



The Daily Star

SECOND EDITION

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Your Right to Know

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"Those police personnel who got involved in crimes will be punished."

HOME MINISTER
ASADUZZAMAN KHAN KAMAL



"President (Joe) Biden's decisions have us hurtling toward an even worse sequel to the humiliating fall of Saigon in 1975"

-- TOP REPUBLICAN SENATOR MITCH MCCONNELL ON US'S
AFGHANISTAN STRATEGY



"We oppose political tracing... and abandoning the joint report... We support scientific tracing."

CHINA'S VICE FM MA ZHAOXU ON FURTHER WHO COVID ORIGINS PROBE



Wonder nasal vaccine knocking on the door

Swedish drug awaits human trial in Bangladesh; successful test may see it available for use at start of next year

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

One sniff, and you're vaccinated against Covid-19! Almost 100 percent protected against almost all variants.

It could be just that simple. No hassle for registration, hospital visit, cold chain storage or inoculation by medical staff. Just vaccinate yourself, at your convenience.

And that's the promise an under-trial powdered vaccine is showing in which Bangladesh can be a part. A potential game-changing vaccine, as dubbed by Swedish researchers, now awaits human trial -- the third and final phase of vaccine research and development before approval for use -- which can be conducted right here in Bangladesh from next month.

If the government weighs in to ensure a smooth research and approval process, the nasal vaccine could be available for use by the start of next year.

And, if the trials get a clean chit, Bangladesh is free to buy the vaccine at production cost or even produce it on its

own for being a party to the development of the vaccine, planned to be named after the Father of the Nation -- Bangabandhu ISR.

Swedish research organisation Holding AB (ISR) is closing in on conducting human trial of its invented vaccine in Bangladesh, thanks to intense engagement of some Bangladesh-born doctors and scientists living in Sweden, the USA and Canada.

To conduct the human trial, the ISR signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Bangladesh Clinical Trials Ltd as its Contract Research Organisation (CRO) earlier this month.

Renowned physicians Prof ABM Abdullah and Prof Ahmedul Kabir are the principal investigators of the CRO, which plans to conduct the trial at Mugda Medical College Hospital in the capital.

They are planning to carry out the Phase-I trial on 180 healthy persons.

Contacted, Prof Abdullah said that after taking the first sniff, one has to get the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



After failing to get their mother admitted to six different hospitals in the capital, the desperate daughter cries for help in front of Dhaka Medical College Hospital while her brother, inset, is being tackled by police after he engaged in a fight with the hospital employees. Eventually, the family from Gazaria, Munshiganj, was able to get her admitted to the dedicated Covid treatment facility of the hospital yesterday morning.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

FUNDS FOR VACCINE PURCHASE Disbursement remains slow

Unavailability of jabs a challenge

REJAUL KARIM BYRON

The unavailability of doses is once again posing as the sole reason behind the slow disbursement of the Tk 14,200 crore fund allocated for Covid-19 vaccine procurement in the budget for the current fiscal year.

In the first two months of the fiscal year, about Tk 500 crore has been released for procuring vaccine shots from Chinese drugmaker Sinopharm, according to finance ministry officials.

In the last fiscal year, the government had set aside Tk 10,000 crore for vaccine procurement, which was later revised down to Tk 6,377 crore.

Even then, it could disburse only Tk 1,553 crore, of which Tk 1,272 crore went towards advance payment for 30 million doses of the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine from the Serum Institute of India and the remaining sum to Sinopharm.

With these amounts, the finance ministry has so far disbursed about Tk 2,100 crore in total for procuring vaccines since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic in March last year.

"We are releasing money as soon as we get demand from the health ministry. The money is not an issue but getting hold of vaccines is," said a top official of the finance ministry requesting anonymity.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Kandahar falls to Taliban

Insurgents also take provincial capital 50km south of Kabul, other key cities; UN warns of humanitarian catastrophe

AGENCIES

The Taliban seized more major cities yesterday as they raced to take full control of Afghanistan and inched closer to Kabul, with the United States and Britain deploying thousands of troops to evacuate their citizens from the capital.

The evacuation orders came as the Taliban took control of Kandahar -- the nation's second-biggest city -- in the insurgency's heartland, leaving only Kabul and pockets of other territories in government hands.

The Taliban also captured the capital of Logar province, just 50kms (30 miles) from Kabul, with a local lawmaker saying the insurgents were in complete control of Pul-e-Alam city.

Earlier yesterday, officials and residents in Kandahar told AFP that government forces had withdrawn en masse to a military

facility outside the southern city.

"Kandahar is completely conquered. The Mujahideen reached Martyrs' Square," a Taliban spokesman tweeted, referring to a city landmark.

Hours later, the Taliban said they had also taken control of Lashkar Gah, the capital of neighbouring Helmand province.

A security source confirmed the fall of the city, telling AFP that the Afghan military and government officials had evacuated Lashkar Gah after striking a local ceasefire deal with the militants.

The Taliban also captured the town of Qala-e-Naw in the northwest, security officers said. Firuz Koh, capital of central Ghor province, was handed over without a fight, officials told Reuters.

The loss of Kandahar will be a heavy blow to the government. It is the heartland of the Taliban, ethnic Pashtun fighters who

MORE ON PAGE 5

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"The results of the Swedish vaccine's trial on mice are very promising as those show efficacy rate close to 100 percent, and there is no side effect of the vaccine."

PROF DR ABM ABDULLAH
RENOWNED PHYSICIAN



PROF DR AHMEDUL KABIR
SECRETARY GENERAL,
BANGLADESH SOCIETY OF
MEDICINE

"The biggest benefit of the trial is that Bangladesh will be able to purchase the vaccine at production cost. Even the government can produce it under its own arrangement if it wants."

The vaccine can withstand temperature of up to 40 degrees Celsius

Trial at Mugda Medical College Hospital in Dhaka

Phase-I trial to be conducted on 180 healthy persons

Infection rate drops to 21pc

Less than 200 deaths first time since July 24

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The daily infection rate of Covid-19 has been dropping consistently over the last couple of weeks.

The rate began to rise from June and it reached 21 percent on June 25. From there, it went up further and surged to 33 percent.

Yesterday, after 50 days, the infection rate dropped to 21 percent. The same day, the country witnessed the lowest death toll in three weeks.

At least 197 more deaths were recorded from Covid-19 in 24 hours ending at 8:00am yesterday, read a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

On July 24, the death toll was 195 and after that it remained over 200-mark every day until yesterday.

The number of Covid-19 deaths in the country now stands at 23,810 and the death rate is 1.69 percent.

At least 8,465 fresh infections were recorded

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



A group of boys playing football in the capital's Suhrawardy Udyan as it drizzled the whole morning yesterday. Such sights are quite common during monsoon in the villages and small towns, but less so in the city.

PHOTO:
PRABIR DAS

Ferry hits Padma bridge pillar again

BIWTA to relocate Banglabazar ghat to avoid further collision

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority is mulling over the relocation of the Banglabazar ferry terminal in Madaripur to another area as ferries continued to collide with the pillars of the under-construction Padma bridge.

A BIWTA committee was formed in this regard after the first such collision in July.

Yesterday, a Ro-Ro ferry named Kakoli hit a pillar on the route from the Banglabazar terminal to Munshiganj's Shimulia terminal.

This is the fourth time a pillar was hit by a ferry on the route in just one month.

Commodore Golam Sadeq, chairman of the BIWTA, yesterday told The Daily Star that they will ultimately have to shift the Banglabazar terminal to Shariatpur's Mazhighat area once the bridge comes into operation.

"But to make the shift, they have to develop land for vehicles in the new terminal and construct connecting roads and to do so, the state minister for shipping and other top officials visited the spot today [yesterday]."

Replying to a question, he said no final decision was taken to shift the terminal immediately.

On August 9, a Birshrestha Jahangiri ferry plying the route hit the same pillar.

Md Badal Hosen, an official of Shimulia ferry terminal, said the incident occurred due to strong winds and currents in the river.

He added that no passenger or vehicle was harmed and the ferry was taken to Shimulia terminal's workshop for repair work.

The frequent collisions prompted Obaidul Quader, road transport and bridges minister, and Khalid Mahmud

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

BANGLADESH UPDATE



8,465
New cases in 24hrs



14,05,333
Total cases



23,810
Deaths



12,73,522
Recoveries



GLOBAL UPDATE



4,352,955
Deaths



206,513,289
Total cases

STRONG CURRENT IN PADMA

500 vehicles stranded at Paturia ghat

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Manikganj

Around 500 vehicles, most of them goods-laden trucks, were waiting at the Paturia ferry terminal in Manikganj till yesterday evening to cross the Padma, as ferry movement was slowed down due to strong currents.

Vehicles have been queuing up for the last three days as the authorities concerned are allowing the vehicles carrying passengers and emergency goods to board ferries on a priority basis.

Although four ferries have been brought to the Paturia-Daulatdia route from the Shimulia-Banglabazar route to keep services smooth, the authorities were yet to normalise the situation.

Currently, 17 ferries are in operation on the Paturia-Daulatdia route and one is under repair, said Zillur Rahman, deputy general manager (Aricha regional office) of the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport

Corporation (BIWTC).

A ferry now takes 45 minutes instead of 30 to cross due to strong currents in the Padma, he said.

Moreover, the number of vehicles have increased on the route, as ferries are not allowed to carry heavy vehicles on the Shimulia-Banglabazar route, he said.

The authorities have banned the heavy vehicles on the Shimulia-Banglabazar route after ferries hit pillars of the Padma bridge four times in just a month.

"Mainly goods-laden trucks have to wait at the ferry terminals, as we are prioritising the passenger and emergency vehicles to cross," the official said.

The water level of the Jamuna at Aricha point in Shibaboy upazila has been increasing over the last few days and so has that of the Padma, which is causing strong currents in the river, according to the Manikganj Water Development Board.



Since the travel restrictions were lifted and transport services resumed, people have been arriving in the capital from across the country. The photo of this family going to their destination in Tejgaon after arriving from Barishal was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Disbursement remains slow

FROM PAGE 1

The government set a target of inoculating 80 percent of Bangladesh's population with two doses of vaccines in one and a half to two years.

To buy the vaccine shots and deliver the jabs to the people, it will need an estimated \$3.7 billion, a major portion of which will come from the loans from development partners.

"The price of the vaccine is fickle worldwide. According to our estimate last year, we would need a little over \$2 billion. But the scenario has changed this year," said another finance ministry official preferring to remain unnamed.

The official believes that the pace of disbursement would increase in the coming days as the government is purchasing vaccines from various sources.

"For example, we have to pay Sinopharm for the procurement of six crore doses soon," he said.

CURRENT STATUS OF VACCINES

Bangladesh has so far received 2.91 crore shots in total.

The government has purchased 1.5 crore doses of Sinopharm vaccines, of which it has so far received 70 lakh doses.

On Wednesday, the cabinet committee on purchase approved a proposal for procuring a further six crore doses of the Sinopharm shots. The doses are expected in November.

The country received more than 21 lakh doses of Sinopharm vaccine in

two consignments as gifts from China. Of the 21 lakh, 10 lakh shots arrived last night.

Besides, it received a consignment of 34 lakh doses of Sinopharm vaccine under the Covax facility, a global arrangement.

As far as the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine is concerned, the government has so far received 70 lakh out of 3 crore doses procured from Serum.

It received 33 lakh doses of the vaccines from India as gifts and 16.41 lakh doses under the Covax facility.

On the other hand, the government received 55 lakh doses of the Moderna and 1.06 lakh doses of Pfizer vaccines.

After starting in February, the country's mass vaccination programme came to a halt when Serum stopped delivering the doses in April. It resumed in the first week of July after the country got vaccines from various sources.

The country has so far inoculated 1.53 crore people, which is just over four percent of the population. And only 52.24 lakh of them got both the first and second shots.

The finance ministry officials said the government is going ahead with the plan of inoculating 15 crore shots by the end of this year.

"If everything goes as per the plan, we will get more vaccines. So, the pace of disbursement of funds will automatically go up," the official added.

Trudeau expected to call Canada snap elections Sunday

AFP, Ottawa

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is expected to pull the plug on his minority Liberal government and call snap elections on Sunday despite a nationwide uptick in Covid infections that is worrying voters.

Trudeau is to visit the governor general to ask her to dissolve parliament and announce voting will be held on September 20, according to public broadcaster CBC and other local media, citing unnamed sources.

He and opposition leaders have been

crisscrossing the country in recent weeks making election-style announcements as talk of a possible fall ballot has heated up.

In power for six years, Trudeau was reelected in 2019 but lost his majority in his second term amid scandals.

Despite rolling out massive pandemic aid, passing a federal budget and other key legislation with opposition backing over the past year, he has lamented that parliament in recent months has become dysfunctional, with a "level of obstructionism and toxicity in the House that is of real concern."

Wonder nasal vaccine knocking on the door

FROM PAGE 1

second one within three to four weeks like any other double-dose Covid-19 vaccine.

"The results of the Swedish vaccine's trial on mice are very promising as those show efficacy rate close to 100 percent, and there is no side effect of the vaccine."

"The prime minister knows everything about the vaccine. We have proposed naming it Bangabandhu ISR," he said.

Talking to this newspaper, Prof Kabir said they have already prepared the protocol and are likely to submit it to Bangladesh Medical Research Council (BMRC) in the last week of this month for ethical permission to hold trial in the country.

Prof Kabir, secretary general of Bangladesh Society of Medicine, said that if phase-I trial is successful, phase-II and III trial will also take place here. "The biggest benefit of the trial is that Bangladesh will be able to purchase the vaccine at production cost. Even the government can produce it under its own arrangement if it wants," he observed.

According to ISR scientists, the dry-powder vaccine uses manufactured Covid-19 virus proteins and can withstand temperature of up to 40 degrees Celsius.

They also said a major advantage of the vaccine in development is the conditions needed to store it compared to the currently available Covid vaccines approved by the World Health Organization.

"The game-changer is that you could distribute the [powder] vaccine extremely easily without the cold chain, and it can be administered without the need for healthcare providers," said a BBC report on July

26 quoting ISR founder, Ola Winquist, a professor of immunology at the Karolinska Institute, one of Sweden's leading medical universities.

In a press release on the ISR website, Ola Winquist, the CEO of ISR, said, "We are very pleased to be working with experts from Bangladesh to conduct a Phase I clinical study with our vaccine formulations designed for optimal immune response at the entry point of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, the respiratory tract."

Prof Kabir told this newspaper that if they get permission for clinical trial, a local drug-maker which struck a deal with the ISR will supply the vaccine.

The ISR signed a MoU with UniMed UniHealth Pharmaceuticals Ltd on July 6 for manufacture and distribution of its Covid-19 vaccine in Bangladesh.

"The purpose of MoU is to agree on a long-term cooperation agreement with a licensing agreement that gives UniMed an exclusive right to manufacture and distribute ISR's vaccine against the SARS-CoV-2 virus in Bangladesh," said an ISR statement on its website.

UniMed will manufacture 100 million units per year with an aim to produce 300 million units or more annually within five years, it mentioned.

Prof Kabir said if everything goes smoothly and the BMRC gives quick approval, the phase-I trial will be completed by November. And analysing the data, the third phase trial can be started by December.

"We hope to produce vaccine here from January next year," said an optimistic Kabir.

INITIATION OF THE PROCESS

It all started when Bangladesh-born Swedish economist Shahjahan Sayeed, who is acquainted with Ola Winquist,

came to know about the invention of the dry-powder vaccine.

Shahjahan then communicated the matter to Arifur Rahman, a Bangladesh-born doctor living in Canada, to explore the possibility of a human trial of the vaccine in Bangladesh.

Arifur then asked four Bangladesh-born US citizens -- cardiologists Prof Choudhury Hafiz Ahsan and Prof Masudul Hassan, nephrologist Prof Ziauddin Ahmed Sadek and former senior UN official Mahmud Ush Sams Choudhury to contact doctors in Bangladesh for initiating trial here.

Prof Abdullah and Prof Kabir then prepared a protocol for the trial with Arifur playing the lead role and coordinating the whole thing from Sweden.

Talking to this newspaper, Arifur said they came forward as Bangladesh is suffering badly due to Covid.

"Now everything is almost ready and we are expecting to get within 15 days a toxicology report on whether the vaccine has any adverse effects. Once we get the report from a German organisation, we will send it to the CRO so that it can apply to the Bangladesh authorities for ethical permission for the trial."

"We hope the trial will be a success and Bangladesh will get the chance to become a leader in Covid vaccine production..."

Prof Masudul said, "If everything goes as planned, we will consider it a great service to the nation."

"Patriotism is the lone driving force behind our efforts. There is nothing else. We wanted to do something for the country in this moment of crisis. Earlier, we had managed ventilators and vaccines from the USA and sent those to Bangladesh."

UN Syria envoy alarmed by hostilities

AFP, Geneva

The UN special envoy for Syria on Thursday voiced his growing concern at increased hostilities in the south of the country and warned of the alarming shortages faced by civilians.

Norwegian diplomat Geir Pedersen reiterated his call for an immediate end to the violence and urged all parties to uphold the principle of protecting civilians.

"Increased hostilities, which have included heavy shelling and intensified ground clashes, have resulted in civilian casualties, as well as damage to civilian infrastructures," his office said in a statement.

"Thousands of civilians have been forced to flee Daraa al-Balad. Civilians are suffering with acute shortages of fuel, cooking gas, water, and bread. Medical assistance is in short supply to treat the injured."

"The situation is alarming."

At Thursday's virtual meeting of the International Syria Support Group's Humanitarian Task Force, Pedersen stressed that immediate, safe and unimpeded humanitarian access must be granted to all affected areas and communities, and that the near siege-like situation must end.

"There is the potential for increased confrontations and further deterioration unless there is an immediate calm and a political way forward," Pedersen's office said.

Kandahar falls to Taliban

FROM PAGE 1

emerged in 1994 amid the chaos of civil war to sweep through most of the rest of the country over the next two years.

The defeats have fuelled concern that the US-backed government could fall to the insurgents within weeks as international forces complete their withdrawal after 20 years of war.

US intelligence assessments concluded this week that the Taliban could isolate Kabul within 30 days and take it over in 90.

"The situation has all the hallmarks of a humanitarian catastrophe," the UN World Food Programme's Thomson Phiri told a briefing, adding the agency was concerned about a "larger tide of hunger".

The fighting has also raised fears of a refugee crisis and a rollback of gains in human rights. Some 400,000 civilians have been forced from their homes since the beginning of the year, 250,000 of them since May, a UN official said.

Under the Taliban's 1996-2001 rule, women could not work, girls were not allowed to attend school and women had to cover their face and be accompanied by a male relative if they wanted to venture out of their homes. In early July, Taliban fighters ordered nine women to stop working in a bank.

Of Afghanistan's major cities, following the eight-day blitz by Taliban, the government still holds Mazar-i-Sharif in the north and Jalalabad, near the Pakistani border in the east, in addition to Kabul.

The first wave of the offensive was launched in early May after the United States and its allies all but withdrew their forces from Afghanistan, with

President Joe Biden determined to end two decades of war by September 11.

Biden insists he does not regret his decision, but the speed and ease of the Taliban's urban victories in recent days has been a surprise and forced new calculations.

Washington and London announced plans late Thursday to pull out their embassy staff and citizens from the capital.

"We are further reducing our civilian footprint in Kabul in light of the evolving security situation," US State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters, while noting the embassy would remain open.

"This is not abandonment. This is not an evacuation. This is not the wholesale withdrawal."

The Pentagon said 3,000 US troops would be deployed to Kabul within the next 24 to 48 hours, underscoring they would not be used to launch attacks against the Taliban.

Many embassies were asking staff to destroy or remove classified documents as part of evacuation plans, a Western official told Reuters.

Nato was also set to hold an urgent meeting later yesterday about the deteriorating situation, diplomatic and official sources told AFP.

After months of taking what were considered less strategically important rural areas, the Taliban since early June zeroed in on the cities.

The insurgents have taken over more than a dozen provincial capitals in the past week.

And in Herat yesterday, a day after its fall, the Taliban said they had captured the city's long-time strongman Ismail Khan, who helped lead the defence of

NORTHERN INDIA

2,000 people evacuated after landslide

AFP, Shimla

At least 2,000 people were evacuated yesterday after a massive landslide in India's ecologically fragile Himalayan north blocked a major river, officials said.

The people were evacuated from 13 villages in the Lahaul area of Himachal Pradesh state as a "preventative measure" in case of flash floods, a senior district official told AFP.

Ferry hits Padma

FROM PAGE 1

Chowdhury, state minister for shipping, to visit the Padma bridge yesterday.

Quader, while visiting the Mawa end of the bridge, told reporters that with this incident, this is the fourth time a ferry hit a pillar in one month.

"It will be a mistake if we take it lightly or treat it as an incapacity of the ferry master. We need to find out if there is any conspiracy behind it. I will request the Bangladesh Army [who is looking over the bridge's construction project] to look into the matter in depth."

He said they would sit together to discuss the frequent hits.

While visiting the Shimulia end of the bridge, Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury said there was indifference to abiding by instructions necessary to avoid hitting pillars.

"The incidents are being investigated. Weakness and irresponsibility are also being examined. Action will be taken against those who acted irresponsibly."

The army, in a meeting with other stakeholders in Shariatpur's Jajira cantonment yesterday, said they decided to put rubber tyres around the pillars to stave off damages from future collisions.

Syed Md Tajul Islam, chairman of Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation, who took part in the meeting, confirmed the decision to The Daily Star.

"Measures will soon be taken to implement the decision," he said, adding that CCTVs will be set up on each pillar.

The meeting also decided to remain alert and ensure that overloaded ferries aren't being operated on the route as heavy load may cause the ferry to lose control, leading to more such accidents.

A few new ferries will also be brought to modernise the fleet, he added.

The Shimulia-Banglabazar ferry route is considered the gateway to 21 southern districts.

Infection

FROM PAGE 1

during the period, taking the number of people infected to 14,05,333, added the release.

The current positivity rate is 20.83 percent, while the overall positivity rate stands at 16.85 percent.

Some 40,641 samples were tested across the country during the period. At least 11,457 Covid-19 patients recovered at that time.

Around 83,42,190 people have so far recovered and the recovery rate is 90.62 percent.

Among the 197 deceased, 108 were men and 89 women.

Of them, one was aged between 0 and 10; one within 11-20; seven were aged between 21 and 30; three between 31 and 40; 17 between 41 and 50; 43 between 51 and 60; 62 between 61 and 70; 41 within 71-80; 18 between 81 and 90; three within 91-100; and one was above 100 years old, added the release.

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the provincial capital along with his militia fighters.

The warlord's spokesman later confirmed Khan had been allowed to return to his residence following negotiations with the insurgents.

On Thursday, the interior ministry also confirmed the fall of Ghazni, opening a corridor along the major highway to Kabul from the Taliban heartlands in the south.

As the rout unravelled, three days of meetings between key international players on Afghanistan ended in Qatar without significant progress Thursday.

In a joint statement, the international community, including the United States, Pakistan, the European Union, and China, said they would not recognise any government in Afghanistan "imposed through the use of military force."

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke to Afghan President Ashraf Ghani on Thursday and told him the United States remained "invested" in Afghanistan's security.

But at home, criticism of Biden's policy has been mounting.

The Republican leader in the US Senate, Mitch McConnell, said the exit strategy was sending the United States "hurtling toward an even worse sequel to the humiliating fall of Saigon in 1975", and urged Biden to commit to providing more support to Afghan forces.

British Defence Secretary Ben Wallace said Afghanistan was spiralling into a failed state and civil war in which groups such as al Qaeda would thrive and likely pose a threat to the West again.

TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Purple-rumped Sunbird, Dhaka.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

Watching the Sunbirds

Like a high-wire acrobat the tiny bird tiptoes forward on the thin horizontal hibiscus branch, step by step. The branch swings up and down with the bird's weight but the grip of its claws remains firm. As it approaches the flower terminating the branch, its patience runs out. Abandoning the circus act, it jumps up, hovers for a split second in the air, propels itself forward and lands on the flower's base. Opening its beak, it extends its needle-like tubular tongue and inserts it into the flower's base.

It takes two or three seconds to extract the nectar. Then it lifts its head, searches, and moves on to the next flower.

After a few months, I am on the rooftop again watching sunbirds. A quarter of our eleventh floor roof is covered with grass around which grow hibiscus, rongon and other flowering plants. The sunbirds come to drink the nectar of the flowers.

Bangladesh has six species of sunbird. Two species show up on this rooftop: Purple Sunbird and Purple-rumped Sunbird. The former is more frequent and easier to approach. The latter is an uncommon arrival, taking flight whenever it sees my camera.

Sometimes the sunbird arrives as if thrown like a basketball from the floor below, a pendulous movement lobbing it in a high arc before it drops like a stone onto its target plant. At other times it arrives in-your-face like an approaching airplane, flying in straight from a neighbouring rooftop. And then it flits from plant to plant, flower to flower, sipping nectar, before taking off just as abruptly.

Not all of the rooftop sunbirds are equally attractive. The most beautiful

is the male Purple-rumped Sunbird, with a blue head, red and purple neck, yellow breast, and a patch of purple on its tail. The male Purple Sunbird is photogenic only part of the year when iridescent purple-blue feathers cover its body. But as summer and monsoon roll around, it disappoints. That's because after mating in spring, when its purple plumage is enhanced by a bright orange circle on its shoulder, it assumes "eclipse plumage" in monsoon when olive and yellow feathers cover its body. The only reminder of its springtime glory is a small blue patch on its shoulder.

Females and juveniles of both these sunbird species are brown. They are friendlier than males and easier to photograph. The juveniles, unfamiliar with the cruel ways of the world, can be slow and sit still for seconds or even minutes at the same spot. But no matter how friendly, I soon run out of patience with them because drab colours do not make pretty pictures.

Sometimes several sunbirds arrive together. They call loudly - *chwee-chwee-chwee* - to each other as they frolic among the flowers and chase each other. Once I saw an eclipse male sit on a high hibiscus and sing its heart out for several minutes. When the desired female did not show, it moved to another plant and resumed its call.

These two species of sunbirds can be found in gardens and parks of the city. If you want to look for them remember they are small, quick, and drawn to flowers.

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

Dengue cases keep rising

211 more hospitalised in a day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

More and more dengue patients are requiring hospitalisation as the number of cases continues to rise across the country.

At least 211 people with dengue fever have been admitted to hospitals in the country during 24 hours, till 8am yesterday. Of them, only 1 person is from outside Dhaka.

With them, a total of 5,645 patients have been diagnosed with dengue this year, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

Of the total infected, 261 are from outside Dhaka.

Among the total infected, 2,987 were diagnosed during the current month, which indicates the fast-rising trend of the disease.

At least 2,286 people were hospitalised across the country in July and 272 in June. In May, 43 people were infected with dengue.

Though most of the patients who were hospitalised have so far been released, 952 are still undergoing treatment at hospitals across the country, the DGHS data shows.

As the capital's public hospitals are overwhelmed with Covid patients, those with dengue were finding it hard to get admission there.

The growing number of dengue cases since last month has been an additional pressure for the hospitals.

DGHS spokesperson Dr Md Nazmul Islam recently said the dengue situation could turn alarming again, but it would be possible to face the situation if necessary measures are taken immediately.

'Still waiting for our first dose'

10 lakh registered vaccine seekers in uncertainty as port city centres run out of Moderna jabs

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

Without prior notice, the vaccine centres across the port city have suddenly stopped administering Moderna vaccines. This has left around 10 lakh registered vaccine aspirants in disarray.

Among the 11 vaccination centres in the city, the service was only being provided by Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH), that too in a limited scale. The centres said they had to stop as they ran out of Moderna doses.

However, the situation was different outside the city, at upazila level, where Sinopharm vaccines are being administered. Sources said people received vaccines at all 14 vaccination centres in the 15 upazilas of the district on Thursday.

However, both areas continued providing the second dose of Oxford-AstraZeneca jabs to people.

According to sources inside Chattogram civil surgeon's office, a total of 2,390,754 people got registered in the district till Wednesday. Of them, 1,050,020 were from the city while the rest 1,340,734 were from upazilas.

Of the registered, around 14 lakh have been vaccinated, either for their first dose or second dose, said sources.

Those who received a single



People demonstrate at the gate of Chattogram General Hospital on Thursday as the authorities stopped the vaccination programme due to shortage of Moderna jabs. Police force had to be deployed in the area to control the situation.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

dose of vaccine are assured of being administered the second dose immediately but it is yet to be known when would be the registered freshers would get their first dose.

According to sources, around one lakh doses of AstraZeneca, 50,000 doses of Sinopharm, and 10,000 doses of Moderna were in stock in the district till Wednesday.

CMCH director Brig Gen SM Humayun Kabir said as the hospital had some stocks of

Moderna jabs remaining, they managed to continue first-dose activities at their centre Thursday.

Meanwhile, vaccine aspirants unaware of the authorities decision to stop vaccinations were seen gathering at different centres in the city Thursday.

At Chattogram General Hospital, several hundred vaccine aspirants were seen, some of whom even demonstrated after knowing vaccines weren't being administered.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Since the lockdown, walls of the capital are gradually being covered with to-let posters, as droves of people, who have lost their income, have been moving across or even out of the city in search of more affordable accommodation. With educational institutes remaining closed, these two university students were seen putting up posters for shared accommodation, as those places are also becoming empty. This photo was taken from Malibagh area recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Cumilla councillor draws flak for giving jabs at her office



PHOTO: COLLECTED

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Despite not being authorised to do so, a Cumilla City Corporation councillor has administered Covid-19 vaccines to over a hundred people at her office on Thursday.

A photograph of Nadia Nasrin, a councillor from reserved ward 4, 5 and 6, administering Moderna vaccine to people at her office went viral on social media on Thursday and drew widespread criticism.

The councillor also came under severe criticism from city dwellers.

Contacted, Councillor Nasrin said she administered the Moderna vaccine to over a hundred people as the scheduled mass vaccination at Harun Primary School Centre was postponed.

She also claimed that she had received vaccination training and has a certificate in this regard. "No one lodged any complaint after being vaccinated by me," she said.

Meanwhile, a three-member probe committee has been formed by the civil surgeon's office to investigate the matter. The committee will submit a report today, said Mir Mubarak Hossain, civil surgeon of Cumilla.

"The councillor has no legal permission to administer vaccines to people. Also, she cannot take those vaccines to her office from the centre. The city corporation authorities have been informed about the matter," he added.

He also mentioned that the councillor was not part of the vaccination training programme in Cumilla.

Asked, the city corporation mayor Monirul Haque Sakku he will look into the matter.

The special mass vaccination programme started in Cumilla on August 9.

No one including cops above the law

Says home minister

UNB, Dhaka

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal yesterday said the police personnel who have connections with crimes will be punished as no one is above the law.

He said this during a food distribution programme organised by the north city unit of Awami League. "Those police personnel who got involved in crimes will be punished..."

There has been a lot of qualitative changes in the force over the last 10 years, he said. "This police force has played a very brave role in dealing with the pandemic."



Two students killed in road crashes

STAR REPORT

Two students were killed in road accidents in two districts on Thursday, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Dinajpur, a speeding truck fatally ran over a college student in Birganj upazila at night.

Sarwar Hossain (25) from Birganj's Jotraghu village was an honours fourth-year student of Dinajpur Government College, said police.

The accident occurred on Dinajpur-Panchagarh highway at Jodumor while Sarwar was going home on a motorcycle from the

upazila headquarters.

He succumbed to his injuries at Birganj Upazila Health Complex.

In Jhenidah, a schoolboy died after a truck crushed him in Hatgopalpur Bazar area in Sadar upazila in the morning, said police.

Likhon Hossain (9), son of Aslam Hossain from the upazila's Paikpara village, was a class four student of Paikpara Government Primary School.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital morgue for an autopsy. They also seized the truck but the driver managed to flee.



For many, staying away from one's pets can be unbearable. Whenever this family takes a trip anywhere around the country, their pet birds accompany them during their travel, just to make sure the birds are cared for at all times. During this trip, a porter is helping them take the birds to their train at the capital's Kamalapur Railway Station on Wednesday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

NEWS IN brief

No security threat centring Aug 15: Rab director general

Bss, Dhaka

There is no security threat in the country centring August 15, National Mourning Day, said Rab Director General Chowdhury Abdullah Al Mamun yesterday.

"We have taken all out measures to maintain law and order and to deal with any kind of untoward situation," he said while distributing food among orphans at a programme.

Rab organised the event at Ranavola Jamia Islamia Orphanage and Madrasa at Uttara on the occasion of the martyrdom anniversary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.



Some areas in Dhaka to see gas disruption today

UNB, Dhaka

Gas supply will remain suspended in different areas of the capital for 10 hours from 9am to 7pm today.

According to Titas Gas Transmission and Distribution Company, the areas include Boro Moghbazar, Taltala Gali, Jahabox Lane, Gabtala, Wahab Road, Nayatola, Chairman Gali, Modhubagh and their adjoining areas.

The consumers of the areas will either have no gas supply or experience low pressure in supply due to works on gas pipeline relocation, said Titas Gas.

Over 1.6 lakh under-trial prisoners released on bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A total of 1,60,768 under-trial prisoners including 2,261 children were released from jails after they received bail from virtual courts across the country in 120 working days since May 11 last year to August 10 this year.

Supreme Court spokesperson Mohammad Saifur Rahman in a statement said yesterday bail petitions in connection with 3,15,568 criminal cases were disposed of through virtual hearings by the subordinate courts and tribunals during this period. A total of 9,622 accused were released from jails on bail since July 1 to August 10 this year.

Contacted, Saifur could not say how many accused including children are now in jail custody.

The regular activities of courts remained suspended for around eight months since March 25 last year due to the pandemic.

Still waiting

FROM PAGE 3

"I took a leave from my office to get my vaccine, but now I have to go back without receiving it," said Aparna Das, a resident at Patharghata area who came to the same hospital.

"The authorities said vaccination would resume soon for second dose seekers but what happens to those of us who are still waiting for the first dose?" she asked.

Contacted, civil surgeon Dr Sheikh Fazle Rabbi said vaccination for the second dose will resume as soon as they would receive more vaccines from the government.

Asked about the first dose aspirants, Rabbi said the first dose seekers will eventually get their vaccines when sufficient stock of vaccine is available, but said it might take some time.

The government decided to suspend administering the first dose of Moderna Covid vaccine from Thursday.

Issuing a circular, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) instructed those vaccination centres, which still have Moderna jabs in stock for first dose, to administer those soon and make preparations for administering the second one.

The government started inoculating people with Moderna vaccine in 12 city corporation areas last month.

Ghostly rings

FROM PAGE 12

The star has about half the mass of our sun.

The space-based Swift Observatory, launched in 2004, detected an X-ray burst from the binary system in June 2015. This burst actually created energetic rings that are visible in the X-ray images.

The phenomenon that created the rings are light echoes. They were created in this system when the burst of X-rays from the binary system reflected off of dust clouds scattered across space between the V404 Cygni system and Earth.

Overcoming all barriers

FROM PAGE 12

"I saw the untold miseries and violence transgender people face. The question of why transgender people should live by the grace of other people constantly troubled me."

After completing her diploma in 2010, she worked at local NGOs for a couple of years to save up before embarking on her dream of starting a business.

"But it was a difficult journey as I didn't have enough money, experience, or any other support to start a business. My first challenge was facing psychological barriers as many people and even hijra leaders didn't want a hijra running her own business."

Another challenge was to gain trust. "When I approached people with the business proposal, they didn't trust me or cooperate with me -- terming my efforts a hoax."

She was turned away several times when she approached factories about producing handicraft items. None of the handicraft factories even allowed inside.

Finally, Mayuri and some other transgender people were able to convince a handicraft worker, who trained the group in mid-2014.

"We started producing handicraft items, including bed sheets, pillow covers, and three-piece sets for women, in a small room which I had rented to live in," she said.

However, unsure of how to market her products, they would stand in front of handicraft sales centres to approach buyers. But no one took them seriously.

One day, a local buyer initially gave some orders after seeing their samples.

Siri Handicrafts kicked off in March 2016 and gradually, buyers started trusting the fledgling business as it produced quality work.

Initially, they only produced nakshi kantha, but soon expanded to nakshi chador, panjabis, fatuas, pillows and cushion covers, bedsheets, and three-piece sets. These products are now being sold to traders and clients in various districts of the country, Mayuri said.

Expanding her small group of trans-women, Mayuri now employs around 500 marginalised women who work from their homes in different villages. Besides, at least 150 hijras work permanently at her factory in the district town.

She said she received some support from some government officials and political leaders during her journey.

A TERRIFYING CHILDHOOD
Mayuri was born with the physical characteristics of a boy and was named Arif.

"But I wanted to dress like a girl. When I was six, my father, who was a government service holder, took me to a market to buy a shirt and a pair of pants. But I refused to and insisted on buying a frock. At one point, my elder brother slapped me."

During her adolescence, she realised that her inner needs were completely like a woman, she said. "I got my answers when I saw other people with similar characteristics to mine."

"I was humiliated and persecuted by my neighbours and relatives. Most of the people in my neighbourhood would stalk me and hurl abusive words. I would always be terrified."

People would not even let their children play with me. I was confused, distressed and frightened," Mayuri continued.

Her family members also faced humiliation and harassment. She had to leave her family behind to save them from being harassed, she said.

"Until I met the people of my community, I had no friends, no relatives, no job, no shelter, and no food. I had nothing or no one except Allah."

Now, Mayuri knows her rights as a human being and can raise her voice if anyone wrongs her or her community.

Mayuri, however, doesn't like to be called "third gender."

"If we are third gender, then who will be the first and second genders? Women or men?" she questioned.

"If hijras are given space and rights, they too can contribute to society. Because they can work just like other people."

HER DREAMS
Mayuri dreams of establishing a Hijra Palli - a village to shelter floating transgender people. There will be 100 houses, livestock and vegetable farms, ponds, a mosque, and an open stage where they can share their joys and sorrows, she described.

"It will be a model for other transgender people, who can replicate it in different areas of the country."

"I want to be a parliament member from a reserved seat for women so that I can work for the development of my community and other marginalised women," said Mayuri, her eyes brimming with excitement and hope.

Pori Moni, 4 others

FROM PAGE 12

She was framed in the case.

The others sent to jail are Raz's associate Sabuj Ali, and Pori Moni's associate Ashraf Islam Dipu.

As different terms of their remand ended yesterday, investigators did not seek to place them on remand again.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Dhiman Chandra Mondol rejected bail petitions of Pori Moni and her associate Dipu after CID Inspector Kazi Golam Mostafa brought them to the court on completion of their six-day remand.

Mostafa, who is investigating the case, said in the forwarding report that officers are verifying the information Pori Moni and Dipu divulged about the drugs recovered from their homes. If they were granted bail they would interfere with the investigation and may leave the country.

He appealed to the court to keep them in prison until the investigation is complete.

Pori Moni's lawyers said that she had earlier signed up for several films which are not being filmed due to her confinement.

She should be granted bail so that she can finish the films, they added.

The same court sent Raz and Sabuj to jail rejecting the bail prayers after CID Inspector Md Ghaus Uddin produced them before it on completion of their six-day remand in two phases in the case.

Ghaus also prayed for keeping them in jail until the investigation is completed.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Abu Sayeed rejected the bail petition and sent Mou to jail after CID Inspector Probrir Kumar Ghosh, produced her before the court on completion of her nine-day remand in three phases.

On August 5, Pori Moni, Raz and their associates were arrested in two separate cases filed by Rab under the Narcotics Control Act.

The previous day, Rab detained them after raiding their houses. They seized foreign liquor and narcotics from there.

Detectives on August 1 arrested Mou at her Mohammadpur residence. They also seized 750 yaba pills and 12 bottles of foreign liquor from there.

What to do

FROM PAGE 12

innate and adaptive immune response, which can lead to abrupt systemic metabolic alteration. The Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention reported an elevated mortality rate from Covid-19 among individuals with diabetes, increasing from 2.3 percent in the general population to 7.3 percent in people with diabetes.

However, the American Diabetes Association reassures that chances of getting severely sick from Covid-19 are mitigated if diabetes is well-managed. The drill is simple, and perhaps obvious too: routine home exercise, maintaining a balanced diet of whole grains and vegetables. One addition

that is prescribed is to cut down on smoking since it can help provide the lungs with increased resilience during sickness.

Further, diabetic patients are asked to reduce their stress levels, even more so during the pandemic. Elevated stress can increase blood sugar in diabetic patients, making them more susceptible to severe Covid-19 symptoms.

Under the current circumstances, when many are in fear and stress of contracting Covid, it would help diabetic patients to secure themselves as best as possible with masks whenever they step outside, distancing, and a good disinfecting routine after they come back home.

China rejects WHO's call

FROM PAGE 12

That report said the virus jumping from bats to humans via an intermediate animal was the most probable scenario, while a leak from Wuhan's virology labs was "extremely unlikely".

Ma rejected suggestions of new lines of investigation. "The conclusions and

recommendations of WHO and China joint report were recognised by the international community and the scientific community," he said.

"Future global traceability work should and can only be further carried out on the basis of this report, rather than starting a new one."

"The conclusions and

Nixon warns Yahya

FROM PAGE 12

"All of these measures will be important in countering the corrosive threat of insurgency and restoring peace to your part of the world. They will also hasten the day when the United States and other countries can resume, within a revised national development plan, the task of assisting your country's economic development which has been so tragically complicated and slowed by recent events. In addition, demonstrable progress on the political front will mean that our own counsels of restraint in New Delhi will have a greater chance of success," added Nixon.

POLITICAL SOLUTION OF BANGLADESH MEANS INDEPENDENCE: RAM
India's Defence Minister Jagjivan Ram emphatically told the Rajya Sabha today that the political solution for Bangladesh meant nothing but independence of that territory. The elected representatives of Bangladesh, he said, had made it clear in unmistakable terms that nothing less than independence would satisfy them.

He further said that India had received seven to eight million people of Bangladesh forced out by the military junta of Pakistan. The only condition to which they could go back to their homeland would be an assurance that their life and property would be safe in Bangladesh.

"That assurance can be there only when they [the refugees] know that Bangladesh is not going to be ruled any more by the military junta of West Pakistan," he emphasised.

As to the Indo-Soviet treaty, the minister told the House that the treaty would serve as a positive deterrent to Pakistan in its act of madness.

PAKISTAN RESENTS THANT'S REMARK ON BANGABANDHU TRIAL

Pakistan protested to the UN Secretary General U Thant that his remarks on the trial of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had exceeded "the bounds of humanitarian concern and competence of the United Nations".

It may be mentioned here that on August 10, 1971, the secretary general said he shared the feelings of many UN representatives that the fate of Bangabandhu was bound to have repercussions outside Pakistan.

In a protest note Pakistan said today that the UN had never expressed feelings about the repercussions of "sentences after summary trials of political leaders in various countries". "Pakistan cannot accept the proposition that any judicial decision on the individual case of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman will have any repercussions outside the border of Pakistan unless Pakistan's hostile neighbour India encouraged to make them," the protest note said.

The note was the first official reaction by the Pakistan government to international pressure regarding the trial of Bangabandhu.

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

Problem over issuing MRPs

FROM PAGE 12

FedEx soon," it said.

The applications for passports were submitted to the embassy between June 21 and August 12, the statement said. Over 1.5 lakh applications remain pending for months because the authorities had not upgraded the software before the 30-million limit for the passports was crossed in early June.

Bangladeshi migrants from different countries have been expressing frustration over the delay.

Migrants became undocumented, facing risks of detention, failing to apply for work permits, and facing problems accessing healthcare, especially in the Southeast Asian and the Gulf countries where a majority of Bangladesh's 1.5 crore migrants work.

Besides, Bangladesh missions from different countries wrote letters to the Department of Immigration and Passports about the problems.

Officials said Malaysia's IRIS Corporation that operates and maintains the Automated Fingerprint Identification System and DIP recently signed a new agreement for upgrading the system.

An official said the upgradation is going on and it will take a few more days for the DIP to fully resume the printing of passports.

The DIP has yet to make a statement on what led to such a debacle and exactly when and how the issue was going to be addressed.

11-year-old girl

FROM PAGE 12

Brahmanbaria General Hospital the next day. She was undergoing treatment at the hospital as of 9:00pm yesterday.

Asked, the OC said accused Alauddin was on the run and attempts were being made to nab him.

পুট বিক্রয়
বন্দুরা বারিধারায় এক-তুকে দক্ষিণ-পূর্ব লোকটিউ ৬, ৯ ও ১০কাতার রেজিস্ট্রেশন ও বাউন্ডারীকৃত কম্পিউট প্লট হলে (এককালীন মূল্য) বিক্রয় করা হইবে।
যোগাযোগ: ০১৭১৫৪৬৬৮৭১

WANTED
Invites application for the post of Vice Principal, Teacher (Science Faculty) and Computer Operator. Please Send your Application To Principal **Bill Gates International School** 400/B, Malibagh Chowdhury para Dhaka-1219 E-mail: bgischool1219@gmail.com

RFP Ref. No.: LRPS-BAN-2021-9169102
Request for Proposal (RFP): LRPS-9169102: To establish Long Term Arrangement (LTA) for Construction Consultancy Services.
UNICEF-Bangladesh is inviting interested companies with a strong record and credibility of providing the above required service. To receive the detailed scope of work and procedure to submit the bid response, please email to "supplybangladesh@unicef.org"
Pre-bid Meeting Date: **Please see the schedule mentioned in the RFP**
The deadline to submit the proposal is **Tuesday, 07 Sept 2021; Time: 11:00 Hrs.**
Please note UNICEF does not charge any fee at any stage of the solicitation process.
www.unicef.org/bd

unicef for every child

RFP Ref. No.: LRPS-BAN-2021-9169106
Request for Proposal (RFP): LRPS-9169106: To conduct Social and Behaviour monitoring on risk communication and community engagement of UNICEF programme interventions, in Cox's Bazar including in Rohingya Refugees camps.
UNICEF-Bangladesh is inviting interested companies with a strong record and credibility of providing the above required service. To receive the detailed scope of work and procedure to submit the bid response, please email to "supplybangladesh@unicef.org"
Pre-bid Meeting Date: **Please see the schedule mentioned in the RFP**
The deadline to submit the proposal is **Thursday, 26 August 2021; Time: 11:00 Hrs.**
Please note UNICEF does not charge any fee at any stage of the solicitation process.
www.unicef.org/bd

unicef for every child

SIBL Social Islami Bank Limited
Share Department, Head Office: City Center 90/1 Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000

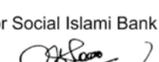
DISBURSEMENT/DISTRIBUTION OF CASH & STOCK DIVIDEND (BONUS SHARES) FOR THE YEAR - 2020

This is for information of all concerned that as per approval of the Shareholders in their 26th Annual General Meeting held on 06.07.2021, we have distributed 5% Stock Dividend to the BO Account of the Shareholders as per CDBL By-laws whose name were recorded in the Members Register of the Bank or in the Depository Register on the Record Date i.e. on 1st June, 2021. We also disbursed 5% Cash Dividend to the Bank Accounts through BEFTN/ On-line transfer as per Recorded Data of the Shareholders. MICR Dividend Warrants have been dispatched to the recorded address of the shareholders which have been returned due to invalid Account Number, Account of Dormant nature, Closure of Bank Account, having no Routing Number of the Bank's Branches or Online facilities.

Please note that the Shareholders who have not Valid BO Accounts or any other mis-matches according to the data base of the Record Date, their Stock Dividend (Bonus Shares) have been kept under bonus suspense-2020 which will be credited as and when the entitled shareholders provide their Valid BO ID.

It is also noted that the sale proceeds of all Fractional dividend have also disbursed to the beneficiary shareholders with their entitled cash dividend.

However, Shareholder(s) have any queries regarding non-receipt of Stock dividend, Cash or Fractional Dividend may contact the Share Department of the Bank.

For Social Islami Bank Ltd.

(Abdul Hannan Khan)
Company Secretary
Phone: 9571852
E-mail: share@sibl-bd.com

Date: 12th August, 2021

তারেক স্মৃতি স্বরণে
আজ শোকাহত সেই ১৪ই আগষ্ট রাত। ১৯৯৬ সালের এই রাতে আমাদের একমাত্র পুত্র মঈন উদ্দিন কাসেম তারেক এর অন্তর্ধানের পর আজ পূর্ণ হলো ২৫ বৎসর। আজও আমরা পুত্র হারানোর একবুক যন্ত্রনা হয়ে বেড়াচ্ছি। আমরা পরম করুণাময় আল্লাহ্‌ তালার কাছে প্রার্থনা জানাই তারেক যেখানেই থাকুক মহান আল্লাহ্‌ তাকে যেন হেফাজত করেন। আমিন।
শোকাহত বাবা-মা
এম. এ. কাসেম ও জ্যোত্স্না আরা কাসেম।

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলীর কার্যালয়
সড়ক ও জনপথ অধিদপ্তর
সড়ক বিভাগ, সিলেট
স্মারক নং-৩৫.০১.৯১৬২.৪৭৩.০০.০০০.২১-২৬৫২ তারিখ: ১২/০৮/২০২১

“সীমিত দরপত্র পদ্ধতিতে (LTM) ঠিকাদার তালিকা ভুক্তির বিজ্ঞপ্তি” (সংশোধিত)।

এতদ্বারা সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, সড়ক বিভাগ, সিলেট কর্তৃক পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট বিধিমালা-২০০৮ এর আলোকে সড়ক ও জনপথ অধিদপ্তরের পরিচালন (রাজস্ব) বাজেটের আওতায় সীমিত দরপত্র পদ্ধতিতে (LTM) ঠিকাদার তালিকা ভুক্তির বিজ্ঞপ্তিতে আবেদনপত্র (ডকুমেন্ট) সংগ্রহ ও জমা প্রদান করার তারিখ ও সময় নিম্নোক্ত ভাবে সংশোধন করা হইল।

বর্ণনা	প্রকাশিত	সংশোধিত
০১। আবেদনপত্র (ডকুমেন্ট) সংগ্রহ ও জমা প্রদান করার তারিখ ও সময়	: ২৩/০৮/২০২১ ইং খ্রীষ্টাব্দ তারিখ বিকাল ৫.০০ পর্যন্ত।	: ৩০/০৮/২০২১ ইং খ্রীষ্টাব্দ তারিখ বিকাল ৫.০০ পর্যন্ত।

নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী,
সড়ক ও জনপথ অধিদপ্তর,
সড়ক বিভাগ, সিলেট।
টেলিফোন-০৮২১-৭১৬৩৩৯

মার্কেটাইল ব্যাংক লিমিটেড
Mercantile Bank Limited
General Services Division
61, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka-1000, www.mblbd.com

INVITATION FOR TENDER
INTRUDER ALARM SYSTEM FOR THE SAFETY OF VAULT AND LOCKER ROOMS

Sealed Tender documents are hereby invited from the eligible Contractors as defined in the tender documents of the under mentioned works as per terms & conditions stated below:

01. Procuring Entity	: General Services Division, Mercantile Bank Limited, Head Office, 61, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka-1000.
02. Tender Name	: Intruder Alarm System (Centralized Monitoring) for the safety of vault and locker rooms of the Branches.
03. Time of completion of work	: 60 days from the date of issuance of Work Order.
04. Eligibility of Tenderers	i) The bidder shall have successfully completed minimum Three (03) numbers of supply as specific contract of Intruder Alarm System (uninterrupted connected to central monitoring system) including central monitoring system in any Bangladeshi Govt/ Private Banks/Financial Institutions ii) Having valid & up to date Trade license, income Tax clearance certificate and VAT registration certificate. iii) Must be financially solvent and recent solvency certificate from any schedule Bank is to be submitted.
05. Price of Tender Document	: Tk.4,600/- (Four thousand six hundred) only (non-refundable) for the said decoration work with a request in the official pad.
06. Earnest Money	: Earnest money amounting Tk.2.00 lac in the form of Pay Order from any schedule Bank of Bangladesh in favor of "MERCANTILE BANK LIMITED" .
07. Name & address of the office for selling and receiving of Tender documents	: General Services Division, Mercantile Bank Limited, Head Office, 7 th Floor, 61-Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka-1000.
08. Date & time for selling Tender	: From 16.08.2021 to 07.09.2021 during office hour (Sunday to Thursday 10.00 AM to 04.00 PM)
09. Date & time for Tender submission	: On 08.09.2021 up to 3.00 P.M.
10. Date & time for opening	: On 08.09.2021 at 3.30 P.M. in presence of available Contractors (if any).
11. Curtailment/Reduction	: The authority has right to curtail/reduce/alter any of tender item or its heads/sub-heads/partial items/works at any stage of the works or may execute through other contractor/vendor for maintaining time frame.
12. Other Terms & Conditions	: Other terms & conditions can be found in the tender document.
13. Special instructions	: Mercantile Bank Limited reserves all the right to accept or reject the whole or part of tender or may divide/segregate the works without assigning any reason whatsoever.

Vice President & Head
General Services Division

NEWS IN brief

Twitter blocks Rahul Gandhi's tweet

Rahul Gandhi, the leader of India's main opposition party, slammed Twitter yesterday for blocking a tweet over the alleged rape and murder of a nine-year-old girl, saying the platform was playing partisan politics.

Malaysia PM seeks bi-partisan support

Malaysian Prime Minister Muhyiddin Yassin made a plea yesterday to opposition lawmakers to support him in an upcoming confidence vote, in a bid to shore up his government and prevent an election amid a resurgence in Covid-19 infections.

Russia asks BBC journo to leave

Russia has asked a BBC journalist working in Moscow to leave the country by the end of the month when her visa expires in retaliation for what it views as British discrimination against Russian journalists.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

US troops pullout a 'mistake'

Says UK defence secy, fears return of al-Qaeda; top US senator says Biden's 'reckless' Afghan policy leading to disaster, compares situation to fall of Saigon

AGENCIES

Britain yesterday slammed the US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan, warning the Taliban's resurgence would create a breeding ground for extremists that threatened the world.

In US, the top Republican in Congress blasted President Joe Biden Thursday for his "reckless policy" on Afghanistan, as the United States moved to evacuate embassy workers ahead of the Taliban advance.

Defence Secretary Ben Wallace on Thursday announced that some 600 troops would help evacuate British nationals from the country, as the Islamists seize more control.

But he told Sky News television the US decision to withdraw troops "leaves a very big problem on the ground", handing momentum to the Taliban.

He predicted it would benefit Al-Qaeda, who were given safe haven by the Taliban before the September 11, 2001 attacks that prompted the West's 20-year involvement in Afghanistan.

"I'm absolutely worried that failed states are breeding grounds for those type of people," he added.

"Of course Al-Qaeda will probably come



President Biden's (Afghanistan) strategy has turned an imperfect but stable situation into a major embarrassment and a global emergency in a matter of weeks

TOP REPUBLICAN SENATOR MITCH MCCONNELL

back," he said, warning that would lead to "a security threat to us and our interests."

"I felt that that was a mistake to have done it that way, that we'll all as an international community probably pay the consequences of that," Wallace said of the Doha agreement signed between the United States and the Taliban.

The agreement, signed under former US president Donald Trump last year, left Britain with no choice but to withdraw its troops, he said.

The minister's critical comments about the withdrawal were among several from senior politicians and military top brass.

The chairman of the influential Foreign

I felt that (troops withdrawal from Afghanistan) was a mistake to have done it that way, that we'll all as an international community probably pay the consequences of that.



UK DEFENCE SECRETARY BEN WALLACE

Affairs Select Committee in parliament, Tom Tugendhat, told the BBC: "We've just pulled the rug from under them," referring to the Afghan people.

Former international development minister Rory Stewart called the troop withdrawal "a total betrayal by the US and by the UK" that risked triggering a civil war between rival warlords currently defending against the Taliban.

Johnny Mercer, a Conservative MP who served in Afghanistan, called the withdrawal "a disgrace".

In US, the news of thousands of American soldiers being sent to Afghanistan to evacuate embassy staff from Kabul has revived painful

US memories of the fall of Saigon.

A photo that immortalized America's defeat in Vietnam, showing evacuees boarding a helicopter on the roof of a building, spread fast on social networks after the United States announced the emergency deployment on Thursday.

The announcement heightened the perception that after 20 years of war the United States is abandoning the country. "Afghanistan is careening toward a massive, predictable, and preventable disaster," top Republican lawmaker Mitch McConnell said in a statement.

"If we let the Taliban dominate Afghanistan and Al-Qaeda return, it will resonate throughout the global jihadist movement."

McConnell said the decision to deploy US troops to manage the evacuation "seem(s) like preparations for the fall of Kabul," which he compared to "the humiliating fall of Saigon in 1975," when North Vietnamese troops seized control of the city two years after the US military withdrew.

"President (Joe) Biden's decisions have us hurtling toward an even worse sequel to the humiliating fall of Saigon in 1975," he added.

21 killed as heavy rainfall batters China

AFP, Beijing

At least 21 people died as heavy downpours struck central China's Hubei province, authorities said yesterday, weeks after record floods wreaked havoc and killed hundreds in a neighbouring province.

China has been battered by unprecedented rains in recent months, extreme weather that experts say is increasingly common due to global warming.

In Hubei, torrential rains caused power cuts and landslides, destroying hundreds of homes and forcing the evacuation of nearly 6,000 people, the province's Emergency Management Bureau said, as reservoirs reach dangerous levels.

Hundreds of firefighters and thousands of police and military have been dispatched to the worst affected areas.

Afghan women forced from jobs as Taliban take control

REUTERS

In early July, as Taliban insurgents were seizing territory from government forces across Afghanistan, fighters from the group walked into the offices of Azizi Bank in the southern city of Kandahar and ordered nine women working there to leave.

The gunmen escorted them to their homes and told them not to return to their jobs. Instead, they explained that male relatives could take their place, according to three of the women involved and the bank's manager.

"It's really strange to not be allowed to get to work, but now this is what it is," Noor Khatera, a 43-year-old woman who had worked in the accounts department of the bank told Reuters.

"I taught myself English and even learned how to operate a computer, but now I will have to look for a place where I can just work with more women around."

The incident is an early sign that some of the rights won by Afghan women over the 20 years since the headline Islamist militant movement was toppled could be reversed if it returns to power.

The Taliban, who ruled Afghanistan from 1996 to 2001, have overrun many of Afghanistan's biggest cities in recent days and are closing in on the capital Kabul.

Under the group's strict interpretation of Islamic law, women could not work, girls were not allowed to attend school and women had to cover their face and be accompanied by a male relative if they wanted to venture out of their homes.

Women who broke the rules sometimes suffered humiliation and public beatings by the Taliban's religious police.

During hitherto fruitless talks over a political settlement in recent years, Taliban leaders made assurances to the



West that women would enjoy equal rights in accordance with what was granted by Islam, including the ability to work and be educated.

Two days after the episode at Azizi Bank, a similar scene played out at a branch of another Afghan lender, Bank Milli, in the western city of Herat, according to two female cashiers who witnessed it. Three Taliban fighters carrying guns entered the branch, admonishing female employees for showing their faces in public. Women there quit, sending male relatives in their place.

Afghan women working in fields including journalism, healthcare and law enforcement have been killed in a wave of attacks since peace talks began last year between the Taliban and the US-backed Afghan government.

Scores of educated Afghan women took to social media to appeal for help and express their frustration.

"With every city collapsing, human bodies collapse, dreams collapse, history and future collapse, art and culture collapse, life and beauty collapse, our world collapse," Rada Akbar wrote on Twitter. "Someone please stop this."

Let's Build A Beautiful Tomorrow



Owners of Land Plots Are Invited To Discuss Their Proposals

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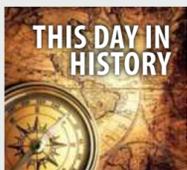


Asset Developments & Holdings Ltd 91 Gulshan Avenue Dhaka 1212



PHOTO: REUTERS

Search and Rescue team members evacuate locals during flash floods which have swept through towns in the Turkish Black Sea region, in Bozkurt, a town in Kastamonu province, Turkey. The death toll from the floods rose to 27 yesterday.



AUGUST 14

1945 - Japan accepted the Allies' terms of unconditional surrender, ending World War Two.

2006 - A UN-brokered truce to end five weeks of fighting between Israel and Lebanese Hezbollah guerrillas came into effect after leaving around 1,110 people dead in Lebanon, and 156 in Israel.

2015 - US embassy re-opens in Havana after 54 years.

SOURCE: REUTERS

US 'white' population drops 8.6pc in a decade

AFP, New York

The number of US residents who identify as "white" has fallen for the first time, according to the latest 2020 census data released Thursday. The United States has grown "more racially and ethnically diverse" and more urban over the past 10 years, according to the Census Bureau.

The 11-year-old British boy walking to save the earth

REUTERS, Woburn Sands



Jude Walker, an 11-year-old boy, is on an odyssey he hopes will help save the planet: he is walking to London from northern England in a bid to garner support for a carbon tax to tackle carbon emissions.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয় মানিকগঞ্জ। "দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি" দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং-০২/২০২১-২২ (রেশন স্টোর)।

"I am yet to play my dream role" – Tareen

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

In a career spanning over three decades, Tareen Jahan has earned acclaim for her versatile performances. In addition to being a splendid actor, she has been a talented dancer and singer since childhood. Her album, which she released a few years ago, was well-received by listeners. "Dancing has a very special place in my heart. That's why I have been able to keep it up till now," she adds. For the first time in her career, Tareen is set to appear in an Indian-Bengali film. The movie, titled "Eti Amader Golpo", is directed by Munshi Sinha. It is now ready to be dubbed. Tareen mentioned that she is immensely proud of the film, as it brought about new challenges for her.

She will also be featured in the Bangladeshi film, "1971 Sheishob Din", directed by Hridi Huq. However, the shooting of this movie is at a standstill due to the Covid-19 pandemic. "I don't want to give away too much, but I can say that my character is the daughter of a rich man. I get to explore my capabilities as an actor in this film. It is a different type of role for me," Tareen explains. "Tareen has been acting in film adaptations of various literary classics for many years. I like to think that directors and producers rely on me to play roles of literary characters. I

take that responsibility very seriously," she says. "Luckily, I got the opportunity to act in diverse adaptations. I feel honoured to work on stories by Rabindranath Tagore." Tareen will be starring in a musical documentary, titled "Rokto Makha Shiri", marking National Mourning Day. Directed by Sohel Rana and produced by lyricist Sujan Hajong with cinematography by Kamal Chandra Das, the film is inspired by Nishiti Barua's song of the same name. Tareen joined the shoot of this film from August 10. She started the shoot in various prominent locations, including Dhanmondi 32, Swadhinata Museum, Jagannath Hall, and Shikha Chirantan. "The musical documentary intends to introduce Bangabandhu to newer generations. I hope that people get to learn our history, and understand our deep respect for Bangabandhu," says Tareen. The musical documentary will be released on August 15 on BTV. Additionally, she recently played the role of a police officer in the Eid telefilm, "Shahoshika". Her performance was widely appreciated. "Over the years, I have experimented a lot with my work. As an artiste, I wish to continue my streak of good roles." However, I am yet to play my dream role," concludes Tareen.

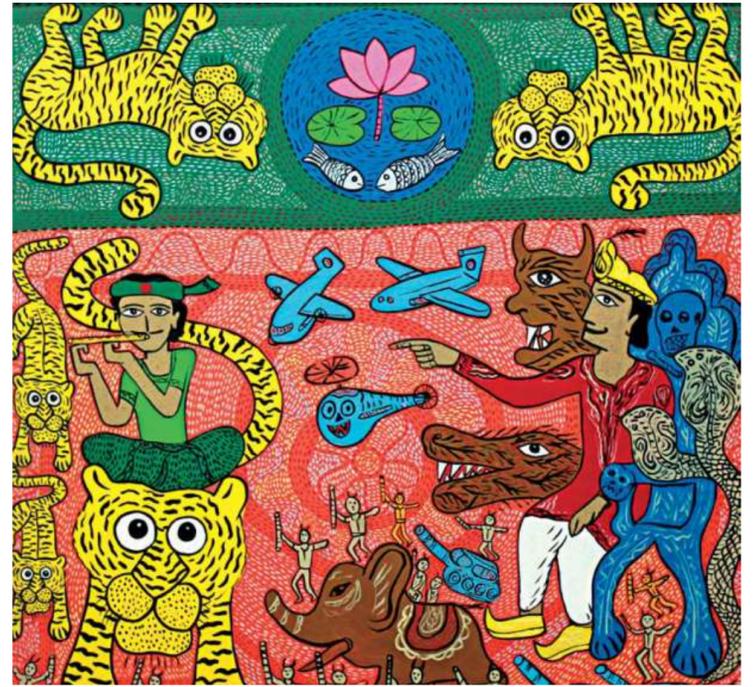
Translated by Shaniz Chowdhury



PHOTO: STAR



Nazir Hossain with 'Bantora Kun'.



Scroll paintings by Nazir Hossain

Celebrating the Bengal tigers through art

FARAH KABIR

Self-taught artist Nazir Hossain is popularly known as "Tiger Nazir", for his remarkable contribution to folk art, and paintings of tigers. He mainly works with the traditional medium of art, 'Potchitro', or scroll painting. Bantora Kun the tiger, a mascot representing Bangladesh, was launched in 2015. It has been making its rounds in Bangladesh-Japan business circuits. It was an outcome of years of mediation on the part of Nazir, whose paintings centering on tiger motifs led to the three-dimensional model. In a recent conversation with The Daily Star, the artist talks about how he developed his career, and more.

How does your work comment on current social and political issues?

I believe that tigers are symbols of victory, and so, they are the heroes of my art. During the colonial era, many British men killed tigers in the Sundarbans. Even today, poachers continue to kill them for their medicinal value. If there are no tigers, there will be no Sundarbans, as these killings are creating an imbalance in nature. It is the duty of every nation to work together to protect tigers. Bangladesh is geographically blessed with six seasons, as well as various water bodies and landscapes. When we traded



muslin thousands of years ago, we were rich. We can restore our financial stability by preserving our culture and heritage. I intend to do my part through paintings to showcase the richness of our country's culture across the world.

How did you develop your career as an artist?

Since childhood, I was not very fond of studying, but was rather interested in drawing and painting. I used to gather news clippings from Shilpakala Academy, and read about renowned artists. I knew from the beginning

of my career that I wanted to paint tigers.

Can you tell us about your exhibition at EMK Centre that was held a few days back?

The EMK Centre hosted a virtual exhibition on July 29, celebrating International Tiger Day. I represented Bangladesh with 40 paintings to raise awareness about the protection of tigers. It was my 52nd exhibition, and I painted 30,000 tigers in total. I also celebrated the day at home by painting on the wall in front of my house in Dinajpur, which was broadcast live.

How do you navigate the art world?

As an artist in Bangladesh, I have observed that people generally do not appreciate the occupation. They are also not pleased to learn that I have not studied at Charukola. However, I believe that our educational system has limited us to only a few career paths. One cannot ignore art, as it is present everywhere. I have been to 50 schools to convey this message, and encourage students to pursue art as a career. I have also volunteered during occasions like Pohela Boishakh and Mongol Shobhajatra, where the money raised through my paintings were donated to preserve the legacy of folk art.

The author is a freelance journalist. Email: farah.kabir1@g.bracu.ac.bd.

Exploring claustrophobia in cinema

TANVEER KABIR

Whenever we think about horror films, we subconsciously imagine things like ghosts, monsters, vampires, zombies or werewolves. The correlation is logical, as horror stories have been known to incorporate these elements for centuries. To me, however, true horror has always been reflected in stories that we can relate to, stories that are terrifying but at the same time plausible.

Many filmmakers have grasped the idea of plausible horror stories, opening doors to numerous subgenres to explore.

For nearly two years, we have faced one form of horror in our real lives with the advent of the global pandemic. It is the horror of being locked indoors for an undefined period of time. Psychologists refer to a terrifying experience of this sort as 'claustrophobia'. While I have spent a large chunk of my time

during the pandemic at home bingeing on films, the types of films that I can relate to now more so than ever are horror films centered around the feeling of claustrophobia, which can distinctly be identified as the films where the protagonist is either physically or mentally trapped in an unpleasant environment through the majority of the film's runtime. A well made horror film of this subgenre can take the on screen anxiety felt by the protagonist and bring it off the screen permeating itself throughout the viewing experience of the audience. This article explores three excellent examples of claustrophobia.

WHAT EVER HAPPENED TO BABY JANE? (1962)

'What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?' is a 1960s claustrophobic thriller/horror film which established an archetype for many great books and films across generations to come.



'What Ever Happened to Baby Jane?'

The movie stars two legendary actors Bette Davis and Joan Crawford who play siblings with hints of deep-rooted rivalry between them. After an unfortunate accident leaves Blanche Hudson (played by Crawford) confined to a wheelchair, she is forcefully kept isolated by her sister Baby Jane Hudson (played by Davis), who has always been jealous of Blanche's success in the film industry.

According to many documentaries, interviews and other historical accounts, these two veteran actresses hated each other in real life. Their off-screen rivalry makes the interplay between the characters on screen feel very realistic.

Any good piece of cinema is bound to bring out certain emotions from the audience, and this is where the film outshines most other stories of this subgenre. The entire story, with its intricate twists and turns brings out a multitude of emotional reactions from the viewers. If you watch this movie at a stretch, the little over two hours of runtime will give you feelings of empathy, anxiety, hatred, and ethical dilemma alongside its primary trigger point, i.e. claustrophobia.

What the director Robert Aldrich was able to do in the early 1960s with a modest budget is remarkable, as it ticks all the right boxes of a suspense-filled experience.

MISERY (1990)

'Misery', which is adapted from a novel by Stephen King, is an epitome of a good claustrophobic horror.

The film is directed by Rob Reiner at the peak of his career as a filmmaker. The film tells the story of romance novelist Paul Sheldon (played by James Caan) who has just come off completing his long term pot-boiling novel series. These popular series of books of his revolved around a girl named Misery Chastain.

In the opening of the film, Sheldon is seen to have just completed typing the manuscript to his new standalone novel, at the serene and secluded Colorado Lodge. On his way back to the publishers, he ends up being caught in a blizzard and crashing his car in a remote, snow covered mountainous area. This is where he is rescued by a woman named Annie Wilkes (played by Kathy Bates) who introduces herself as Sheldon's "number one fan". Annie starts out as a friendly and hospitable character with the noble intention of nursing Paul back to health. However, as the story progresses we are introduced to a darker and more sinister side of her, especially after she learns that Paul killed off her favorite character Misery Chastain in the newly published final installment of the novel series. Annie holds him captive in her cabin keeping him sick by various means and forcing him to write a follow up novel

in order to reincarnate the Misery character.

Although James Caan gives off a wonderful performance, the highlight of this film is Kathy Bates' academy award winning portrayal of Annie Wilkes. Through the role she impeccably portrays Annie as a person of psychopathic tendencies in the form of an obsessed fan. The vivid portrayal of the multiple personality disorder of Bates' character can be seen through her transitions from an amiable smile to a rather Mephistophelian grin.

Ardent fans of Alfred Hitchcock may notice various aspects of the direction and cinematography of the film emitting an eerie vibe, similar to that of Hitchcock's films. Overall, this film has the likes of being on the top 10 list of many horror/thriller fans and it is perhaps one of the best adaptations of a Stephen

her communicate with the outside world.

The character of the mother in this film is played by Sarah Paulson, who is known for taking up antagonistic roles, which the audiences love to hate. Paulson's portrayal of the mother in this film with her borderline psychopathic obsession of keeping her daughter secluded from connecting to any person or institution beyond the confinement of their house is a testimony to the fact that she is a veteran in playing roles of this sort.

The desperation and helplessness of the character Chloe throughout the film feels painful and realistic.

This has much to do with the fact that the actress Kiera Allen, who plays the role of Chloe, uses a wheelchair as she suffers from a paralysis in real life. Hence, it is undeniable that she plays this particular character with extreme finesse and



'Run'

King novel put to film.

RUN (2020)

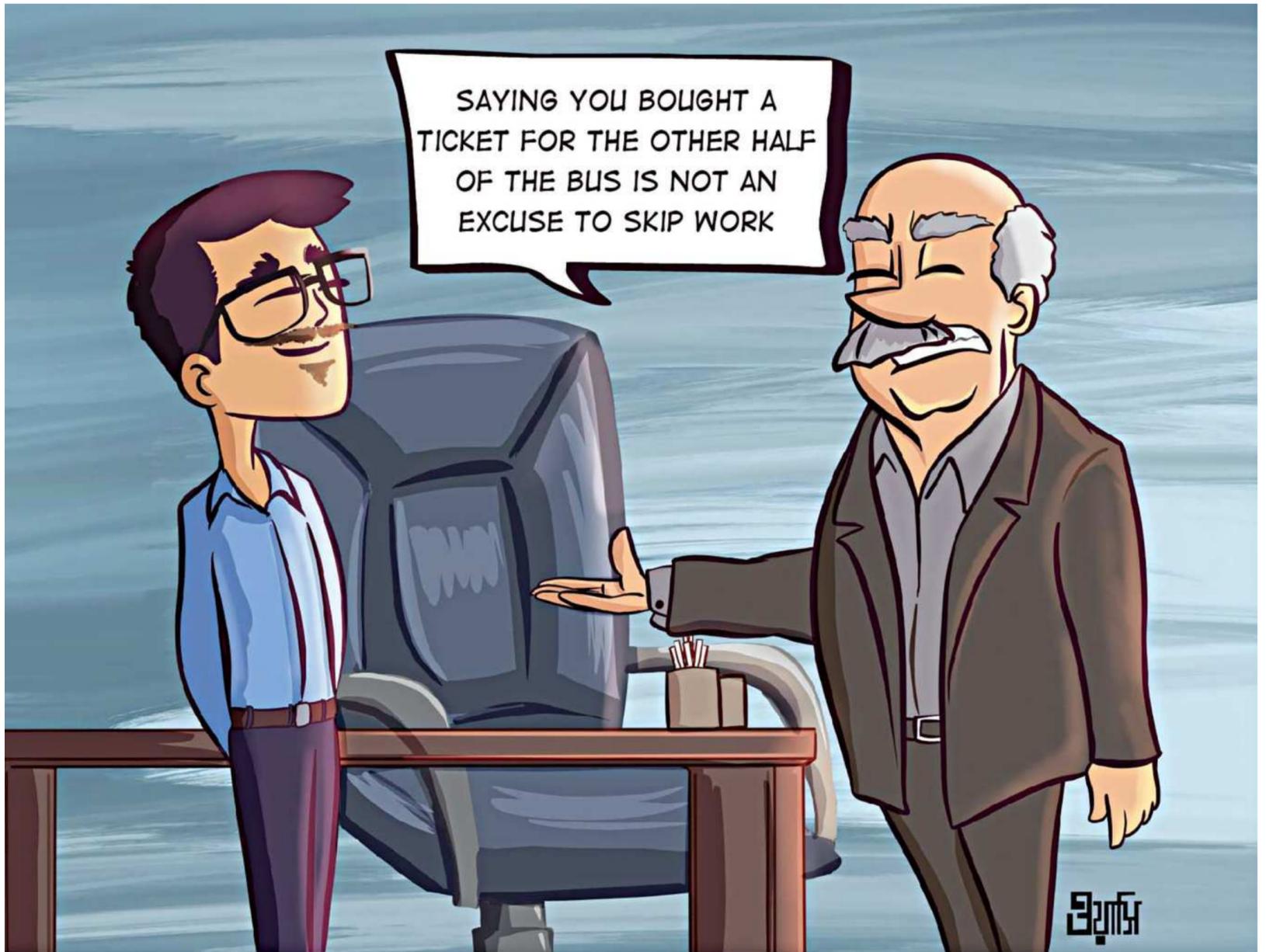
Perhaps the most emotionally exhausting film on my list is the amazing film 'Run', which was directed by Anesh Chaganty. What makes the storyline more difficult to digest is the fact that the victim in captivity in this film is being kept isolated by her own mother.

Chloe, who has been confined to a wheelchair for as far back as she could remember becomes suspicious of her mother who never lets

realism.

The plot of the film clearly draws inspiration from its long list of predecessors, including films like 'Misery' which I also covered in this article. The film clearly learns from all of the past claustrophobic horrors/thrillers of this sort and incorporates all of the best elements in terms of its choices of storytelling, direction and cinematography.

The author is a freelancer and avid cinephile. email: tkabir16@gmail.com



Public transport owners cut their vehicles in half after government decision

MAHBUB ALAM MUNNA

After a series of comedy of errors, Chapasthan has come up with another revolutionary idea: only half the fleet of any public transport will be allowed to ply the roads to tackle the spread of Covid-22.

"Halving the number of public transport will not only limit the Covid-22 spread, but also reduce traffic congestion by 50 percent. We are geniuses. It will also mean that every bad thing, including corruption

and bribery, will also be halved. In other words, our standard of life will improve by half," a transport ministry spokesperson explained while people wondered what "half" actually meant.

Owners of public transport fleets, however, were not geniuses like the high government officials. They did not know what halving their fleets meant. So, they decided to go the literal route and cut their vehicles into half.

"We respect our minister's decision. So, we cut our cars into half. We don't know whether our car will function as

before or not, but we know for sure that the minister is right and his decision will be fruitful. Now, our half cars look good and it seems that it will consume half the energy and take up half the parking space," a driver of a half-bus said.

The half transport rule has caught the attention of half the population. Some people are debating the pros and cons of the decision while others are still wondering what it actually means.

Teachers are asking their students to submit an assignment on the rule, focusing on its definition and

explanation, reasons behind the historical decision, how it affects commuters and, of course, the merits of this decision.

After the submission of assignments, institutes plan to publish their research papers on it.

Chandu, a law-abiding citizen and a netizen, said, "That's it. Our country is on the verge of becoming the most prolific tech-based country in the world. If you don't believe it, just see the results. We are planning to allow half cars at full capacity while many

developed countries are struggling to run a full car at half capacity. Prepare to say goodbye to traffic jams."

The minister was unhappy because people, especially transport owners, did not understand his set of easy directives.

"What will we do with these illiterate people? How will they operate a half car? How did they not get my point? My point was clear. There was nothing confusing in my statement. Next time I will bring a translator with me so that he can translate my easy speech into your stupid local dialects," he fumed.



This is a potted plant. It looks good, but it is dumb and not known for thinking on its feet.

PHOTO: STAR

Dumb as a plant: Actor arrested for being too stupid to throw away drugs

STAR VEGETATION CORRESPONDENT

Mona Fairy, a popular actor in Chapasthan, has been arrested because she was too stupid to throw away some drugs she kept at her house while police were breaking down her door.

Two cases were filed against her – one for possessing the narcotics, but since it was an open and shut case and therefore would not allow law enforcers to interrogate her for long, another case was filed under the new Stupidity Act.

"What we have seen is very concerning," said one of the police officials who conducted the raid at Fairy's house. "The house was full of drugs – ice, LSD, potted plants, planted pot, snow, wind, fire, earth. You name it, she had it.

"What was puzzling, however, was that she knew we were coming around half an hour before we actually entered the house. Instead of dumping the drugs down the toilet or out the window, she spent all that time panicking on the phone with her friends.

"That is the kind of stupidity that doing drugs causes."

Most of the police's concern has surrounded the upper-middle class children and powerful businessmen Fairy infected with her stupidity. That is why, the police official said, they have kept Fairy in remand -- to know the extent of her stupidity and the names of others like her who were bringing down the national IQ.

"Those kids are innocent. They just went to her parties not knowing they would be transformed into idiots. The same for the businessmen.

They became so stupid over the course of one or two parties that they did things that exposed them to blackmail -- it's a national disgrace."

Over the course of their interrogation of Fairy, police have learned that she even went on vacation to export her stupidity. After that, government officials said plans were under way to bar stupid people from going abroad.

The police official said one of their own were infected with her stupidity, but that was dealt with swiftly.

"Of course, police are not immune. The stupidity came into our ranks and we even arrested an influential person who was tricked into assaulting Fairy at the Chapa Yacht Club. Luckily for us, we came to our senses and found the drugs in her flat – it's a triumph for law enforcement."

How RTI regimes are faring in South Asia

SHAMSUL BARI AND RUHI NAZ

THE Covid-19 pandemic will be remembered for the colossal chaos it caused to governments as they grappled—and continue to do—with its catastrophic onslaught affecting lives and livelihoods across the globe. And as governments bristled at public outcry against their inept handling and clamped down on critics, the gap widened between those who govern and those who are governed.

The crisis has shown that public distrust of governments is less pronounced in countries where a Right

number of women and disabled persons among them, the pay scale and service rules.

As the Registrar failed to respond, the applicant appealed to the Information Commission of Pakistan. The latter's prodding led the Registrar to act; but instead of providing the requested information, he simply forwarded a letter he had sent earlier to the Ministry of Law and Justice on a matter relating to the National Assembly, with a copy of a Supreme Court judgment regarding separation of the judiciary from the executive. He thereby inferred that the Supreme Court did not fall under the RTI

secretariat rejected the request on grounds that the relevant file had been sent to the National Archives from where it was lost, the applicant appealed to the Information Commission.

After considering submissions from both sides, the Commission concluded that "the RTI Act prevails over and above the clauses relating to confidentiality in the National Archives Law and related Regulations. It is a pertinent factor that the absence of the Report of the Commission of Inquiry in regard to this matter is of considerable public interest."

The Commission further underlined that the "Department of the National Archives is the custodian of 'all records' of Commissions of Inquiry under the Act... Hence the Department may properly call upon the depositing body or individual... to ensure that the Report of the Commission or Committee is sent to the Department in accordance with the law."

Meanwhile, the example from India related to an RTI application submitted in early 2019 to the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment, seeking disclosure of the cabinet note and all relevant correspondence and annexure about an amendment to the Constitution by the Indian parliament relating to ten percent reservation for the economically weaker section (EWS) of the society. The applicant had relied on an earlier order of the Central Information Commission (CIC) directing the government to make public all cabinet notes relating to proposals for new bills that are to be tabled in parliament and also to display them on the website of the department within seven days.

called his action "grossly inappropriate" and "severely admonished [him] for the inappropriate denial of the information to the Appellant". She also "warned [him] to ensure that due diligence is exercised while dealing with the RTI applications in future."

Now for the Bangladesh example (complaint number 17/2019). In September 2018, an applicant submitted an RTI request to the Designated Officer (DO) of the Ministry of Power, Energy and Mineral Resources, seeking copies of some documents relating to the construction of a fuel depot by Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC) on 192 acres of forest land in the Maheshkhali Hill Area of Cox's Bazar district. The documents included applications by BPC for permission to build the depot and to cut down trees on promise of replanting five times the number; project approval letter for "Installation of Single-Point Mooring with Double Pipeline"; Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the project; approval, if any, by the cabinet for tree-chopping; workplan for replanting new trees and the varieties of new trees to be planted.

The DO provided the applicant all the items requested, except the EIA. He argued that the latter document, provided by the Environment Directorate, was an important government document which could be abused if it fell into wrong hands. The applicant appealed to the Secretary of the ministry, who upheld the DO's decision. The appellant then submitted a complaint to the Information Commission.

At complaint hearings, additional arguments were made against disclosure of the environmental assessment. It was claimed that the government had attached great importance to the project and appointed a foreign consultant, namely ILF Consulting Engineers, Germany, to prepare the environmental assessment report. The latter contained important technical and scientific knowledge that the consultants had acquired through serious research. This knowledge could be considered to be their intellectual property, which falls under an exemption clause of the Bangladesh RTI Act 2009. The Information Commission concurred with the submissions and decided in favour of non-disclosure.

The examples above will hopefully spur readers to reflect on the prospects and promises of the RTI Act. We conclude by underlining its intrinsic value to facilitate citizen-government interaction on matters of governance, thereby contributing to strengthening participatory democracy.

Shamsul Bari and Ruhi Naz are Chairman and RTI Coordinator respectively of Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB). Email: nb@citech-bd.com

Restrictions are being lifted, but at what cost?

Such decisions must follow a concrete plan to enforce health and safety rules

SINCE the beginning of the pandemic, Bangladesh—like most other countries in the world—has been faced with the "lives vs livelihoods" dilemma, as pandemic-induced lockdowns hit the economy hard even while working towards bringing widespread Covid-19 transmission slightly under control. During the latest spate of lockdowns, we have once again faced the same issue. Over the past week, the positivity rate has finally dropped by about five percent after spending more than two weeks at a whopping 30 percent. However, we have also witnessed restriction relaxation demands across pandemic-hit sectors that are struggling to cope with the continued loss of income.

While we do have sympathy towards the difficult decisions that must be taken with regard to Covid-19 policy in this context, what we cannot understand is the government constantly resorting to a one-size-fits-all approach when it comes to decision-making. How else does one explain the recent decision to lift almost all coronavirus restrictions from August 19, despite the daily death toll continuing to cross 200? While it is important to ensure that the economy is allowed to operate, is it necessary to re-open everything in such quick succession, and even allow social gatherings to take place?

Although the authorities have stated that community centres, tourist attractions and recreational facilities will operate at half of their capacities, and that everyone is required to wear a mask and follow health and safety guidelines, we know from prior experience that these directives are hardly ever monitored and enforced. It is not enough for the authorities to simply announce these rules and then sit back and watch them being broken. Does the government have any specific plan to ensure that these directives will be followed this time around? If so, we have not been made privy to it.

This state of affairs is all the more concerning given that, on Thursday, the health minister reiterated how serious the Covid-19 situation is in the country, and stressed the importance of getting virus transmission under control. Not too long ago, he had warned that the country's health infrastructure was not enough to cope with the rising number of coronavirus cases and that it could face imminent collapse. In this situation, it is incomprehensible why the authorities did not consult experts or attempt to lift restrictions in phases and/or according to the situation profile of different sectors.

Even though we commend the government for restarting the vaccination campaign, we must remember that it might be a long time before the entire targeted population gets at least a first dose. Until we reach this vaccination target, there is no alternative to taking measures to reduce Covid-19 transmission through strict enforcement of the health guidelines. Without increasing awareness on the importance of following these guidelines, and without taking concrete steps to enforce them, a relaxation/lifting of lockdown will only make the current Covid-19 situation worse.

Digital access comes before digital learning

Govt must address digital divide for new learning contents to benefit all

WE appreciate the government's initiative to buy new digital contents containing interactive and communicative lessons to help secondary students tap the potential of distance learning. The contents—to be aired on TV and also uploaded on different educational websites—will consist of recorded video lectures as well as visual presentations on various subjects including infographics and slideshows, so that students can easily understand them. The broader objective, according to the National Curriculum and Textbook Board, is to help make up for the learning loss caused by school closures since the start of the pandemic. With all educational institutions shuttered for nearly 17 months now and the prospect of reopening still seeming distant amid soaring Covid infections, this is a small but potentially impactful step targeting a vital group of the student population.

While, as always, proper execution is key to the success of this initiative—and one wonders if this couldn't have come sooner—our immediate concern is how much of an impact it will have given the existing digital divide in the country. It's well-known that initiatives taken so far by the government to ensure learning continuity have fallen far short of expectations. But what little it did hasn't had the desired outcome either, because of lack of access to digital devices and internet among students from rural and lower-income backgrounds. School students in particular suffered enormously because of this, to a point that Unesco called "a generational catastrophe." According to a joint study by Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC) and Brac Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) released in May, the prolonged school closure has put a minimum of 3.42 million primary students and 2.50 million secondary students at risk of learning loss. Researchers behind the survey said a large number of students either were not studying at all or became irregular in their studies. Many dropped out of schools, and many were forced into marriage.

The future implication of this state of affairs is not hard to imagine. Introducing new learning contents is of course important, but far more important is to ensure its benefit reaches all students, not just those who have the "privilege" of access. This will no doubt further increase the divide between the privileged and the underprivileged in society. Unfortunately, despite repeated urgings, the education authorities have failed to come up with an effective learning continuity plan in all these months, nor were they able to offer a precise timetable for school reopening, which has become essential regardless of the present coronavirus situation. We urge the government to take urgent steps in this regard, in consultation with experts in the field. And for now, the ever-festering digital divide must be bridged, if we are to reap the benefits of what small learning measures being taken.

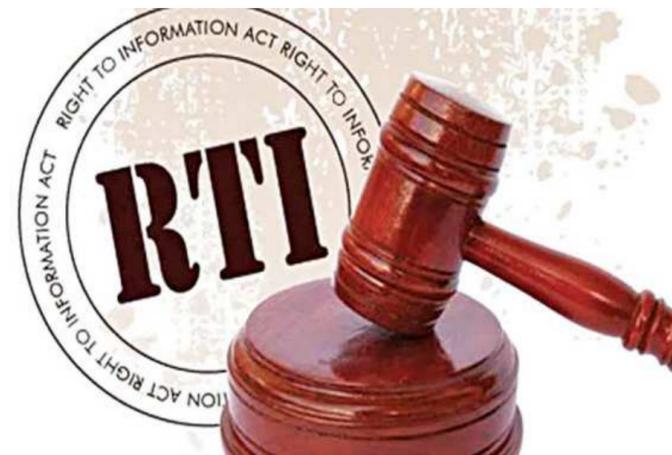


PHOTO: COLLECTED

to Information (RTI) Act facilitates easy sharing of information. The situation is reversed where this is not the case.

With this in mind, we decided to take a fresh look at the situation of RTI regimes in South Asia in more recent times. We wanted to observe the trend in public use of the law, the response of the authorities and the role of the Information Commissions in resolving conflicts between the two sides.

Pakistan was the first country in South Asia to adopt an RTI law in the form of an ordinance by a military ruler in 2002. Since it lacked the basic elements and safeguards of an effective transparency regime, it was replaced by a more balanced Right of Access to Information Act in 2017. It appears to have generated renewed hope.

In the example from Pakistan (Appeal No 060-06/19), an RTI application, submitted in April 2019, sought from the Registrar of the Supreme Court some basic information relating to staff members of the apex body, such as the number of sanctioned posts, number of vacancies,

Act and was, therefore, not required to provide the requested information.

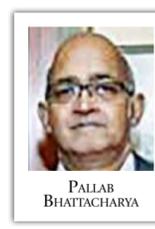
The Commission, however, stated quite unequivocally that "the judiciary's independence and separation from [the] executive is certainly ensured by the Constitution but it doesn't and shouldn't be construed to mean that [the] judiciary is not accountable and responsive to citizens of the country, who have created all state institutions through legislation enacted by their elected representatives and who are to exercise authority as a sacred trust, as provided in the Preamble to the Constitution of Pakistan." The appeal was allowed, and the Registrar ordered to share the requested information.

In the Sri Lankan example (RTIC/22/2017), a citizen submitted a request to the Presidential Secretariat in February 2017 seeking a copy of the report of a commission of inquiry into the death of the founder and former leader of the Sri Lanka Muslim Congress, M.H.M. Ashraff, who had been killed in a helicopter accident in 2000. When the

Public distrust of governments is less pronounced in countries where a Right to Information (RTI) Act facilitates easy sharing of information.

As the ministry declined to disclose the information requested, citing a specific exemption under the Indian RTI Act, the applicant appealed to the CIC. Commissioner Saroj Punhani accepted the appeal and directed the Public Information Officer to provide all the documents on a working Google Drive link to the applicant. She chided him for not providing justification for his denial and "non-application of mind in dealing with matters under the RTI Act." She

A stormy parliamentary session and clouds over Indian democracy



PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

about Indian democracy.

The sittings of both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha were cut short by a couple of days ahead of their schedule, as the entire session remained to be hit by opposition protests over the alleged use of Pegasus spyware, central farm laws and other issues. The opposition repeatedly demanded a statement from the government on the Pegasus spyware issue, while the ruling party stonewalled any discussion on it in the House.

In terms of productivity, the monsoon session saw the lowest figure of the current 17th Lok Sabha which functioned for slightly over 21 hours against the stipulated 96 hours. The Rajya Sabha registered a slightly better record of functioning for 28 hours, out of the available 97.30 hours.

The session saw unsavoury scenes of opposition lawmakers snatching papers from a minister, tearing and flinging papers and files at the presiding officers of both the Houses, suspension of a Trinamool Congress member-cum-doctor for a greater part of the session, and a similar action against six MPs of the party for a day for "unruly" behaviour. The last day's session in Lok Sabha was no less unedifying—opposition lawmakers sitting and standing on the table of parliamentary officials. On their part, the opposition accused the government of bringing in "outsiders" who are not part of parliament security to manhandle their lawmakers. Seven ministers released a video showing a woman marshal of parliament surrounded by opposition MPs, and alleged threats made by the opposition for bringing in bills for passage.

Outside the parliament, one saw opposition lawmakers cycling their way into the parliament complex protesting

fuel price hikes—not once but twice—and Rahul Gandhi leading the Congress tractor march to oppose farm legislation. What comes out through all these visuals and trading of charges between the ruling party and the opposition is the shrinking of space for dialogue and democracy.

It was just for a day that the opposition pressed the pause button on their protests and disruptions when the parliament gave its stamp of approval to the passage of a constitution amendment bill that restores the power of the states—which was

were passed by the House without the opposition's participation in debates over them.

The monsoon session has raised serious structural issues about democracy in India. One, it has been suggested that the ruling party has a bigger responsibility to take the opposition on board in ensuring a smooth parliament session and passage of legislation after threadbare discussion. This issue had also come up in the winter session of parliament in 2010 when the Congress-led United Progressive

Parliament is not just a forum for passing bills but also one for listening to and accommodating the opposition's views and concerns.



What happened in the just-concluded monsoon session of India's parliament, with sustained opposition protests and disruptions, has not been seen in recent years.

PHOTO: AFP

taken away by a Supreme Court ruling in May—to come up with their own lists of Other Backward Classes (OBC) for social welfare schemes and other benefits. It was the only instance in the just-concluded monsoon session when the ruling party and the opposition buried their differences and came together to pass a piece of legislation full of political significance to woo a vital section of the electorate. Clearly, neither the opposition nor the treasury bench wanted to be seen as obstructing a law that relates to OBC. It shows how parties across the spectrum can come together to take care of their political and electoral interests. Barring the bill relating to OBC, all other bills

Alliance was in power and protests by the BJP, then the main opposition, led to the washout of the entire session. (The saffron party had demanded the formation of the Joint Parliamentary Committee to probe alleged graft in the 2G telecom spectrum allocation case.)

Secondly, it has been also suggested that the government could have referred some of the key bills passed in the session with the help of its commanding—some say "brutish"—majority to parliamentary select committees, which are also a forum of parliamentary oversight. It must be noted that the ruling party cannot be faulted for securing a commanding parliamentary majority

nor is it mandatory to refer bills to select committees before being tabled in the House. But it certainly is the responsibility of the ruling party to ensure the opposition is on board. At the same time, the opposition should introspect whether it is right in being fixated on one particular issue, however important it is.

Without in any way lessening the importance of committees as an important adjunct of the institution of parliament, discussions in such committees, which can be time-consuming at times, do not necessarily translate into consensus in the House. Referring bills to select committees should not be used as a convenient method of avoiding taking hard decisions or putting issues on the backburner.

On the other hand, India's ruling party should not view the opposition as a "disrupting" force or an adversary. It has been rightly argued that the parliament is not just a forum for passing bills but also one for listening to and accommodating the opposition's views and concerns irrespective of its numerical strength. Passing bills in parliament without a substantive debate where multiple views are heard is not illustrative of a healthy and functional democracy.

The incidence of disruption of parliamentary proceedings due to sustained opposition protests is nothing new in India. But what happened in this monsoon session has not been seen in recent years. This has made democracy-watchers quite worried. India's democracy has weathered many a storm in the past, and one hopes this too would pass.

Pallab Bhattacharya is a special correspondent of The Daily Star. He writes from New Delhi, India.



Empathy and Bangabandhu

FAKRUL ALAM

Empathy, the Wikipedia entry on the word tells us, includes “caring for other people and having a desire to help them; experiencing emotions that match another person’s emotions; discerning what another person is thinking or feeling; and making less distinct the differences between the self and the other.” To anyone who has read Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’s published works or heard at least a few of his speeches, it will become obvious that these are the qualities that made him come so extraordinarily close to people throughout the length and breadth of Bangladesh as well as elsewhere, and led him to represent them. That is exactly what made him win the hearts of his people.

Bangabandhu’s posthumously published works evidence endlessly his capacity for empathy. Read *The Unfinished Memoirs* (2012), for abundant examples of his caring, giving nature and ability to empathize with others. Not part of the original manuscript, but placed as the apt epigraph of this most caring and fatherly of all leaders, we read these very apt lines he had scribbled in English in his personal notebook on May 3, 1973. “As a man, what concerns mankind concerns me. As a Bengalee, I am involved in all that concerns Bengalees. This involvement is born of, and nourished by love, which gives meaning to my politics and to my very being.”

In *The Unfinished Memoirs* we thus find the 17-year-old following his tutor’s advice to work for the Muslim Welfare Association in Gopalganj “to help poor students” of the town (8), even doing so, as he himself confesses, quite aggressively at times. In Kolkata, and while studying at Islamia College, he tries to alleviate the sufferings of the famine-struck people of the city as well as of his home town, Gopalganj. He becomes heavily involved in “the famine relief effort”; along with others, he “opened quite a few gruel kitchens” then (18). Initially opposed to the Muslim League because he felt that it was largely directed by the moneyed class, he later joined the party because he was attracted to Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy, clearly because he found in him the quality basic to all empathetic people: he was such “a generous man!” (51). In the Calcutta riots of 1946, we find him defending Muslims but also rescuing stranded Hindus and deploring people who had “lost their human sides in the violence” (69). Soon, he volunteers to join in relief efforts going on in Patna, once again moved by empathy, which made him reach out to the distressed now as always. At the end of the Calcutta and Bihar riots and subsequent bloody events related to the partition of India, Bangabandhu had learnt a lesson from the hard, horrifying times that he would soon be delivering to everyone and that would be one of keystones of his subsequent political philosophy when he moved to Dhaka in 1947—“the most pressing need of our time—[is] communal harmony” (90).

In Dhaka we see Bangabandhu reaching out—sometimes way out—to help people in distress. In addition to getting involved in the movement to establish Bengali as a state language of Pakistan and in student politics, he joined the movement to support farm

laborers in Faridpur, Cumilla, Dhaka and Khulna districts deprived of their rightful share because the government had arbitrarily decided to enforce the “cordon” system” even after these migrant and seasonal laborers had done their work. In between his travels to these and other districts, he joined the movement of the lower-class employees of Dhaka University, not only agitating for their rights but also joining other student activists to raise funds for these unjustly deprived poor people.

Because he felt that the Muslim League leaders had totally alienated themselves from the masses by such arbitrary measures and its support of leaders who had no feelings for the Bangla language, Bangabandhu decided to abandon the party and help form the Awami Muslim League. He realized that the Muslim League simply was not interested in doing anything “to alleviate their sufferings” (134). How could he, truly a man of the people, be with the Muslim Leaguers? Empathy, here and everywhere, motivated Bangabandhu to good works and directed his political moves. For the suffering, he was always willing to give up everything. As he puts it at this point of his narrative: “I was able to come to the conclusion that to engage in politics one must be ready to make huge sacrifices to make our people happy” (137). To be a truly successful leader, what was needed he knew by instinct as well as by his own observation of the failure of the Muslim League and the popularity of pro-Bangladeshi leaders like him springing up everywhere was that “people can be won over by good manners, love and sympathy and not by force, hatred or oppressive means” (201).

An interesting passage in *The Unfinished Memoirs* reveals the



eco-critical consciousness that Bangabandhu feels had been nurtured in him by Bengal’s landscape—as opposed to the harshness of the desert landscapes of West Pakistan. Such consciousness leads to love of nature as well as nurtures in people empathy for the land and its people. In his first visit to Karachi in 1952 we find him thinking about how wherever one gazed in Bangladesh “one saw a sea of grass.” How could one born in such a land ever get to like “the pitiless landscape” he saw spread before him now? For him the conclusion was inevitable—pity and sympathy for others are bred in his people from birth—“we were born into a world that abounded in beauty: we loved

whatever was beautiful” (214).

Bangabandhu was clearly an unabashedly sentimental as well as patriotic person. An instance of how he could be both emotional and compassionate can be found at the end of the book when he narrates an encounter he has with an impoverished old woman while on the campaign trail in his constituency during the 1954 provincial elections. The woman had been waiting for hours because she had heard he would be in the area. She offered him milk to drink, betel leaves to chew, and even a little money to help him out in the elections. Listening to her, Bangabandhu says in his autobiography, he would leave with “eyes... moist with tears.” On that day he promised himself: “I would do nothing to betray my people” (261).

The Unfinished Memoirs has become a valuable source for anyone trying to understand the early life and times of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. However, anyone trying to understand fully the man who is the founding father of Bangladesh, including his capacity for empathy, should also read his other posthumously published works. *The Prison Diaries* (2018) is an essential sourcebook for those wanting to know more about his consciousness and the reasons behind his greatness. Written during and about various prison terms that he served because of the West Pakistani politicians and generals and their East Pakistani lackeys who wanted to disable him politically, this book contains a wealth of information illuminating his personality and illustrating the benevolent and humane emotions that drove him.

The first of the four notebooks reproduced in *The Prison Diaries* contains detailed descriptions of prison and prison life. Anyone

them were measures we see him deploying in his dealings with such prisoners here and in the other note books. Bangabandhu’s compassionate accounts amply indicate that a man is not born to be a prisoner; unjust and unsympathetic systems mostly make prisoners.

The remaining three books of *The Prison Diaries* focus on the time Bangabandhu spent in prison in the later 1960s as East Pakistanis moved closer and closer towards becoming Bangladeshis inspired by his visionary leadership and sacrifices. But everywhere in these notebooks readers continue to meet the caring, altruistic, compassionate man reaching out spontaneously to help others in



trouble. In the entry for 9 June, 1966, we thus read of his concern for young men herded into cells after being beaten up badly by the police. What he does next is to persuade the guards who clearly respected him a lot to ensure that these young prisoners were not abused physically anymore and given water to bathe and food to eat.

In prison, Bangabandhu’s main link with the external world is the newspapers delivered to him. As he reads them, he keeps thinking about the plight of his people. A report about the havoc floods were causing that year to Bengalees depresses him but also makes him indignant about a careless government. Why was it letting its citizens starve and do nothing about the floods? Why had the government stopped importing bidi leaves—driving bidi workers into unemployment? When his wife brings food she has cooked for Bangabandhu in one of her visits, he shares them with the other inmates. The entry for 28-30 April, 1967, in fact, shows him taking advantage of extra food items supplied from his house as well using his jail quota to cook a Khichuri dish to the prisoners and guards around him!

An absorbing aspect of *The Prison Diaries* is the empathy Bangabandhu shows for the prison’s avian visitors. When two yellow birds he would see regularly in a past prison stint don’t show up in the term he was serving then, in his notebook entry

of 18 June 1966, he tries to imagine the birds’ feelings about him. He wonders: had they left because “they had become upset” at his not being there for them in those years (95)? A little later we see his happiness at a hen and its chicks and a pigeon that has befriended him. He tells us with the ecological consciousness referred to above, “Trees, the yellow birds, the swallows and the crows are my friends in the lonely corner” of the prison he is allowed to go out to in the daytime (230). He protects the pigeons fiercely from the guards and others who might bother them. His only enemies are the crows who bother him, but even they, he feels, can teach Bengalis a lot when he sees three of them unite to defeat an

healthy bodies, he thinks instantly “about the unfortunate children” of his country (78). Thinking of the women Bangabandhu comes across in the transformed China, he thinks ruefully “My homeland was a place where our womenfolk had to starve to death” (82). In Nanjing, he plays with children members of his delegation come across, even delaying his group’s visit for this reason. But he has the kind of personality that cannot help but reach out to others—old or young. As Bangabandhu says in the entry, “I love mingling with children” (88).

Reflecting on the success the Chinese had in rehabilitating women who had turned to prostitution because of poverty through well-planned schemes, Bangabandhu thinks of women he had come across in his country and their fathers who had no access to such schemes. We learn at this point how he had even “skipped” his “intermediate examination” so that he could “devote” himself to relief work during the 1943 Bengal famine (127).

Bangabandhu reveals his concern at the plight of women in his own country who cannot be married off because of their parent’s inability to pay dowry. This moves Bangabandhu to his resolution to “launch a campaign against this practice” along with others on his return (129). Indeed, quite a few pages of *New China 1952* are devoted to Chinese women, for their transformed situation seems to have led to extended reflections in him on how to alleviate the sufferings of Bengali women. Bangabandhu has no doubt that “if half of a nation’s people end up doing nothing but giving birth to children, it will never be able to attain any kind of status in the world” (132).

The three posthumously published works based on notebooks that he filled up in the many prison terms Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was force to serve time and again reveal a man who had an extraordinary capacity for empathy, for loving others and caring for all living things—human or non-human. His caring nature is consistent in these notebooks and we see him putting himself in the situation of the distressed or deprived and standing up for the oppressed time and again. We see him too trying to experience the emotions of the suffering—whether women, men or even the animals he came across in prison. A loving son, husband and father, he will leave them and even go to prison repeatedly to help others and stand up for the rights of the subjugated and deprived people of Bangladesh.

On August 15 every year, let us remember how this loving, compassionate and large-hearted man was gunned down mercilessly along with all his family members except his daughters by men who had no human side to them and no compassion at all. Let us learn from Bangabandhu’s life and works as we move forward in the task of developing our nation to the utmost and follow him in cultivating our human side for our own self-improvement as well as for building a better Bangladesh.

Fakrul Alam is Director, Bangabandhu Research Institute for Peace and Liberty, and UGC Professor, Department of English, University of Dhaka.



WHAT TO WATCH

T SPORTS
Bangladesh Premier League
Rahmatganj vs Mohammedan
Live from 4:00 pm
Brothers Union vs Chittagong
Abahani
Live from 6:15 pm
SONY SIX & TEN 3
India vs England
Second Test (Day 3)

Live from 4:00 pm
PTV SPORTS
Pakistan vs West Indies
First Test (Day 3)
Live from 9:00 pm
STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
English Premier League
Manchester United vs Leeds
United
Live from 5:30 pm

Chelsea vs Crystal Palace
Live from 8:00 pm
Norwich vs Liverpool
Live from 10:30 pm
MTV
La Liga
Mallorca vs Betis
Live from 11:30 pm
Alaves vs Real Madrid
Live from 2:00 am (Sunday)

Tough friendlies ahead for Bangladesh

SPORTS REPORTER



After being demoted four places to the 188th position in the FIFA World Ranking on Thursday, Bangladesh national football team are scheduled to play against two superior sides -- 101th-ranked Kyrgyzstan and 102nd-ranked Palestine -- between August 30 to September 7 of the upcoming FIFA window.

Apart from these two matches, the men in red and green are also slated to play against Kyrgyzstan U-23 side. All three matches are considered as part of the national football team's preparation for October's SAFF Championship in Maldives.

not inclined to bring any massive change to his 27-member squad.

Following the matches in Kyrgyzstan, the booters are expected to return home on September 11 and join a 10-day national camp for October's SAFF Championship on September 18 as the Bangladesh Football Federation will look to complete three pending premier league matches of Bashundhara Kings, who are now in Maldives to participate in the AFC Cup from August 18 to 24.

Meanwhile, Bhutan failed to get their government's permission to participate in the SAFF Championship, leaving the regional football tourney with a five-team competition in which the top two teams will play the final following a round-robin league format.

Pochettino willing to wait on Messi

REUTERS, Paris

The arrival of Lionel Messi at Paris Saint Germain has created a positive mood at the Ligue 1 club but he is unlikely to play any part in Saturday's home game against Strasbourg, coach Mauricio Pochettino said.

Speaking at Friday's news conference ahead of the league fixture after Messi joined PSG from Barcelona earlier this week, Pochettino added his first task was to make sure a star-studded outfit began to look the sum of its parts.

PSG surrendered the French league title to Lille last season and were eliminated in the Champions League semi-finals by Manchester City despite boasting the likes of Neymar, Kylian Mbappe and Angel Di Maria in their ranks.

Adding Messi to the fold will have raised expectations among fans and the board at the Qatar-owned club, whose management have invested heavily in a bid to see the club win their maiden title in Europe's premier club competition.

But Pochettino, who took over at PSG midway through last season



It is his second day of training after a month since he last played at the Copa America. We will take things step by step, get to know each other and have him feel fit and comfortable so that he is able to make his debut when he is fully fit.

MAURICIO POCHETTINO, PSG COACH

in January, struck a note of caution after 34-year-old Messi arrived from Barcelona, his only previous professional club.

"Our challenge now is to ensure all of these top players form a team capable of meeting all the challenges ahead of it," said

Pochettino. "We want to make sure that this team becomes a strong unit."

"As for when we might see Leo Messi in action, it is his second day of training after a month since he played the last game at the Copa America."

"We will take things step by step, get to know each other and have him feel fit and comfortable so that he is able to make his debut when he is fully fit."

Messi, who won 10 LaLiga and four Champions League titles during a 17-year long stint at Barcelona, led Argentina to the Copa America title with a 1-0 win over hosts and traditional rivals Brazil in the July 11 final.

When asked about the future of striker Mbappe, who has been linked with a move to Real Madrid either during the current transfer window or next summer when his contract with PSG expires, Pochettino said: "Kylian is our player."

"We all know that Leo Messi is the best, or one of the best players in the world, without any doubt. Nevertheless we have other players as well and Kylian is also one of the best players in the world."



"We are going to Kyrgyzstan to play three international matches against Palestine on September 5, Kyrgyzstan on September 7 and Kyrgyzstan U-23 on September 9 under the FIFA window as part of national team's preparation for upcoming SAFF Championship," Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) vice-chairman Kazi Nabil Ahmed told the reporters in a virtual press conference after the meeting of the National Teams Committee.

"We are hoping to get the final approval from FIFA by Monday about the FIFA friendlies under its window," Nabil added.

The charges of Jamie Day, who has been in quarantine after arriving here yesterday morning, are expected to fly out for Kyrgyzstan on either August 31 or September 1 following the completion of ongoing Bangladesh Premier League on August 27.

"Upcoming games will be tough but it may be an opportunity to implement tactical variations with SAFF tournament in mind," said Day while adding that he is

Replying to a query, BFF vice-chairman Nabil said, "As the SAFF championship will be held on a round-robin basis, our chance will be fair because we will get an opportunity to play against all participants, so our team will be able to show their real performance. Also, we are getting more time to prepare this time due to the three matches against strong teams in Kyrgyzstan and with a 10-day training camp in Dhaka."

We might not have produced good results in the past due to luck or bad performances but this time we are looking to give our best effort."

Nabil also informed that they are planning to avail the November 8-16 FIFA window to play two international matches against either Mongolia or Nepal as the discussion with the two associations is going on.

Among all five participants of SAFF Championship, Bangladesh are only ahead of 205th-ranked Sri Lanka but behind 105th-ranked India, 158th-ranked Maldives and 168th-ranked Nepal.



Domingo's contract extended till 2023

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo advocates opting for the typical strategy of utilising the home conditions to gain confidence, even if the victories may seem pyrrhic.

Now that Domingo, appointed on a two-year contract earlier back in August 2019, got his contract extension till the end of 2023, it will be interesting to see how, and if, his mindset changes with the vision of the long-run.

"Yes, we have decided to extend Domingo's contract till the end of the ODI world cup [October-November, 2023]. And regarding other members of the coaching staff, we will arrive at a decision soon," Akram Khan, one of the selectors of Bangladesh cricket, told The Daily Star.

Prior to the Zimbabwe tour this year, doomday had loomed large for the Tigers under Domingo as they were desperate to return to winning ways after a string of inconsistent performances across the formats, especially in the Tests, at home or otherwise.

When push came to shove, the think-tank once again took the go-to approach of preparing slow and low pitches for the home series against Australia. Eventually it all paid dividends though, as Bangladesh went on to register a historic 4-1 series win over the Aussies for the first time in the shortest format.

Domingo admitted that Bangladesh has a lot of room for improvement in T20 cricket, and pressed the need to instil confidence through the act of winning

matches as well.

However, there were questions concerning on whether the sluggish pitches in Mirpur, which produced low-scoring totals throughout the latest series, can be part of an ideal preparation for the Tigers ahead of the ICC World T20 later this year, and with that in mind, should there be better sporting tracks for the upcoming home series against New Zealand?

"The runs depend on which type of pitch you are playing as chasing 200 runs was not that difficult in Zimbabwe and I know that we have to score big runs but that should be in good wickets. I am hoping for a better pitch against New Zealand however I know that we won't be getting a pitch that will have seam movements. So I am looking forward to a sporting wicket for the batsman. Whether you score 140 or 180, wins always gives you confidence. So please try to remain positive, okay? Be positive," Domingo told the media.

Despite being surprised at not seeing any members of the New Zealand World Cup squad for their upcoming Bangladesh tour, the South African believes the conditions in Bangladesh are not that far from being ideal in preparing for the world cup, which will take place in the Middle East later this year.

"There is a scope to beat any opponent from such a series and it is very important to gain self-confidence. I know the fact that we still have to improve a lot in all the departments," he said. Now, it remains to be seen whether Domingo keeps sticking to his confidence-gaining mantra at home over the next couple of years and more as Bangladesh is yet to become a consistent side while touring abroad.

Saif beat Abahani after four years

SPORTS REPORTER



A brace from Nigerian forward Kenneth Ikechukwu helped Saif SC to a 3-2 win over six-time champions Abahani after four years in a Bangladesh Premier League match at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

On their debut season in 2017-18, Saif surprised Abahani with a 1-1 draw in their maiden meeting during the Federation Cup before beating the country's most successful club 2-1 in the reverse fixture Bangladesh Premier League following a 3-2 defeat in the first league meeting. It was Abahani's second league defeat at the hands of Saif SC in six league matches.

Saif SC, however, were lucky to register their 11th win in 20 matches as Abahani forwards Faisal Ahmed



Shitol, Jewel Rana and Kervens Belfort squandered numerous chances before Saif capitalised on two counter-attacks in five minutes to take a 2-0 lead before the break.

Saif SC goalkeeper Pappu Hossain also made two brilliant saves before Nigerian duo of

Ngwoke and John Okoli struck one goal apiece.

Okoli ran down the left flank to advance into the box before chipping it to compatriot Ngwoke, who dove in the air to find the back of the net in the 43rd minute with substitute goalkeeper Sultan

Ahmed looking helpless at near post while Okoli beat Sultan with a grounder from 25 yards in the stoppage time of the first half to double the margin.

After resumption, Belfort reimbursed one with his second effort in the 76th minute before Jewel Rana drove a cutback home to level the margin two minutes later.

Abahani goalkeeper Sultan showed incompetence in conceding the third goal when Ngwoke drove one from outside the box in the 81st minute. A third defeat left Abahani in third position, two points behind Sheikh Jamal, who have 42 points with a game in hand.

In the day's other match, Bangladesh Police beat Muktiyoddha Sangsad 3-1 to raise their tally to 22 points from 20 matches, seven more than 11th-placed Muktiyoddha Sangsad.



England's James Anderson celebrates taking the wicket of India's Ajinkya Rahane on the second day of the second Test at Lord's in London on Friday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Another five-for for Anderson

AFP, LONDON

England moved to 23 without losing any wicket at Tea on the second day of the second Test against India on Friday after bowling out the visitors for 364 in their first innings. Both openers -- Dom Sibley and Rory Burns -- were batting on 11.

Earlier, James Anderson, England's all-time leading Test wicket-taker, took 5-62 in 29 overs to dismantle India.

It was the 31st time in 164 matches that Anderson had taken five wickets in a Test innings and the seventh occasion when the 39-year-old had done so at Lord's. Already the most successful fast bowler in Test history, Anderson now has 626 wickets in the format with only two retired spinners in Sri Lanka's Muttiah Muralitharan (800 wickets) and Australia's Shane Warne (708) ahead of him.

Earlier, India opener KL Rahul added just two runs to his overnight century before he was caught at short cover off paceman Ollie Robinson for 129.

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Overcoming all barriers

The story of Mayuri, an award-winning handicraft entrepreneur in Jamalpur

AKANDA MUHAMMAD JAHID

She was born into a prosperous family.

But ahead of puberty, Arifa Yasmin Mayuri began feeling gender dysphoria -- a conflict between a person's assigned gender and their identity. As she approached adolescence, she finally realised she was not into typically "boy things".

Her battle began on multiple fronts as she started living as a hijra or transgender person -- facing unimaginable mockery, hatred and structural discrimination in a largely conservative and patriarchal society.

But nothing could stop Mayuri from standing on her own two feet and pursuing her dreams.

After a long struggle, Mayuri is now a successful handicraft entrepreneur in Jamalpur and has won multiple awards, including the National SME Women Entrepreneur Award in 2019 and the Joyeeta



Award in 2016. She is the first-ever transgender to win either award.

"Obviously, it has been a difficult journey," she said.

"My first battle was for my gender identity, and then for livelihood. Now, I am fighting for the rights of my community."

"I know more hurdles will come along. I will have to deal with it and move on," said a resolute Mayuri.

The 36-year-old has been able to thrive in a country where most transgender people get by on collecting alms or doing sex work amid widespread discrimination. They remain one of the most marginalised groups in Bangladesh despite being officially recognised as a third gender since 2014.

HURDLES APLENTY
The idea of running a business came to Mayuri's mind when she was a student at Mymensingh Polytechnic Institute.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



A man on a wheelchair filling out a form for Covid-19 test at Mugda Medical College Hospital in the capital yesterday. With the daily death toll and the number of new virus cases still high, most of the testing centres are seeing large crowds even on Fridays.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

COVID ORIGINS PROBE China rejects WHO's call

Says it's bringing Delta-driven outbreak under control

AGENCIES

China yesterday rejected the World Health Organization's calls for a renewed probe into the origins of Covid-19, saying it supported "scientific" over "political" efforts to find out how the virus started.

Pressure is once more mounting on Beijing to consider a fresh probe into the origins of a pandemic which has killed more than four million people and paralysed economies worldwide since it first emerged in the central Chinese city of Wuhan.

A delayed and heavily politicised visit by a WHO team of international experts went to Wuhan in January 2021 to produce a first phase report, which was written in conjunction with their Chinese counterparts. It failed to conclude how the virus began.

On Thursday the WHO urged China to share raw data from the earliest Covid-19 cases to revive its probe into the origins of the disease.

China hit back, repeating its position that the initial investigation was enough and that calls for further data were

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

ROAD TO FREEDOM
THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

Nixon warns Yahya of famine

I am Justice: Yahya Khan. Hindusthan Standard, August 15, 1971.

AUGUST 14, 1971
SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

NIXON'S LETTER TO YAHYA
In a letter dated August 14, 1971, US President Richard Nixon advised Pakistan President Yahya Khan to step up relief efforts to avert the risk of famine. Terming it as the "most immediate priority" Nixon said, "This step is fundamental to progress in re-establishing normal conditions. It will help those of us who want to help and will reduce the pretext for interference."
Nixon also advised Yahya to continue to enlist the support of the elected representatives of the East Pakistani people in "the urgent work of national reconciliation".

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

11-year-old girl raped in B'baria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

An 11-year-old girl has reportedly been raped by her neighbour in Kasba upazila of Brahmanbaria.

Mohammad Alamgir Bhuiyan, officer-in-charge of Kasba Police Station, said the incident took place on August 8.

The victim's father filed a case against Alauddin Ali, 20, of the same upazila, on Thursday night, he added.

According to the case statement, Alauddin called the girl when she was playing on a street adjacent to her home on that day. He then forcibly took her to a secluded place and raped her.

At one point, hearing the girl's scream, locals rescued her and rushed to Kasba Upazila Health Complex.

Later, as her physical condition was deteriorating, on-duty doctors sent her to

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Ghostly rings found around a black hole



CNN ONLINE

Black holes are one of the universe's ultimate mysteries, hard to even imagine. But thanks to a recently released Nasa image, we can visualize one a little bit better now.

Ghostly glowing rings were captured around a black hole by Nasa's Chandra X-ray Observatory and Neil Gehrels Swift Observatory. The X-ray images reveal what would otherwise be invisible.

The black hole exists in a binary system with a companion star -- and the black hole's gravity is pulling material away from the star and into a disk around itself.

The black hole and star system is called V404 Cygni, and it's about 7,800 light-years from Earth.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Pori Moni, 4 others sent to jail

Court rejects her bail plea in case under narcotics act

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Actress Pori Moni, model Mariam Akhter Mou, director Nazrul Islam Raz and two others were sent to jail yesterday in three cases filed with Banani and Mohammadpur police stations under the Narcotics Control Act.

Pori Moni's bail petition was rejected after her lawyers moved it on grounds that

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Correction

In our news report titled "Female cop files rape case against SP", published on August 13, it was stated that the case was filed against "the superintendent of police in Bagerhat". It should have been "an officer of the rank of superintendent of police stationed in Bagerhat". We regret the inadvertent error.

Problem over issuing MRPs resolved

Bangladesh embassy in the US resumes printing passports

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The shortage of passports at the Bangladesh embassy in Washington DC is coming to an end because the "technical problem" delaying the printing of machine-readable passports has been solved, the embassy said in a statement yesterday.

"At least 1,101 of the 1,364 passports that were processed from the Bangladesh Embassy in Washington DC have already been printed. These passports are expected to arrive in Washington by

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



PRAYER TIMING AUGUST 14

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4:25 12:45 4:45 6:41 8:00
JAMAAT 5:00 1:15 5:00 6:44 8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



People ignoring social distancing and health safety guidelines while shopping from hawkers on a foot bridge near the capital's New Market yesterday, the first weekend after the government lifted restrictions it imposed to curb the spread of Covid-19.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Star HEALTHLINE

Diabetes and Covid-19 WHAT TO DO

STAR HEALTH DESK

While it is unlikely that people with diabetes are more likely to contract Covid-19, they are certainly more likely to have serious complications if they contract it.

The American Diabetes Association, in a release, has stated that people with diabetes are generally more likely to have severe symptoms and complications when they are infected with any virus.

Individuals affected by diabetes, especially type-2, have an impaired

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



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