it what you will, but it is a landscape I can call my own. It is a sanctuary, an immutable retreat where I wander and create, a haven barricaded against the afflictions of Time. It's a place where past and present merge into a composite of the occidental and the oriental, somewhere I can feel no tension or disharmony between my divided self. Here I can peel back the years, rediscover and refurbish my past, locate my cultural coordinates and reassure myself about who I am now and where I began. Among the rooms there is a chamber of mirrors where I can encounter multiple reflections of myself. "I am a part of all that I have met," claimed Tennyson's Ulysses and the line reverberates within me, reinforcing the plurality of my identity. Here I am not confused and nor do I feel any sense of loss because I can instantly reclaim the past without leaving the present.

Well, where is it? I hear you frame the unasked question with growing impatience.

Why do you want to know?
How can you get there?

Such persistence should be rewarded, I suppose. All right, I will give you directions. It's really quite simple. Dive into the imagination. Take what is there. Then . . . 'Second to the right and straight on till morning.' What's that? Why am I being so impossibly vague? But that is what Peter Pan said to Wendy about the way to Neverland . . . Oh, you'll never find it. That's the point! It's my private place which I guard with the utmost jealousy, a creation of memory and imagination. It is shrouded in a permanent fog and I am its custodian with the key to its entrance.

TEN 1
England vs New Zealand
Second Test (Day 3)
Live from 4:00 pm
SONY SIX & TEN 2
EURO 2020
Wales vs Switzerland
Live from 7:00 pm

Denmark vs Finland
Live from 10:00 pm
Belgium vs Russia
Live from 1:00 am (Sunday)
STAR SPORTS SELECT 1 & STAR SPORTS 1
FRENCH OPEN WOMEN'S FINAL

Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova vs Barbora Krejčíková
Live from 7:00 pm
T SPORTS
PAKISTAN SUPER LEAGUE
Quetta Gladiators vs Peshawar Zalmi
Live from 10:00 pm



(L-R) Shakib Al Hasan kicks at the stumps and then uproots them before banging them on the ground in a fit of rage during Mohammedan's Dhaka Premier League fixture against Abahani at the Sher-e-Bangla Stadium in Mirpur yesterday. The all-rounder then gets into a verbal spat with Abahani coach Khaled Mahmud, who is restrained by the players of the two teams. PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Shakib takes frustration to the extreme

MAZHAR UDDIN



The historic battle between archrivals Abahani and Mohammedan SC may have faded over the years but Shakib Al Hasan certainly felt the heat of the rivalry and took it to new heights, or depths based on how you look at it, during a Dhaka Premier League T20 encounter yesterday.

What Shakib did at the home of cricket in Mirpur yesterday has hardly ever been seen on a cricket field in any top-level game and it coming from an experienced player like him was even more shocking.

Shakib, who is captain of Mohammedan, lost his temper not once, but twice. First, he kicked the stumps over when umpire Imran

Parvez refused a leg-before appeal against Abahani skipper Mushfiqur Rahim in the fifth over. In the very next over, Shakib uprooted the stumps with his hands while fuming at the umpire after the umpire called for the covers to be brought out due to rain before the final ball of the sixth over.

The players went off after rain halted proceedings with Abahani at 31 for three in 5.5 overs in case of 146 runs, but Shakib escalated things once again by making indecent gesture towards the Abahani dressing room.

That caused Abahani coach and Bangladesh Cricket Board director Khaled Mahmud to become enraged and engage in a war of words before Mohammedan batsman Shamsur Rahman pacified Mahmud and separated him from the situation.

However, after the incident, it was learned that the star cricketer went to the Abahani dressing room and offered apologies.

Although there was no immediate reaction from match officials, the chairman of the Committee of Dhaka Metropolitan informed that such incidents happen on the cricket field.

"A lot of things happen on the cricket field. As it was a Mohammedan-Abahani encounter, we saw a lot of excitement on the field and we saw an incident involving Shakib Al Hasan. You have also witnessed what happened as it was telecast live on Facebook and YouTube and it is unfortunate. We know that the players might get heated in some situations but we always feel the players should keep their emotions under control," CCDM

chairman Kazi Inam Ahmed said. "However, like any international game, we have a designated department. The match referee and the umpires are expected to give a report by tonight (Friday night). On that basis we will act accordingly."

According to former Bangladesh captain and international match referee Raqibul Hasan, such offenses can lead to suspensions and financial penalties, or both.

"If such incident took place on a cricket field, it is a breach of minimum level-2 offence. In such cases, the match referee would take the on-field umpire's report and on that basis a decision can be taken," said Raqibul.

Interestingly, Shakib was involved in the breach of the bio-secure bubble during a Mohammedan practice session just

two days back.

The BCB and CCDM held a hearing with a strange outcome. Despite the affirmation of a breach and Mohammedan officials admitting to being aware of it, there were no fines or suspensions meted out.

According to many, Shakib's outburst yesterday was related to biased umpiring decisions, questions about which have been raised in domestic cricket over the years.

Many also indicated that the reason for the umpire to call off the play just a ball before the sixth over was to favor Abahani in the calculation of the D/L method considering the result of the game. But Mohammedan were already ahead in terms of the D/L method after the fifth over. They eventually won the game by 31 runs.

Shakib's Facebook apology

Dear fans and followers, I am extremely sorry for losing my temper and ruining the match for everyone and especially those who are watching from home. An experienced player like me should not have reacted that way but sometimes against all odds it happens unfortunately. I apologise to the teams, management, tournament officials and organizing committee for this human error. Hopefully, I won't be repeating this again in the future. Thanks and love you all.

Ngidi gives South Africa the edge

REUTERS

Seamer Lungi Ngidi showed all his guile to take five wickets for 19 runs as South Africa skittled West Indies for 97 and seized the initiative on the first day in Saint Lucia on Thursday.

After winning the toss, the home side posted their lowest test total against South Africa, who reached the close on 128 for four in reply, a lead of 31 runs on a wicket that is proving difficult to score on.



Rassie van der Dussen (34 not out) and Quinton de Kock (4 not out) will resume on the second day, seeking to steady what has been a brittle top six in recent times.

West Indies' firebrand teenage fast bowler Jayden Seales - who has only played one previous first-class match - accounted for fellow debutant Keegan Petersen (19) in South Africa's innings.

The impressive Seales (3-34) also removed opener Aiden Markram (60), and another debutant Kyle Verreynne (6), all caught behind the wicket, validating his selection in place of the injured Shannon Gabriel.

South Africa's tight lines and nagging length with the ball starved the West Indies of scoring shots as Ngidi and fellow seamer Anrich Nortje (4-35) claimed nine of the wickets to fall.

Nortje also cracked the helmet of batsman Nkrumah Bonner, who went on to make 10 from 32 balls but was later diagnosed with concussion.

He has been replaced in the game by Kieran Powell, who will bat in West Indies' second innings.



Players of Belgium, the top-ranked team in the world, pose for a photograph during training on Thursday as they start their Euro 2020 campaign against Russia in one of three matches tonight. (R) Wales captain Gareth Bale trains ahead of their game against Switzerland.



PHOTO: TWITTER/REUTERS

The pandemic that cancelled the Copa America in 1918

AFP, Sao Paulo



"Rio is a giant hospital," screamed one headline. "No doctors, no medicine," said another.

"Government criminally negligent," decried a third.

With such damning words splashed in giant print across the front pages, Brazil decided it had little choice but to postpone the Copa America football tournament.

No, not this year's highly controversial, Covid-19-battered event -- the 1918 edition, which was called off over the Spanish flu.

With the clock ticking down to the 1918 "South American National Teams' Championships," as the world's oldest-running international football tournament was then known, the planet was in the midst of a pandemic nightmare eerily similar to today's.

A dangerous virus was wreaking havoc around the globe on its way to killing an estimated 50 million people in two years.

The pandemic did not spare Brazil, which was due to host the tournament.

With a month to go, the now-extinct Rio de Janeiro newspaper Gazeta de Noticias ran the headlines above.

Except for the yellowed paper they are printed on, they could easily be mistaken for articles from the Brazil of 2021, where Covid-19 has claimed 480,000 lives, and far-right President Jair



Brazil went on to win the 1919 Copa America title, originally scheduled for 1918, at home.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Bolsonaro stands accused of driving the death toll higher with his policies.

Just days ago, the current Copa America, which opens Sunday, looked set to suffer the same fate as the tournament's third edition 103 years ago.

Already postponed by 12 months because of the pandemic, its fate looked dire when original co-hosts Colombia and Argentina fell through because of violent anti-government protests in the former and a Covid-19 surge in the latter.

But Brazil's Supreme Court ruled Thursday the tournament could go ahead.

The Brazil of 1918 was already starting its love affair with football. Just four teams -- instead of the 10 today -- were slated to take part

home, particularly at night, and many establishments shut their doors.

Football, however, remained open for business well into the health crisis.

Newspapers of the era report footballers playing sick. Others died of the disease, including British striker Archibald "Archie" French, of Fluminense, and Joao Cantuaria, star of Sao Cristovao.

"Football only stopped when the death toll really hit a critical level," history professor Joao Malaia of Santa Maria Federal University told AFP.

Rio recorded its first death in the pandemic one month before the tournament was due to begin.

Two weeks from kickoff, the Brazilian Sporting Confederation asked for it to be postponed.

From October to December that year, an estimated 65 percent of Brazil's 30 million people were infected with the virus.

Rio, then Brazil's capital, registered 14,348 deaths. Sao Paulo, the economic capital, registered 2,000.

"Many fell dead on the street, their faces pressed against the gutter. And that's where they stayed," wrote Nelson Rodrigues, one of Brazil's greatest authors and football columnists, in 1971.

The organisers ultimately postponed the tournament until May 1919, when the pandemic was starting to dissipate.

Led by striker Arthur Friedenreich, Brazil won the first of its nine Copa America titles.

Title beckons for late bloomers

AFP, Paris



Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova and Barbora Krejčíková, two of the most unlikely Grand Slam finalists of the modern era, meet in Saturday's French Open title match at the conclusion of a shock-heavy tournament.

World number 32 Pavlyuchenkova has reached this stage for the first time at the 52nd attempt, 10 years after making a first Slam quarter-final in Paris.

Krejčíková, ranked one place lower, has long been labelled a doubles specialist and this is just her fifth appearance in a main draw singles at the Slams, having never previously got beyond the last 16.

However, both women have capitalised on a draw where the top seeds fell and just kept falling.

"The 14-year-old me would tell me 'What took you so long?'," said 29-year-old Pavlyuchenkova who played her first Slam event in 2007.

"It's been a long road. I had my own long special road. Everybody has different ways. I'm happy I'm in the final."

Pavlyuchenkova is bidding to become the fourth Russian champion at Roland Garros after Anastasia Myskina (2004), Svetlana Kuznetsova (2009) and Maria Sharapova (2012 and 2014).

Always considered to possess the weapons to win a major -- she has 37 career wins over top 10 players -- Pavlyuchenkova was often written off as "too nice" to succeed when it mattered most.

At the French Open in 2011, she was a set and 4-1 up on defending champion Francesca Schiavone but faltered and a semi-final place slipped away.

"I'm nice to people but I'm not nice at all," she said. "I mean, obviously I'm respectful but when I'm on the court, I'm doing my job and I fight, and I want to kill my opponent every time I play."

That steely attitude has served her well in Paris this year where she defeated third seed Aryna Sabalenka, former number one Victoria Azarenka as well as doubles partner Elena Rybakina, all in three sets.

Krejčíková is bidding to become just the second Czech women's champion in Paris, 40 years after Hana Mandlikova triumphed.

The 25-year-old is already a Grand Slam champion, having captured the women's doubles with Katerina Siniakova at Roland Garros and Wimbledon in 2018.

Her late blossoming as a singles specialist, however, means she has yet to play in the main draw at both the All England Club and US Open.



PHOTO: REUTERS/TWITTER

First-time finalists Anastasia Pavlyuchenkova (R) and Barbora Krejčíková (inset) will face off in the final of the French Open women's singles today.

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River erosion may eat up 28sq km area

Forecasts a govt research organisation; 13 districts likely to be affected

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Rivers are likely to erode about 28 square kilometres of land this year, which is more than the land eroded last year, according to a research body of the water resources ministry.

The Jamuna, the Ganges and the Padma will aggressively erode their banks in at least 13 districts, said a report from the Center for Environmental and Geographic Information Services (CEGIS).

At least 24 sq km of bank disappeared into the rivers in 2020.

The latest report titled Riverbank Erosion Prediction for 2021 said Madaripur might be the worst-hit district where 9.54 sq km of land will be gone in the coming months.

The other particularly vulnerable districts are Kurigram, Jamalpur, Gaibandha, Bogura, Sirajganj, Tangail, Manikganj, Pabna, Kushtia, Rajbari, Rajshahi, and Faridpur.

In Tangail, 4.94 sq km of land will be eroded. In Gaibandha and Rajbari, the researchers predict that people will lose 2.91 sq km and 2.88 sq km of land respectively.

Riverbank erosion is one of the major natural disasters in Bangladesh as it makes thousands of people homeless and landless every year.

The damages done to the banks by the frequent and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



In her flooded home in Narayanganj city's Adarshanagar area, a woman cooks sitting on a bench while the stove is placed on a taller bench. Due to poor drainage, only a few days of rain makes residents suffer a full-on flood. The water is about a metre deep in some parts of the neighbourhood. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Combined entry test for public univs postponed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Twenty general and science and technology universities have postponed holding of uniform admission tests due to Covid-19.

The authorities of the universities made the decision in a virtual meeting yesterday afternoon.

After the meeting, vice-chancellors of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology Prof Farid Uddin Ahmed and Barisal University Prof Sadequ Arefin confirmed the postponement of the admission tests, which were scheduled for June 19, 26 and July 3.

"We will announce the fresh dates for the admission tests observing the Covid-19 situation," said Prof Farid Uddin.

He said primary application process of 20 general, science and technical universities will continue till 11:59pm on June 25.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Trafficked by husband into India for Tk 40k

20-yr-old survivor sues nine after escape from gang in Chennai

MUNTAKIM SAAD

Two years ago, when she was 18, Tania (not her real name) married Jahidul Islam Rony, 27, a conductor of a city bus.

Their days were passing well until she discovered that her husband was a drug addict and irregular in his job.

Following ups and downs in their conjugal life, Rony one day told Tania that he was trying to manage a job for her in India with a monthly salary of Tk 30,000. He also said the job would change her luck and she believed it.

Rony then took Tania to a "madam", a trafficker, in the capital's Hatirjheel area who tricked her into going to India, promising her a job at an old age home in Chennai. Reaching there, Tania discovered that her husband had sold her to a sex trafficking racket for Tk 40,000.

Luckily, the 20-year-old recently escaped from Chennai, returned to Dhaka after four months, and filed a case against nine people, including her husband, with

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

ROAD TO FREEDOM THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

Bangladesh issue will linger: Indira Gandhi

JUNE 12, 1971

SHAMSUDDOZZA SAJEN

US URGES INDIANS AND PAKISTANIS TO USE RESTRAINT

The United States appealed today to India and Pakistan to exercise restraint and urged the Pakistanis to restore normalcy in East Pakistan through "peaceful political accommodation".

It was the first public statement by the United States on the situation in the subcontinent since the Pakistani army on March 25 began quelling the Bangladesh movement for autonomy and later for independence.

The statement reflected the increasing concern that hostilities might erupt between India and Pakistan if the massive movement of Bangladeshi refugees into India was not halted.

The latest figures available to the state department indicated that more than five million refugees had crossed the borders into India. This represented more than seven percent of East Pakistan's population. Refugees were reported still entering India at a rate of more than 100,000 a day.

A cholera epidemic was spreading among the refugees, and the state department announced today that three United States Air Force planes were delivering a million doses of anticholera vaccine to India. The planes are to participate in a refugee airlift.

INDIRA GANDHI'S PRESS CONFERENCE

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Khaleda has no post-Covid complications

Says Fakhru

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia currently does not have any post-Covid complications, but she is still at risk because of her old age, the party said yesterday.

"The latest statement from the medical board formed to treat madam [Khaleda] shows that she is doing much better if we go by the post-Covid parameters," BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir told a press conference at Khaleda's Gulshan office.

"There are, however, some issues which are worrying. One is that her heart and kidney problems are acute. The medical board at Evercare Hospital is concerned about them."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

New 'weird' planet with 'unknown' atmosphere found



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A 'weird' planet recently discovered has excited scientists in their hunt for extraterrestrial life.

Researchers from Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory and the University of New Mexico discovered exoplanet TOI-1231 b orbiting an M dwarf star - otherwise known as a red dwarf.

Scientists were able to characterise that star, and measure both the radius and the mass of TOI-1231 b. This then gave them the necessary data to calculate density, and hypothesise what the atmosphere is made of.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

12 Rohingyas detained in Noakhali

They fled Bhasan Char settlement

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

Police yesterday detained 12 Rohingyas in Noakhali's Comaniganj upazila for fleeing a refugee camp at Bhasan Char in the district's Hatiya upazila.

According to the law enforcers, Abdul Halim, a local of Comaniganj upazila's Char Elahi Dakkhin Ghat, first traced the Rohingyas around 10:00am.

He then held the Rohingyas with the help of other locals.

On information, police went to the spot and took the Rohingyas into custody.

During primary quizzing, the Rohingyas said they fled the refugee camp with the help of some brokers and were heading towards Cox's Bazar through a boat.

Instead of going to Cox's Bazar, the brokers anchored the boat at Char

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Delta variant 60pc more transmissible

Says UK govt

AFP, London

The British government yesterday said that the new Delta coronavirus variant is 60 percent more transmissible in households than the variant that forced the UK to lock down in January.

The Delta variant, which first emerged in India, has caused a rise in cases in Britain, prompting questions about whether social distancing restrictions will be lifted as planned from June 21.

New research from Public Health England "suggests that the Delta variant is associated with an approximately 60

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



PRAYER TIMING JUNE 12

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-05 12-45 5-00 6-50 8-15
JAMAAT 4-40 1-15 5-15 6-55 8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Climate activists hold up placards on either side of an inflated Pikachu doll, a character of popular Japanese media franchise "Pokemon", in front of the National Press Club yesterday. With the G-7 summit starting yesterday, 20 young climate activists raised various demands in a joint venture between Bangladesh Foreign Debt Working Group and Youthnet for Climate Justice.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

POST-COUP MYANMAR Myanmar violence escalating, creating 'rights catastrophe'

Says UN rights chief

AFP, Geneva

The UN rights chief yesterday said that violence was escalating across Myanmar, warning that the country had plunged into a "human rights catastrophe" since the February 1 coup.

Pointing to reported military build-up in several regions of the country, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet called for a halt to the already spiralling violence to avert even greater loss of life and a deepening humanitarian emergency.

"In just over four months, Myanmar has gone from being a fragile democracy to a human rights catastrophe," she said in a statement, adding that the military leadership was "singularly responsible" for the crisis.

The country has been in turmoil since the generals ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi on February 1.

The UN rights office yesterday pointed to credible reports showing that at least 860 civilians had been killed in a brutal crackdown by security forces on near-daily protests against the coup.

Fighting has flared in several communities -- especially in townships that have seen a high death toll at the hands of police -- and some locals have formed "defence forces".

Bachelet pointed to intensifying violence in many parts of Myanmar, including Kayah State, Chin State and Kachin State, "with the violence particularly intense in areas with significant ethnic and religious minority groups".

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2