

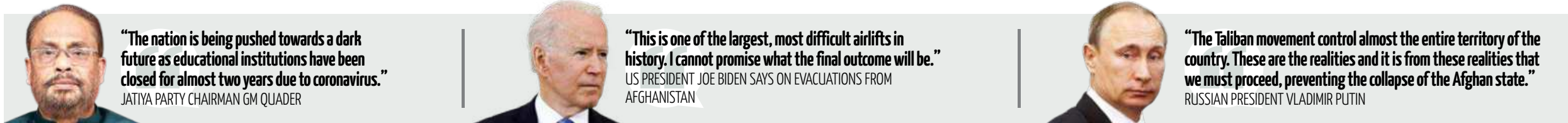


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Do users really need those?

Initiatives for state-owned social media, messenger draw quizzical response

ZARIF FAIAZ and NAHALY NAFISA KHAN

Social media users are seemingly sceptical of the government's move to introduce home-grown alternatives to Facebook, WhatsApp and other digital platforms.

They cited serious privacy and data security concerns regarding platforms developed locally when they cannot even fully trust foreign and well-established social media services.

Some said that they were unsure if "Jogajog", the government proposed alternative to Facebook, and "Alapon", the fill-in for WhatsApp, Viber and other messenger apps, would be any good at all or if they would get any traction in a market dominated by global software giants like Facebook, Tencent and Google.

They also questioned if they would get services as per their requirements.

Nadia Jahan, an executive of a marketing firm, said there was no reason why she would be willing to move to "Jogajog" from Facebook.

"I am perfectly okay with using Facebook and a localised platform does not make any sense to me. I also have friends from other countries with whom I connect on

Facebook; should I expect them to shift to "Jogajog" as well?"

Rafid Shadman, a university student, mentioned his concerns about privacy and data security.

"At a time when we are sceptical even about Facebook harvesting our data, and others monitoring our activities on Facebook, I don't feel assured about local alternatives.

"I have no way of knowing that my data and privacy will not be breached and I don't think I will feel safe exercising my freedom of speech on state-owned social media platforms."

Rasel Alam, a shopkeeper in Chandpur, said he had heard about "Jogajog" and "Alapon" being in the pipeline but he was unsure of what to feel about them.

"It can be a good initiative if the local social media is more simplified and is offered in Bangla. We want to see local news and local stories more. I mostly watch clips of Bangla TV shows and music videos on Facebook. If the local alternatives are offered fully in Bangla, showcasing all local materials, I think we will find it more

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



The scenic Shada Pathor area in Companiganj, Sylhet, has started to see tourists after a long time. Coronavirus restrictions have put many, whose livelihood depends on the tourists, out of business. Many of the tourists, however, were not maintaining social distancing or wearing masks.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

AUGUST 21 GRENADE ATTACK Carried out with patronage of BNP-Jamaat Says PM



UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said it was not possible to carry out an attack like that of August 21, 2004, had there been no direct patronage from then BNP-Jamaat government.

"They [BNP-Jamaat] thought that I had been killed [in the grenade attack], but when they came to know that I did not die they allowed four criminals to flee the country," she said.

She said the then BNP-Jamaat government assembled the terrorists and militants for carrying out such an attack

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

GOVT FORMATION TALKS Taliban co-founder now in Kabul

Anti-Taliban forces say they've taken three districts in the north; the Islamist group accused of door-to-door search for opponent

AGENCIES

Taliban leaders gathered in the Afghan capital yesterday to begin mapping out an "inclusive government", as thousands scrambled to leave the country via a chaotic evacuation dubbed one of the most difficult airlifts in history.

A senior Taliban official told AFP that Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar -- who co-founded the group -- would meet jihadi leaders, elders and politicians in the coming days, stirring faint hope they may hold good on pledges to rule differently this time around.

But the gathering also included top officials from the Haqqani network, a US-designated terrorist organisation with million-dollar bounties on its leadership.

Meanwhile, forces holding out against the Taliban in northern Afghanistan yesterday said they have taken three districts close to the Panjshir valley where remnants of government forces and other militia groups have gathered.

Defence minister General Bismillah Mohammadi, who has vowed to resist the Taliban, said in a tweet that the districts of Deh Saleh, Bano and Pul-Hesar in the neighbouring province of Baghlan to the north of Panjshir had been taken.

It was not immediately clear what forces were involved but the incident

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar

Barishal AL, admin at odds

SUSHANATA GHOSH, Barishal

The local administration and the ruling Awami League men in Barishal appear to be at loggerheads following the violence in front of Barishal Sadar UNO's office which left around 50 people injured on Wednesday night.

Panic has gripped Barishal city with many AL activists on the run to avoid arrest.

The situation appears to have worsened after Sheikh Sayed Ahmed Manna, councillor of ward 21 and president of the ward AL, was arrested in Dhaka on Friday night over the incident, said local politicians.

Wednesday night's violence took place after dozens of ruling party men went in front of the UNO's office on C&B Road in Barishal city to take down banners put up marking the National Mourning Day.

Witnesses said the AL men misbehaved with UNO Munibur Rahman and broke open the gate of his official residence after being barred by on-duty Ansar members from removing the banners. Later, Ansar and police members baton-charged the crowd and dispersed it.

At least 600 people, including Barishal City Corporation (BCC) Mayor Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah, were accused in two cases filed over the incident.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Serving in silence

Country's lone human tissue bank offers hope, especially for the poor patients

NILIMA JAHAN

When Shreyon Paul suffered a second-degree burn to his back, doctors at a local hospital were not sure if the nine-year-old would ever fully recover.

The deep burn from boiled water had destroyed the affected tissues, they told his father Swapan Paul, from Gazipur.

After he was taken to Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmad Medical College Hospital in Gazipur, doctors told the desperate father about amniotic membrane treatment. It is a therapy to help stimulate tissue growth more quickly and efficiently than traditional skin grafting and is available at the public hospital.

The thought of the cost worried Swapan. However, when he went to collect the tissue at the Institute of Tissue Banking and Biomaterial Research (ITBBR), the country's lone tissue bank in Savar, he was surprised and relieved at once.

There was little hassle and it cost him almost "nothing", given the gravity of the burn in his son's body. "I collected the tissue for a token amount, which was a great help for me," he said.

If recommended by a public hospital doctor, poor patients can get it even for free.

Back at Shaheed Tajuddin hospital, doctors placed the required amnion tissue on Shreyon's wound a day after its collection, and it started healing rapidly.

"My son is doing great now and the scars have also faded," Swapan told The Daily Star.

Shreyon is not alone. Many patients in need of tissue for transplant and bone grafting are turning to the Institute.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 2



A fire at a building on Airport Road in the capital's Banani causes a gridlock on the key city street. City dwellers waited hours as traffic hardly moved on streets affected by the knock-on effect. Inset, members of fire service trying to douse the fire.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Fire sparks gridlocks in busy city areas

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Traffic in some parts of the capital came to a standstill yesterday due to a fire at a commercial building on Airport Road at Banani's Chairmanbari.

As the north-bound side of the road remained closed to traffic for nearly seven hours since the fire broke out around 9:15am, different roads across the city saw long tailbacks with thousands suffering.

There were gridlocks in Uttara, near the airport, and Gulshan as well. This caused particular stress to those who were scheduled to fly out of the country.

CNG driver Alamgir Hossain said it took him four hours to drive past the Chairmanbari area. "The distance is merely a kilometre. I picked up a woman and two children from Mohammadpur. They

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MORE NEWS

UNITE TO DEFEAT BJP
Sonia Gandhi urges
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What is Alesha Card

A concern of Alesha Holdings Limited

To Know More: Page No. 4

17th anniversary of Aug 21 grenade attack observed

AGENCIES

The country observed the 17th anniversary of the August 21 grenade attack on an Awami League rally in Dhaka with various programmes yesterday.

On this day in 2004, a grisly grenade attack was carried out on an anti-terrorism rally organised by AL at Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital.

Sheikh Hasina, then leader of the opposition, was the target of the attack. The BNP-Jamaat alliance government was in office at that time.

At least 24 people, including AL women affairs secretary and late President Zillur Rahman's wife Ivy Rahman, were killed. Three hundred others were also injured.

AL President Sheikh Hasina, who was addressing the rally, survived the attack but suffered injuries in her ears.

Fourteen years later, a Dhaka court sentenced 19 people, including the then BNP government's state minister for home affairs Lutfozzaman Babar, to death.

Tarique Rahman, the eldest son of BNP chairperson Khaleda Zia and the party's current acting chairman, and 18 others were also sentenced to life in prison.

Awami League and affiliated bodies observe the day as "Grenade Attack Day".

Marking the day, AL, its front and associate bodies and its left-leaning allies, and other political parties, socio-cultural and professional organisations have chalked out elaborate programmes across the country, maintaining health guidelines, reports UNB.

A discussion was held in the morning to recall the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



People from all walks of life gathered at the capital's Bangabandhu Avenue yesterday to pay respects to those who lost their lives in the grisly August 21 grenade attack in 2004. At least 24 people were killed and around 300 were injured in the incident. An altar was set up at the site of the tragedy to commemorate the departed souls. PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



Muqtadir Ali passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Major (ret'd) Muqtadir Ali, a valiant freedom fighter and former chairman of Petrobangla, died on Friday at the Combined Military Hospital, Dhaka.

He was 69, said Retired Armed Forces Officers Welfare Association in its website.

"Muqtadir Ali fell on the floor and hurt his head while he was trying to put something high up in his home. Immediately, he was taken to the hospital. He didn't regain his sense afterwards. He died around 5pm on Friday," said Maj Gen (ret'd) Jiban Kanai Das, batchmate and friend of Muqtadir.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Upgraded research, training facility for RHD on the way

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The Roads and Highways Department (RHD) is finally getting an upgraded research and training facility, much-needed given the volume of projects the government agency implements and the upkeep needed of the existing sprawling network.

At present, the department only has Bangladesh Road Research Laboratory (BRRL), spread over 41 acres of land in the capital's Mirpur area, with separate sections for laboratory tests, soil investigation and quality control. But the workforce and testing apparatuses at the facility is inadequate, leaving the RHD dependent on Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology for complex tests, according to officials.

The state of the training centre is worse due to severe workforce shortage, said an RHD executive engineer, on condition of anonymity to speak candidly on the matter.

"The centre is running with less than 10 people. As a technical

- New centre to be built at Mirpur
- 4 buildings to be set up at a cost of Tk 251.6cr
- It's part of RHD's plan to strengthen research, training
- Existing facilities not adequate

department, the training facilities should be robust," he added.

In this given situation, consultants under another RHD project titled "Technical Assistant for Sub-Regional Road Transport Project Preparatory Facility" had recommended bringing the BRRL and training centre together under a new wing and create a "Centre of Excellence", shows RHD document.

In the first phase of the project under one of the 11 packages of SASEC Road Connectivity Project-2, funded by the Asian Development Bank, a Road Research and Training Centre (RRTC) will be set up on 14 acres inside the BRRL's complex at a cost of Tk 251.6 crore.

The cabinet committee on

government purchase on Thursday approved a proposal for appointing a contractor for the works.

As per the proposal, the complex will be constructed by the National Development Engineers within two and a half years.

Apart from the one-year "defect liability period", the contractor will have to provide maintenance for three more years, officials said.

A defect liability period is a specified period after completion of a construction project during which the contractor may have to return to the site to fix defects.

"We hope the construction work will start within three to four months," Project Director Waliur Rahman told The Daily Star on Thursday.

There would be residential facilities for about 160 trainees, a six-storey main office for the research centre, a six-storey training centre, a three-storey testing laboratory building and a two-storey welfare building, shows documents.

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It's 'hateful and aggressive'

Say 64 eminent citizens over BCL stance against Prof Asif Nazrul

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sixty-four eminent citizens have condemned Bangladesh Chhatra League's (BCL) "hateful and aggressive" actions against Dhaka University law department chair Dr Asif Nazrul over a Facebook post made on August 17.

"We strongly condemn the hateful and offensive role of the ruling party's students' wing and an associate organisation against Asif Nazrul over a Facebook post," they said in a joint statement released yesterday.

Such an aggressive attitude is a direct threat for people's right to freedom of thought and speech, and is part of a reprehensible project to create an environment of fear against free expression,

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'Meth trade in the hands of a few'

10 held with crystal meth, yaba in Dhaka

MUNTAKIM SAAD

Alongside yaba, drug traders are now peddling the high-priced synthetic drug crystal meth, also called "ice", according to narcotics officials.

In the last two years, different law enforcement agencies conducted raids in Dhaka and Chattogram, and seized a huge amount of crystal meth.

A high official in the narcotics department, wishing not to be named, said five to seven persons are now controlling the ice trade in Dhaka. He, however, refused to share their details.

On Friday, Department of Narcotics Control (DNC) arrested 10 persons with 500 grammes of crystal meth and 5,000 yaba pills from the capital's Uttara, Banani, Banasree, Khilkhet and Bashundhara Residential Area.

DNC officials said in recent times, meth is being smuggled in from Myanmar through Teknaf border, an established gateway for yaba.

It is sold to affluent people living in upscale neighborhoods - 10 grammes go

for a minimum of Tk 1 lakh, said narcotics officials.

Crystal methamphetamine, a powerful drug that affects the central nervous system, poses high risks of stroke, heart attack, teeth decay, and permanent hallucinations, according to the website of the US National Institute on Drug Abuse.

Shafiqul Islam Sarker, an assistant chemist at DNC, said the drug is more hazardous than yaba. Meth is about 20 times more potent than yaba. A raw material for yaba - methamphetamine, in its cube form, is called crystal meth.

He added it is possible to make one lakh yaba pills with 500g of ice. Now drug dealers are bringing more ice than yaba. As it is easy to carry, it is possible to evade law enforcers.

The detainees include drug traders and those addicted to the drug. Most of them are businesspersons, private university students, and youngsters from rich families in Dhaka, DNC Additional Director Fazlur Rahman told a press briefing at its Tejgaon office yesterday.

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Hasan Azizul Huq shifted to BSMMU

He was flown to capital in morning

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, RAJSHAHI

Noted writer Hasan Azizul Huq has been shifted to Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU) from the National Heart Foundation yesterday evening around 6pm.

Earlier in the day, he was flown to Dhaka on an air ambulance and taken to the National Heart Foundation's CCU unit, family sources said.

From there, he was taken to BSMMU's medicine unit after Prime Minister's Office representatives



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South Sudan names road after Bangladesh

Keen to build partnership between 2 countries, says foreign minister

UNB, Dhaka

The South Sudan government has named a road in its capital Juba as "Bangladesh Road".

It was constructed with the help of the Bangladesh UN Peacekeeping Engineering contingent. The contingent was praised by the people of the country for their pro-people construction works, said the foreign ministry yesterday.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen, who is on an official visit to the country, met with the South Sudanese acting Defence Minister Gen Chol Thon Balok at his office in Juba on Friday.

The acting defence minister praised the role of Bangladesh Peacekeepers deployed in UNMISS.

He referred to the contribution of Bangladesh peacekeepers in infrastructure development of South Sudan as well as that in health services and commended them for being trained, disciplined and efficient.

Foreign Minister Momen suggested that cooperation between the two countries may be built in areas like pharmaceuticals, RMG, agriculture and ICT sectors.

He also underlined the importance of partnership to achieve the common aspirations of the people of the two countries for social and economic development.

VISIT TO TURKEY

Army chief for boosting defence ties

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh's Chief of Army Staff General SM Shafiuddin Ahmed, who is on an official visit to Turkey, met Turkey's President of Defense Industries Ismail Demer and Deputy Minister of National Defense Muhsin Dere on Thursday.

During the meeting, the army chief said there have been long-standing strategic friendships and cultural ties between the armed forces of Bangladesh and Turkey, said a press release of Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

He also hoped that these relations would reach new heights in the future.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Chief of Army Staff General SM Shafiuddin Ahmed visited different stalls of International Defence Fair-2021 in Turkey on Friday, as part of his official visit to the country. Earlier, General Shafiuddin met Turkey's President of Defense Industries Ismail Demer and Deputy Minister of National Defense Muhsin Dere on Thursday. PHOTO: ISPR



As part of an initiative by the railway authorities, areas around rail tracks are being cleared up across the country. But the continued existence of this Railway Colony Bazar beside the Khilgaon rail-crossing, a track that opens up at Kamalapur Rail Station, shows that the authorities' efforts are not nearly enough. This photo was taken yesterday. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Parents worried over Aga Khan School's planned closure

Authorities to start anew; guardians say fees will be 3 times higher

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Many parents of Aga Khan School are anxious about the future of their children, as authorities concerned will close down the school and establish a new institute, which will reportedly charge more and restrict the option of choosing curriculums.

Besides, parents are worried whether they will be able to admit their children to the new institute.

They wrote a letter to Education Minister Dipu Moni, and sent copies to Secondary and Higher Education Division Secretary Mahub Hossain, Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education Prof Syed Md Golam Faruk and Dhaka Education Board Chairperson Prof Nehal Ahmed and others in this regard.

One of the parents, Noor Khan, said they had sent the letter on August 16.

In the letter, parents urged

authorities to take necessary steps to keep the present English-medium school open and continue Cambridge International Examinations and International Baccalaureate (IB) curriculums, so students can choose between them.

Prof Faruk and Prof Nehal both said they are yet to receive the letter.

"After getting the letter, we will take necessary steps following discussions with the education ministry," Prof Nehal told The Daily Star yesterday afternoon. Parents said the present school has been operating at the capital's Uttara for 33 years, and about 1,000 students are studying there.

Aga Khan Education Service, the managing authority of Aga Khan School, in an online meeting on June 16 and then via email, said the school would be closed down in phases during the next two academic years.

Aga Khan Academy's campus will be at Bashundhara Residential Area.

Many of the 1,000 students of the present school will have to be transferred. "We'll have to transfer our children to Aga Khan Academy or change schools," Noor Khan said.

The letter said authorities assured that there will be an opportunity to transfer students to Aga Khan Academy. Some days later, after an exchange between guardians and school authorities, parents came to know that tuition fees of the new school will be three to four times higher than that of Aga Khan School.

Current tuition fees vary from Tk 21,000 to Tk 25,000 per month.

Parents in the letter said the new school will offer only IB curriculum, which is reportedly not accepted by all universities in the country.

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17th anniversary

FROM PAGE 3

victims of the attack. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presided over it from Gono Bhaban through video conferencing, adds BSS.

Besides, AL and its affiliated organisations placed wreaths at a makeshift altar in front of the party's central office at Bangabandhu Avenue in the morning.

The premier and President Abdul Hamid issued messages commemorating the martyrs of the day.

An arts summit titled "August Repeated Attempts" started on the premises of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy yesterday, which will continue till Monday.

Army chief for boosting

FROM PAGE 3

General Ahmed said his official visit to Turkey on the occasion of the International Defence Fair-2021 would open new opportunities of cooperation between the military forces of the two countries.

The army chief thanked both the President of the Turkish Defense Industries, and the Deputy Minister of National Defense for inviting him.

Deputy Minister of National Defence Muhsin Dere expressed his country's commitment to further cooperation and assistance to Bangladesh in the field of military equipment as well as training of military personnel and technology exchange.

President of Defense Industries Ismail Demer assured that he would look into the ongoing issues with Bangladesh on behalf of his organisation, and provide necessary assistance so that future defence cooperation between the two countries would be more friendly and beneficial.

The army chief is expected to return home on August 26.



Death anniv of Khwaja Selima Khatun today

CITY DESK

Today is the 33rd death anniversary of Begum Khwaja Selima Khatun, a freedom fighter, journalist, educationist, social reformer, politician and women leader.

Popularly known as "Mina Apa", Selima was commissioner of Jashore municipality and editor of the weekly "Banhi".

She was also publisher of the weekly "Matribhumi" published in 1970, which was based on the Liberation War, said a press release.

Pakistan Army had issued a circular mentioning her as an absconding accused.

She had a pioneering role in journalism as vice president of Jashore Press Club. Her son Sayed Rana Moostofee is the editor-publisher of the national business magazine Arthokotha, host and presenter of talk show "Channel i Exclusive" and international business talk show MONEYtalk on satellite TV channel, and chairman and managing director of Motherland Group.

Selima Khatun was the member of National Social Welfare Council, one of the founder directors of national women cooperatives, and chairperson of Jatiya Mohila Sangstha, Jashore branch.

She was a visiting professor of Connecticut University in USA. She was a founder and head teacher of Jashore Seba Sangha Girls High School. She also served as the head teacher of Kuada Girls High School.

To mark the day, various religious and social programmes will be arranged.

Muqtadir Ali

FROM PAGE 3

He was buried at the Banani Military Graveyard with state honours, after his namaz-e-janaza there after Asr prayers yesterday, Jiban Kanai Das also said.

Major (ret) Muqtadir Ali served as managing director of Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company Limited (BAPEX).

The freedom fighter also worked as a consultant to various energy companies in the country after retiring from the post of Petrobangla chairman.

He held posts of chairman of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, MD of Titas and Sylhet Gas Field. He was also the first coordinator of the LNG terminal.

Muqtadir was a student of East Pakistan University of Engineering and Technology (now Buet) when the Liberation War started. In order to join the war, he crossed the border and began intelligence training, being attached to an Indian army brigade.

After initial training, he was sent to various places in Bangladesh to gather intelligence about Pakistan troops deployment. Later on, he was sent for training at Loharband, Silchar jungle area in Assam.

After the training was over, he joined Baropunji sub-sector 4 under Sector 4. There, he started regular patrolling, conducting operations in tea gardens and destroying bridges.

Soon afterwards, he was selected for 2nd Bangladesh War Course/SS-2 and landed in Murtee for officer's training in November 1971. After being commissioned, he joined Minor Tigers (3 E Bengal).

He has served in 21C of Dashing Tigers (36 E Bengal), 10 E Bengal and as adjutant of Mirzapur Cadet College.

Meth trade

FROM PAGE 3

Officials said eight cases will be filed against them with different police stations. The arrestees, however, claimed that they were framed, and DNC officers took Tk 50,000 from them. DNC officials denied the allegations.

DNC officials said they first came to know about ice after arresting two people from Dhaka's Mohammadpur in February, 2019. Then the department busted a narcotics manufacturing lab and seized five grammes of meth from the capital's Jhigatola on February 27. On June 28, DNC arrested a Nigerian national from Dhaka with around 500g of ice.

Hasan Azizul Huq

FROM PAGE 3

contacted his family and consulted BSMU doctors to facilitate the arrangement.

Huq has been bed-ridden with electrolyte imbalanced and heart disease for the last one week, and was undergoing treatment at his residence in Rajshahi city's Bihas residential area, said his son Prof Imtiaz Hasan.

Meanwhile, he has been tested for coronavirus twice, both of which returned negative.

The air ambulance helicopter took off from Shah Makhdam Airport in Rajshahi at 10am and reached Dhaka 40 minutes later. Rajshahi Lawmaker Fazle Hossain Badsha went to the airport to see off Huq.

The Ekushey Padak and Independence Award recipient, nearing 83, began feeling unwell since suffering a mild waist bone fracture a month ago. Although this pain eventually subsided, he started developing other complications.

Born in Jabgram village of Burdawan district of Indian West Bengal in 1939, Huq migrated to Bangladesh during the partition. A teacher of philosophy at RU, he is well-known for his short stories and novels, and was awarded with the Bangla Academy Literary Award in 1970.

Parents worried over Aga Khan

FROM PAGE 3

Contacted, Aymn Saleh, chairman of Aga Khan Education Service, Bangladesh, said their media team will send a statement over the issue soon.

All students at Aga Khan School who wish to transfer to Aga Khan Academy will be offered a place on priority basis, along with financial support to ease the transition, stated the statement from Aga

Khan received yesterday.

Fee schedule for students transitioning from the current school will only be developed after consulting with parents, the statement read. Regarding the IB curriculum, Aga Khan Education Service said at least five private universities accept IB diploma as entrance qualification, and students can get an "equivalency certificate" to get into public universities.

It's 'hateful and aggressive'

FROM PAGE 3

the statement said. Anyone can protest Asif Nazrul's post, but it has to be done in a systematic and gracious manner, the statement read.

The statement also said it's because of such reprehensible, arrogant, and violent conducts that Bangladesh's image is tarnished, and the country is left lagging behind in freedom of speech indexes.

Signatories to the statement urged the government to take legal steps against those involved and demanded abolition of the controversial sections of the Digital Security Act as they interfere with citizens' fundamental rights.

Sultana Kamal, rights activist; Ali Imam Majumder, former cabinet secretary; Dr Salehuddin Ahmed, former governor of Bangladesh Bank; Dr Hameeda Hossain, rights activist; Khushi Kabir, coordinator of Nijera Kori; Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation; Dr Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of

Transparency International Bangladesh; Rasheda K Choudhury, executive director of Campaign for Popular Education; Dr Zafrullah Chowdhury, Gonoshasthya Kendra founder and trustee; Badiul Alam Majumder, secretary of Shujan; and Shamsul Huda, executive director ALRD, are among the signatories in the statement, undersigned by eminent SC lawyer Syeda Rizwana Hasan.

On August 17, Prof Nazrul made a post from his verified Facebook page, saying Bangladesh's airports may witness similar scenarios as Kabul Airport if a fair election takes place in the country.

Protesting the status post, some leaders and activists of Chhatra League on August 18 accused Nazrul of making "anti-state sentiments" and padlocked his office room on DU campus.

BCL human resource development secretary Nahid Hasan Shahin also filed a complaint against Nazrul with Shahbagh Police Station.

Upgraded research

FROM PAGE 3

Once the first phase is implemented, there would be a 150-member workforce for the centre, according to Rahman.

After completing all three phases, the workforce will comprise 400 employees, he said, adding that foreign trainers would be

brought if necessary.

According to RHD, there are 22,428 kilometres of national and regional highways and district roads under the department across the country. Besides, there are some 4,400 bridges, 15,000 culverts and 43 ferries under its network.

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What is Alesha Card and Why?

1. What is Alesha Card?

Alesha Card is a privilege or loyalty card. This card, a product of Alesha Card Ltd., will allow cardholders to avail up to 50% discount in 90 categories from more than 3000 partners all around Bangladesh. Cardholders can easily avail the services of Alesha Card with our easy to use app and website.

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5. How is Alesha Card sold?

Alesha Card can be purchased by anyone aged 18 year and above by signing up and applying for it using the website (www.aleshacard.com) or the Alesha Card app. Following a verification of information the card can be bought after a payment of BDT 7,980. Please note that all freedom fighters and birangonas will get the card free of charge and citizens aged 65 years and above will get a 50% discount on card purchase.

6. What is the validity and price of Alesha Card?

The price of Alesha Card is BDT 7,980 for 1 (one) year of validity.

7. How to get an Alesha Card after purchase?

Cardholders will receive Alesha Card as soon as possible according to their specified address. Alesha Card is an app and web based product or service. In most places except for certain categories, cardholders will be able to use it right after purchasing and verification.

8. Is there any registration fee to be a partner of Alesha Card Ltd.?

There is no need to pay any registration fee or money to become a partner of Alesha Card Ltd.. A business can apply to become a partner through the app or website according to the category. The trader can easily become a partner subject to verification and approval of information.

9. What share of profits do the partners of Alesha Card Ltd. share with the company?

Partners do not have to share any portion of their profits with Alesha Card Ltd.. According to the agreement, the company will only provide a certain amount of discount to the cardholders on their services and products. There is no other type of financial transaction or liability of the partner company with Alesha Card Ltd.

10. Is it possible to purchase products or services directly through Alesha Card?

Direct purchase of products or services is not possible since financial transactions are not facilitated by Alesha Card. The cardholders will get a prescribed discount from the mentioned partners. Apart from that, Alesha Card is not responsible for extension, cancellation or other additional facilities of products or services.

11. Are Alesha Card services applicable everywhere in the country and abroad?

At present Alesha Card's service is Ltd. to services within the borders of Bangladesh.

12. Will cardholders not receive services if Alesha Card Ltd. does not pay its partners?

The partners do not have any financial transactions with Alesha Card Ltd.. As per the agreement partners are obliged to offer discounts or services to all cardholders. So cardholders will receive all of Alesha Card services irrespective of payment to its partners.



13. Who is liable if Alesha Card Ltd. sells this card to the customer and disappears with the money?

The partners have an agreement with Alesha Card Ltd. and are obligated to provide all their services and products to the cardholders as per the agreement and time frame. Therefore, there is no liability to assume. Alesha Card Ltd. a concern of Alesha Holdings Ltd. is not a single entity therefore unlikely to disappear.

14. Does Alesha Card Partners get any commission/payment to Alesha Card Ltd. at the sale and discount of any product?

This agreement between Alesha Card Ltd. and its partners is completely free. Partners do not have to give any commission/payment to Alesha Card Ltd. Alesha Card promotes brands and businesses through its website and app for the prosperity of its partners.

15. Do Alesha Card holders pay any commission to Alesha Card Ltd.?

There is no other commission/payment paid by cardholders apart from the payment of BDT 7,980 at the time of purchase for a validity of 1 year.

16. Does the purchase price of BDT 7,980 include VAT and taxes?

There are no more hidden charges and prospective cardholders will only need to pay BDT 7,980 for Alesha Card. VAT and taxes are included in this price.

17. Why is a payment gateway used in Alesha Card purchase?

The payment gateway allows the government to easily monitor VAT and taxes on the purchase price of the card BDT 7,980. Alesha Card is a website and app based product or service and the payment gateway ensures transparency for all parties involved.

18. What are the benefits of the Alesha Card referral system?

When someone buys an Alesha Card with your reference you will be able to earn with the Alesha Card referral system.



Bhogtera Community Clinic: Setting precedence in normal delivery

The hospital sets a record of a thousand normal deliveries free of cost

MINU DESHWARA

Twenty-five-year old Khadija Akter of Moulvibazar's Barlekha upazila got married in Chaudagram of Cumilla. She moved to her father's house a few months ago as she was pregnant.

Her relatives brought her to the Bhogtera Community Clinic in Juri upazila around 7:00am on August 10 after she started experiencing labour pains.

Khadija said, "Due to various medical complications, I lost all hope of my life. I thought I would have to undergo caesarean section. But, suddenly the community clinic gave me a huge relief. I gave birth to a baby boy at 9:20am with the help of Lipa Khanam, a midwife at the clinic."

With the birth of Khadija's baby, the clinic set a record of one thousand normal deliveries. Of them, seven women have given birth to twins. As a result, the total number of children born at the clinic stands at one thousand seven.

Husna Begum, a resident of Bhogtera village, said "We the people of the village no longer worry about diseases now. We go to the nearby community clinic when we suffer from fever or stomach ailments. We don't need to buy medicines as we get free medicines from there."

Not only Khadija Akter or Husna, the people of a number of villages in Moulvibazar district are very happy with the medical services provided by the Bhogtera Community Clinic.

Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Samarjit Singha said, as a small community clinic inside the rural village, the facility has set a record of one thousand normal deliveries free of cost for over 9 years. The hospital, located in Juri Upazila of Moulvibazar, is known as the 'Hospital of the Poor'. The clinic



Patients queue up for treatment at Bhogtera Community Clinic in Juri upazila of Moulvibazar.

PHOTO: STAR

is in the first position in normal delivery in Sylhet division. The community clinic encourages normal delivery and only recommends caesarian sections in exceptionally critical cases, he said.

Community Health Care Provider (CHCP) Haniful Islam said, the clinic started its journey with the initiative of locals and upazila health division on the land of a local resident Moynul Islam in 2012. On January 12 in 2012, the first baby was born in the clinic without any c-section. A total of 1007 babies have been

born in the clinic so far. Of them, 540 were girls, 367 were boys and seven were twins.

Sadia Begum, a patient of the clinic, said the physicians and nurses, better known as community healthcare providers, are patient-friendly and give free medicines to the patients. No money is required to purchase medicines.

Lipa Khanam, a volunteer maternity staffer and a resident of the same village, said she joined the clinic in June 2014 after receiving training on midwifery. So far 746 children have been

born in her hands. However, she does not get any remuneration for her work.

Moulvibazar Civil Surgeon Chowdhury Jalal Uddin Murshed said, the clinic received Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina award on the occasion of Safe Motherhood Day on June 19 in 2013. Besides, the clinic also received the best community clinic award at the national level on July 16 in the same year.

He highlighted people's satisfaction over the services from the community clinic, saying that everybody is happy

with the Medicare services and free medicines provided by the clinic.

Rafiq Mia, treasurer of the clinic management committee, said the then state minister for health, late Mujibur Rahman Fakir visited the clinic on April 26, 2013. He assured to turn the clinic into a 10-bed mother and child hospital. However, no action was taken in this regard later.

He demanded that the government take initiative to implement the assurance of the state minister.

JAMUNA SWELLS Thousands marooned in low laying areas of Sirajganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Thousands of people living in low-lying areas of different upazilas of Sirajganj have been marooned as the mighty Jamuna river has continued to swell.

The river has been swelling rapidly over the last couple of days and the water level is almost close to the danger level mark.

The situation is worsening every day as the increasing water level may cross the danger mark anytime, but surprisingly Sirajganj Water Development Board (WDB) ruled out any chances of immediate flood in the district.

Although, officially there is no, most of the low-laying areas under Sirajganj Sadar, Kazipur, Chowhali, Belkuchi and Shahzadpur upazilas have been submerged under water, marooning over 50,000 in those shoal areas.

While visiting different flood hit areas, this correspondent saw many waterlogged families seeking help from the government, although officially there is no flood.

"Flood water may enter my house any time as water level in the Jamuna keeps increasing over the last few days, Babul Miah of Bonni village in Sirajganj Sadar upazila said.

Amid the waterlogging situation, Babul is facing serious trouble in maintaining his family as has been out of work for long due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic.

Like Babul most of the people living in the low-laying areas along the Jamuna river are experiencing the pain as they are not getting any support from the government.

Sirajganj District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer Abdur Rahim said usually people living in shoal areas are habituated to fight against natural disasters.

Any relief distributing work is yet to start as officially there is no flood, he said, adding that waterlogging in the low-laying areas of Sirajganj is a common problem.



PHOTO: STAR

Three quarters of Kuakata Nat'l Park gone in the sea

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

After taking heavy pounding from different cyclonic storms such as Sidr, Aila, Fani, Amphan and most recently Yaas, Kuakata National Park by the sea beach lost three quarters of its land and forestry in little over a decade's time.

According to the Forest Department in Patuakhali, more than 2.5 lakh trees and around 2,000 acres of forest land on Kuakata beach have been lost to the sea due to Cyclone Sidr in 2007 and various other cyclonic storms that swept through the region till date.

Kuakata National Park was established on 13,984 hectares of forestland in Gangamoti, Latachpali, Khajura and Fatrar Bon areas alongside Kuakata beach where the Forest Department



PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

In this recent photo, uprooted jhau trees are seen scattered near the entrance of Kuakata National Park by the beach.

initially spent Tk 2.76 crore to establish an ecopark in 2005-06 fiscal year, as part of its coastal afforestation programme.

Around 42,000 trees of different species were planted in the park where the authorities also built five picnic sheds, an eye-catching wood bridge, dirt trekking paths, several culverts, ticket counters, office buildings and various other establishments.

Jhau (casuarina equisetifolia) trees were planted along the

southern shore in a bid to protect the park from tidal wind and surges.

During a recent visit to the park, this correspondent came across many uprooted jhau trees and bits and pieces of damaged picnic sheds and sections of boundary wall scattered all over the beach.

Forest guard Monirul Islam said that while the forestry is being diminished every year due to cyclones, floods and high tides, Cyclone Amphan last year alone uprooted about 1,000 trees on the

beach.

Tourists and students from different parts of the country used to visit the scenic park for its flora and fauna, but the deteriorating state of Kuakata National Park and the adjacent beach will ultimately affect the number of visitors when all lockdown restrictions are lifted, said Rumman Intiaz Tushar, president of Kuakata Tour Operators' Association.

Patuakhali Divisional Forest Officer Abdullah Al Mamun said the Kuakata beach has been facing massive erosion since Cyclone Sidr.

Only 1,300 acres of forestland that still exists near the beach may soon disappear unless effective and sustainable measures are taken to protect the Kuakata coastline, he added.

Kuakata town Mayor Anwar Hossain said that with no effective measures taken to protect the coastline so far, the Kuakata beach is losing its beauty as it is slowly disappearing into the sea.

Contacted, Executive Engineer Abdul Halim Salehee of Bangladesh Water Development Board in Patuakhali said they already made a proposal to construct a permanent embankment for the protection of Kuakata sea beach and the proposal was sent to the higher authorities for approval.

Kuakata National Park was established on 13,984 hectares of forestland in Gangamoti, Latachpali, Khajura and Fatrar Bon areas alongside Kuakata beach.

Online Certificate Course on Genocide and Justice

Center for the Study of Genocide and Justice (CSGJ) of the Liberation War Museum (LWM) invites interested individuals to apply for participating in the **Online Certificate Course on Genocide and Justice** to be held from 03 September 2021 till 09 October 2021. The month-long certificate course will be held virtually (using Zoom platform) on each Friday and Saturday afternoon. Academics and experts from home and abroad will conduct the classes. The deadline for submitting the application form is 25 August 2021. The applicants should be from Bangladesh and at least 3rd Year student of any university or a professional with Bachelor's degree or equivalent. Proficiency in English is required. The selected applicants will have to pay a course fee of Tk. 1000 before the commencement of the course. The students will have to pay Tk. 500 as concessional course fee. Limited number of course fee waiver shall be offered to some deserving candidates. The interested individuals are requested to fill up the form:

<https://cutt.ly/tQ8nx2>

Liberation War Museum
Plot # F-11/A-B, Agargaon
Sher-e-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka - 1207
Ph: 9142781-3, Cell: 01995264858
e-mail: mukti.jadughar@gmail.com
website: www.liberationwarmuseumbd.org

DISPUTE OVER PROPERTY

Ex-schoolteacher killed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

A former schoolteacher was killed allegedly by one of her elder sister over a dispute, centring share of their ancestral property, in Indurkani upazila yesterday.

The deceased, Maknu Akhter, 40, a former primary school teacher, used to live with her family in the capital.

Deceased's husband Kamal Hossain, a college teacher, said there had been a feud between his wife and her elder sister Kamrunnahar Minu over the ownership of their ancestral property.

Kamal and his wife came to his in-laws' house at Parerhat in the upazila on Thursday as an arbitration meeting was scheduled for yesterday to settle the matter.

But, before the meeting is held, a quarrel took place between the two sisters.

At one stage, Minu and his three children—Sumana, Mohana and Siam—beat up Maknu mercilessly with sticks and left her unconscious, Kamal alleged.

Later, neighbours and family members rescued injured Maknu and took her to Pirojpur District Hospital, where the doctors declared her dead.

Mohsin Howlader, a member of Parerhat union parishad (UP), said the murder incident occurred after Minu denied to attend the arbitration scheduled for yesterday.

Officer in Charge (OC Investigation) of Indurkani Police Station Shamim Ahmed said they picked up Minu and her three children for interrogation in connection with the murder, adding the body was sent to the hospital for autopsy.

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বাংলাদেশ ডেভেলপমেন্ট ব্যাংক লিমিটেড

হেড অফিস
৮, রাজউক এডিনিউ, ঢাকা
হিউম্যান রিসোর্স ম্যানেজমেন্ট ডিপার্টমেন্ট

নং-০৬/১/ আগস্ট ১৯, ২০২১

দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি

০১।	প্রকিউরিং এনটিটিসির নাম	হিউম্যান রিসোর্স ম্যানেজমেন্ট ডিপার্টমেন্ট, বাংলাদেশ ডেভেলপমেন্ট ব্যাংক লিমিটেড (বিডিবিএল), হেড অফিস, বিডিবিএল ভবন (সেক্টর-৯), ৮, রাজউক এডিনিউ, ঢাকা-১০০০।
০২।	দরপত্র পদ্ধতি	পাবলিক প্রকিউরিং বিধিমালা (পিপিআর)-২০০৮ অনুসরণে Open Tendering Method-এ।
০৩।	তহবিলের উৎস	বাংলাদেশ ডেভেলপমেন্ট ব্যাংক লিমিটেড (বিডিবিএল)-এর নিজস্ব তহবিল।
০৪।	কার্যের সংক্ষিপ্ত বিবরণ	বাংলাদেশ ডেভেলপমেন্ট ব্যাংক লিমিটেড (বিডিবিএল)-এর হেড অফিস ও ঢাকাসহ দেশের বিভিন্ন এলাকায় অবস্থিত অফিসসমূহের জন্য আউটসোর্সিং পদ্ধতিতে ৫৮ (আটান্ন) জন ডাটা এন্ট্রি অপারেটর ও ৬৭ (সাতষাট) জন ম্যাসেঞ্জার সফটওয়্যার লক্ষ্যে প্রকৃত ও খ্যাতিসম্পন্ন জনবল সরবরাহকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান নিয়োগ।
০৫।	দরপত্র সিডিউল বিক্রয় ও জমা গ্রহণের ঠিকানা	হিউম্যান রিসোর্স ম্যানেজমেন্ট ডিপার্টমেন্ট, বাংলাদেশ ডেভেলপমেন্ট ব্যাংক লিমিটেড (বিডিবিএল), হেড অফিস, বিডিবিএল ভবন (সেক্টর-৯), ৮, রাজউক এডিনিউ, ঢাকা-১০০০।
০৬।	দরপত্র সিডিউল বিক্রয়ের সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও সময়	সর্বশেষ ০৫/০৯/২০২১ তারিখ অফিস চলাকালীন সময় পর্যন্ত।
০৭।	দরপত্র দাখিলের সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও সময়	সর্বশেষ ০৬/০৯/২০২১ তারিখ দুপুর ১২.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
০৮।	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ, সময় ও স্থান	০৬/০৯/২০২১ তারিখ দুপুর ১২.৩০ ঘটিকা, স্থান: হিউম্যান রিসোর্স ম্যানেজমেন্ট ডিপার্টমেন্ট, বাংলাদেশ ডেভেলপমেন্ট ব্যাংক লিমিটেড (বিডিবিএল), হেড অফিস, বিডিবিএল ভবন (সেক্টর-৯), ৮, রাজউক এডিনিউ, ঢাকা-১০০০। সকল দরদাতা/দরদাতার প্রতিনিধির (যদি কেহ উপস্থিত থাকেন) উপস্থিতিতে দরপত্র খোলা হবে।
০৯।	দরপত্রদাতার যোগ্যতা	(ক) রেজিস্টার্ড অব জয়েন্ট স্টক কোম্পানীজ এন্ড ফার্মস-এ নিবন্ধনকৃত; (খ) বিভিন্ন প্রতিষ্ঠানে ডাটা এন্ট্রি অপারেটর/ম্যাসেঞ্জার সরবরাহে ন্যূনতম ৩ (তিন) বছরের অভিজ্ঞতা সম্পন্ন জনবল সরবরাহকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান; (গ) এছাড়া, দরপত্র সিডিউলে উল্লিখিত অন্যান্য শর্তাদি।
১০।	টেন্ডার সিকিউরিটি	বাংলাদেশে অবস্থিত যে কোন তফসিলী ব্যাংক থেকে বাংলাদেশ ডেভেলপমেন্ট ব্যাংক লিমিটেড (বিডিবিএল)-এর অনুকূলে পে-অর্ডার ডাটা এন্ট্রি অপারেটরের জন্য ৪,৬০,০০০.০০ (চার লক্ষ ষাট হাজার) টাকা এবং ম্যাসেঞ্জারের জন্য ৩,৬৮,০০০.০০ (তিন লক্ষ আটশত হাজার) টাকা মাত্র।
১১।	দরপত্র সিডিউলের মূল্য	ডাটা এন্ট্রি অপারেটরের জন্য ১,০০০.০০ (এক হাজার) টাকা (অফেরতযোগ্য) এবং ম্যাসেঞ্জারের জন্য ১,০০০.০০ (এক হাজার) টাকা (অফেরতযোগ্য)। দুটি পদের জন্য দুটি পৃথক খামে দরপত্র জমা দিতে হবে।

বাংলাদেশ ডেভেলপমেন্ট ব্যাংক লিমিটেড (বিডিবিএল) কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন প্রকার কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতীত যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিল অথবা সকল দরপত্র বাতিল করার অধিকার সংরক্ষণ করে।

কবির আহমদ
ডেপুটি ম্যানেজিং ম্যানেজার
হিউম্যান রিসোর্স ম্যানেজমেন্ট ডিপার্টমেন্ট
ফোনঃ ০২২২৩৩৮৬৭৫০
ই-মেইলঃ hrm_head@dbdl.com.bd

জিডি-১৪৯৪

Unite to defeat BJP

Sonia Gandhi urges all Indian opposition parties to set aside differences ahead of 2024 polls

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Congress President Sonia Gandhi yesterday said time has come for all Indian opposition parties to rise above their different compulsions and “plan systematically” and unitedly for the 2024 parliamentary election against Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led Bharatiya Janata Party.

“We all have our compulsions, but clearly, a time has come when the interests of our nation demand that we rise above them,” Sonia said while virtually addressing a congregation of 15 opposition leaders including West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee.

She said the ultimate goal is 2024 Lok Sabha polls and must plan systematically to give a government which believes in values of freedom movement and in the principles of the Constitution.

“The 75th year of Independence occasion to reaffirm our collective resolve. Congress will not be found wanting,” Sonia said.

Mamata proposed a core group of opposition leaders to decide on joint programmes and movements.

She urged opposition parties to keep aside differences and work together to defeat BJP in 2024 parliamentary polls.

Among other opposition leaders who

attended today’s meeting were Maharashtra Chief Minister and Shiv Sena leader Uddhav Thackeray, DMK leader and Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M K Stalin, Nationalist Congress Party leader Sharad Pawar, Rashtriya Janata Dal’s Tejashwi Yadav and CPI(M) Sitaram Yechury.

However, Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav stayed away from the meeting while Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) leader Mayawati and Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party’s Arvind Kejriwal were not invited.

Mamata Banerjee who is sparing no chance to remind the Congress that they can’t call the shots till they buck up themselves, too said that all parties need to come together.

The Opposition also plans to step up protests all over the country from September 20 to 30 addressing various public issues.

Over the next few days more such meetings are expected to be held with an eye on polls. But two messages from Sonia Gandhi were clear: One her meet was a rebuttal to the dinner meet called by the rebel G23 leader Kapil Sibal in which most top leaders attended. Second, pointed to Mamata and the likes questioning the Congress, the party may be down but it was definitely now out.



In this image courtesy of the US Marine Corps taken on Thursday and released yesterday, fortunate evacuees wait for their flight out of Afghanistan at Hamid Karzai International Airport, Kabul, Afghanistan.

PHOTO: AFP

MORE NEWS

EU says no recognition of Taliban, no political talks

The European Union has not recognised the Taliban, EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen said yesterday, nor is it holding political talks with the militants, a week after they seized control of Afghanistan. The head of the EU executive spoke after visiting a reception centre in Madrid for Afghan employees of EU institutions evacuated from Kabul. Von der Leyen said she would propose an increase in the 57 million euros (\$67 million) in humanitarian aid which the Commission had allocated this year for Afghanistan. She said EU development aid is tied to respect of human rights, good treatment of minorities and respect for the rights of women and girls. “We may well hear the Taliban’s words but we will measure them above all by their deeds and actions,” von der Leyen told a news conference. She said the Commission was ready to provide funding to EU countries which help resettle refugees, and she planned to raise the resettlement issue at a G7 meeting next week.

Suicide attack targeting Chinese national kills 2 in Pakistan

A suicide bomb attack in Pakistan on a motorcade carrying Chinese personnel injured one Chinese national and killed two local children, the Chinese embassy in Islamabad said yesterday. The attack took place on Friday at the Gwadar East Bay Expressway project in Balochistan, the embassy said. Several wounded people were treated at a local hospital, it said. The embassy called on the Pakistan authorities to conduct a thorough investigation of the attack. No group has claimed responsibility for the incident. In July, a suicide bomber attacked a bus carrying workers to a dam construction site in northern Pakistan, killing 13 people, including nine Chinese nationals. Pakistan’s foreign minister said Pakistani Taliban militants known as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan were behind that attack. Beijing is investing over \$65 billion in infrastructure projects in Pakistan as part of the China Pakistan Economic Corridor, under its wider Belt and Road initiative.

Taliban websites disappear from internet, reason unclear

The official websites of the Taliban, who swept to power in Afghanistan on the back of a lightning offensive last week, appeared to have vanished from the internet late on Friday. It was not immediately clear whether a technical fault or something else was to blame. The Taliban operate separate websites in Pashto, Dari, Arabic, Urdu and English. All five appeared to be unreachable on Friday. A spokeswoman for CloudFlare, which online records list as providing protection for the Taliban sites, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The outage was first reported by The Washington Post.

SOURCE: WEBSITES

Delta variant continues to disrupt life

AGENCIES

Covid-19

Police arrest hundreds of protesters as Australia reports record cases

Shanghai places hundreds in quarantine after airport cases

Sri Lanka announces lockdown as coronavirus cases surge

Australian police arrested hundreds of anti-lockdown protesters in Melbourne and Sydney yesterday and seven officers were hospitalised as a result of clashes, as the country saw its highest ever single-day rise in Covid-19 cases.

Mounted police used pepper spray in Melbourne to break up crowds of more than 4,000 surging toward police lines, while smaller groups of protesters were prevented from congregating in Sydney by a large contingent of riot police.

Victoria state police said that they arrested 218 people in the state capital Melbourne. They issued 236 fines and kept three people in custody for assaulting police. The arrested people face fines of A\$5,452 (\$3,900) each for breaching public health orders.

Police in New South Wales, where Sydney is the capital, said they charged 47 people with breaching public health orders or resisting arrest, among other offences, and issued more than 260 fines ranging from A\$50 (\$35) to \$3,000. The police said about 250 people made it to the city for the protest.

Meanwhile, authorities in Shanghai have quarantined hundreds of people in an attempt to halt a fresh Covid-19 outbreak in the city after infections were detected in cargo workers at its airport, the municipal government said yesterday.

Two of the cargo workers, a Chinese national and an Ethiopian national, were included among four locally transmitted cases in mainland China’s tally of 20 new confirmed infections for Aug 20, announced yesterday.

In Sri Lanka, authorities announced a 10-day lockdown starting on Friday night in an effort to curb the spread of the coronavirus, as surging infections and deaths overwhelm the island’s health system.

The Indian Ocean nation recorded its highest single-day death toll of 187 and 3,793 cases on Wednesday.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa met with members of the presidential task force on coronavirus and was expected to address the nation on Friday evening.

Daily infections have more than doubled in a month to an average of 3,897, according to the Reuters Global COVID tracker.

TALIBAN TAKEOVER THROUGH TWO AFGHANS LENSES

Questions are swirling in the air after the Taliban took control of Afghanistan last week ending the rule of West-backed government of Ashraf Ghani. It took the Taliban just over a week to seize control of the whole country and to obliterate government forces, trained for years and equipped by the United States and others at a cost of billions of dollars. The Taliban have offered a pledge of reconciliation, vowing no revenge against opponents and to respect women’s rights, press freedom. They have also pledged an ‘inclusive government’ based on Sharia. But there are huge concerns globally and within Afghanistan about the Taliban’s brutal human rights record and tens of thousands of Afghans are still trying to flee. Pockets of resistance have emerged against the new ruler of Afghanistan, where one’s ethnic identity often eclipses national one. Can the Taliban be trusted this time? What form of government is on the cards? Will it be inclusive? What will be the future of their new regime? Can they deliver for Afghans? Will there be another civil war? — questions like these are making the headlines in Western-backed news media around the world. But little is coming out from the Afghans themselves. The Daily Star’s correspondent Mostafa Shabuj has asked these questions and more to two Afghan youths from two major ethnic groups of Afghanistan. Here is their conversation:

THE DAILY STAR: How is the situation there? Why people are fleeing?

Ali from Kabul: The situation is calmer after the Taliban’s take over. The people who are leaving the country are mostly (80 percent) Pashtuns who were the translators, interpreters, and employees of US/ western entities. These people are leaving the country, not for the Taliban but to grab the opportunity of a better life abroad.

Irfanullah Irfan from Kunar province: At the beginning, people were scared because they thought that the Taliban would torture or kill them. But the sense of panic ebbed as Taliban announced general amnesty. Now people are feeling relatively safe.

TDS: Why did the Ghani regime fail? Why didn’t the Afghan army fight?

Ali: Although I don’t support the Taliban, I am happy that it (the Ghani regime) collapsed. It was an epitome of corruption, injustice, and nepotism and it heavily prioritised Pashtuns. So was the Karzai regime. Therefore, they collapsed. I would blame more on the Afghan technocrats than the western powers. Corruption and shameless patronizing of Pashtun ethnic groups resulted in empowering the Taliban. Both Karzai and Ghani had sympathy for the Taliban because both are Pashtuns. They wanted the Taliban to be a force, a pressure group, against non-Pashtuns especially the Tajiks (the second dominant ethnic group in Afghanistan).

Irfan: Yes, due to the ethnicity biases the previous

government has collapsed.

TDS: Do you trust this Taliban?

Irfanullah Irfan: The Taliban have pledged to rebuild the country, save it from corruption and nepotism. We are welcoming them this time. Besides, they said they won’t repeat the past mistakes and promising an inclusive government taking in all major ethnic groups on board. That is giving me hope.

Ali: As I said before, corruption, injustices, and Pashtun ethnocentrism pushed the Afghanistan people from the previous government. Even during their past stint,

Irfanullah Irfan, a 28-year-old from the Pashtun ethnicity, is working for an international NGO in Afghanistan.

urban life, they don’t know the bureaucracy to run the government.

TDS: what will happen to progressive groups if the Taliban imposes Sharia laws?

Irfan: See, we are Muslims and we have no issue with the Sharia laws. Yes, they will apply the Sharia rules. No doubt about this but as I said, they already allowed women in works and they have no problems with the media and social media. Taliban said they are not against any groups that follow the Sharia rules. But the concern remains how moderately they will apply the Sharia.

Ali, a 30-year-old from Hazara ethnicity, is a former consultant of World Bank and Afghan ministry of urban affairs.

The Taliban courts were transparent and delivered justice faster than the Ghani regime. Nevertheless, only Pashtuns are keeping their faith in the Taliban, not the others yet.

TDS: Can Taliban deliver?

Irfan: Taliban should form a unity government along with the other ethnic groups and they have already promised to do so. We hope they stick to their promises, including their commitment to build good relationship with other countries.

Ali: Taliban would not be able to govern properly. It won’t be easy for them. Taliban only have the Sharia ideology. Most of them are from rural areas and most of them are Durrani Pashtuns, they don’t know the

Ali: Pakistan, Iran, China, and Russia will be the big players. India is out.

Erfan: The Taliban government should maintain a good relationship with all the nations.

TDS: What will happen to your Afghan cricket team?

Irfan: We are worried about our cricket teams as the T20 world cup is knocking at the door.

Ali: I don’t know what is waiting for the cricket team but I like Pakistan cricket team.

TDS: Last question. Are there any chances of civil wars?

Ali: We might have another civil war in a year or two but it will depend on how the Taliban behave. Much depends on the government formation. Will it be inclusive and power-sharing or not? If not, then pockets of resistance will start especially in the Tajik, Hazara, and Uzbek areas. We have a rich ethnic diversity. The Afghan constitution recognizes 16 ethnic groups but there are more than 40 ethnic groups according to researchers. Pashtuns are around 39%, Tajiks around 30%, Hazara 23%, Uzbek, Turkmen 18%, etc. Right now every group wants a share of the governmental power. The ruling Pashtuns never wanted to conduct a census because they feared that if a census is done then their real numbers might come out and they will no longer be able to claim that they are the majority.

Irfan: This Taliban is reformed and they promised a unity government. But I can’t say anything about it because we don’t know how the Taliban will treat the new generation who emerged for the democracy in a republic era.



AUGUST 22
1910 - Korea was annexed by Japan after five years as a protectorate.
1973 - Henry Kissinger was named US Secretary of State.
2006 - All 170 passengers and crew on board a Russian Tu-154 airliner were killed when it crashed in Ukraine.
2010 - Thirty-three Chilean miners trapped underground for 17 days manage to send message to surface, making first contact with rescuers.

SOURCE: WEBSITES

ইউএফএসসিএম বাংলাদেশ লিমিটেড
সর্বোচ্চ মানের সেবার প্রতিশ্রুতি
সর্বোচ্চ মানের সেবার প্রতিশ্রুতি
সর্বোচ্চ মানের সেবার প্রতিশ্রুতি

Invitation to Bid (ITB) for Laboratory Equipment

Tender Ref. No. icddr,b/SCM/OTM/2021/39 Date: 22 August 2021

icddr,b leads the four-year TB implementation project titled "USAID's Alliance for Combating TB in Bangladesh Activity". icddr,b invites renowned equipment manufacturers and authorised agents/distributors of laboratory equipment to participate in a bidding process for supplying and installation of laboratory equipment (portable X-ray system with AI).

Interested participants can download the ITB document from the web address below: <https://www.icddr.org/work-with-us/tender-notices>

(Supply & installation of laboratory equipment (portable X-ray system with AI))

Pre-bid meeting will be held on **26 August 2021 at 12:00 PM** through Microsoft Teams. Interested bidders should notify icddr,b about their interest in participating in the pre-bid session through email [\[supplychain@icddr.org\]](mailto:supplychain@icddr.org) by **25 August 2021 within 5.00 PM**. Please mention 'Bid Reference' and 'Interested in Pre-Bid Participation' in the email subject.

Offerors shall submit their password protected **Technical and Financial** offers through email to supplychain@icddr.org. Offers must be received not later than **05 September 2021 by 3:00 PM BST**. Bid opening session will not be conducted as a public opening. Please see the bid document for details.

icddr,b reserves the right to accept or reject all/part of the proposals without assigning any reason whatsoever. This ITB will also form a part of the contract and will be binding upon the tenderer.

icddr,b Senior Manager, Procurement
Email: supplychain@icddr.org

Malaysia PM sworn in

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

A new Malaysian leader was sworn yesterday following the previous government's collapse, reclaiming the premiership for his scandal-mired party without an election.

Ismail Sabri Yaakob is a stalwart of the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO), the lynchpin of a long-ruling coalition that lost power in landmark elections during the multi-billion-dollar 1MDB graft scandal in 2018.

He was named as the new prime minister Friday, days after his predecessor quit following a turbulent 17 months in office.

Malaysia's king opted to appoint a new premier based on who had majority support in parliament, rather than call an election, over concerns a vote could worsen a dire coronavirus outbreak.

In an elaborate ceremony at the national palace, Ismail Sabri, wearing a traditional Malaysian outfit, took the oath of office before the king.

The 61-year-old was deputy prime minister when UMNO was a partner in the last government, and has held several other cabinet posts during a long political career.

His predecessor Muhyiddin Yassin quit after losing his parliamentary majority, as public anger grew over his government's handling of the pandemic.

After announcing the new leader, the king, Sultan Abdullah Sultan Ahmad Shah, urged politicians to put aside their differences to fight the virus.

Ismail Sabri becomes Malaysia's third new prime minister in less than four years.

But his government is essentially a rejigged version of the one that collapsed a week ago, with Muhyiddin and his allies backing him.

There have been signs of public unhappiness, with a petition against his appointment garnering hundreds of thousands of signatures, and some fear his government will be as unstable as its forerunner.

Sri Lanka bans 'drunk driving' of elephants

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka will issue captive elephants with their own biometric identity cards and ban their riders from drinking on the job under a wide-ranging new animal protection law.

Many rich Sri Lankans keep elephants as pets, but complaints of ill treatment and cruelty are widespread.

The new measures are aimed at protecting the animals' welfare and include strict regulations around working elephants, as well as mandating a daily two-and-a-half-hour bath for each creature.

It brings in multiple regulations for working elephants. Baby elephants can no longer be used for work -- even cultural pageants -- and cannot be separated from their mothers. Logging elephants cannot be worked for more than four hours a day and night work is prohibited.

From now on, no more than four people can ride an elephant at once. Their use in films is banned, except for government productions under strict veterinary supervision, as is allowing their riders to drink while working. Owners must send their animals for medical check-up every 6 months.

Those who violate the new law will have their elephant taken into state care and could face a three-year prison sentence.

Managing post COVID-19 fatigue at home by physiotherapy

ZAHID BIN SULTAN

After recovering from COVID-19, it can take some time to feel back to normal. One most common symptom people feel after COVID-19 is fatigue. It might originate from the lingering immune response or because the lungs and heart are still recovering.

Management of post-COVID fatigue:

1. Ensuring enough sleep by getting daily sunlight exposure and not consuming caffeine late in the day.
2. Staying hydrated by drinking plenty of water and eating a well balanced diet.
3. Managing stress. Practice mindfulness and learning to focus on your breathing. Do deep breathing exercise and meditation to reduce stress.
4. Doing physical and mental activity slowly. Do not overdo any activity or do not take lots of rest. Keep balancing your activity with rest and recovery.
5. Pacing: It is an individualised systemic process to managing physical, cognitive, and emotional energy within the patient's energy limit to prevent or reduce fatigue. Pacing is not activity avoidance technique, rather it is a way used to minimise symptom exacerbation. Pacing establishes the balance between activity and rest to avoid exacerbation of symptoms. Qualified physiotherapist guides you regarding the accuracy of your activity and resting period. Physiotherapist helps you to increasing the activity level gradually, introducing proper resting period and switching to different types of activity within a control manner before you feel tired.



Some activities at home will alleviate post-COVID fatigue: Activity can be classified into physical and emotional or mental activity. Both physical and mental activity related to each other and each of these can affect other. Here is given some safe examples of activities that you can do at home:

1. Practice deep breathing in sitting. Sit upright and place your hands around the sides of your stomach. Close your mouth and inhale through your nose and pull air down into your stomach where your hands are. Then exhale slowly through your nose. Repeat deep breaths for five times before any activity.
2. Do some activities that you are comfortable doing. If a task is difficult, learn to stop and change the task. As for

example: start with short walks, or carrying out a simple task such as ironing your shirts and then taking a rest. If you may find walking difficult or you may confront shortness of breath then stop and set a realistic task like walking to the toilet at first. Do a little more each day, but avoid overdoing it.

3. Slow down and spread your activities throughout the day. Do not do all the activities at a time. Add some mental or emotional activity with your physical activity. This technique helps you to conserve your energy.
4. Take some time while getting out of bed. If you have spent long periods of time in bed due to COVID-19 infection, your blood pressure may take some time to adjust. You may feel dizzy when you

sit or stand up quickly from bed. So take it slow when getting out of bed, then sit on the edge of the bed for 1 to 2 minutes and then go for wash or shower. Take rest before and after going to toilet.

5. Gradually improve your activity level. When you are comfortable with short distance walking then you can improve your physical activity level by increasing walking distance slowly and then try to walk for long distance when you are comfortable with this. You can also improve your mental activity level such as: Playing electronics games, puzzle or Sudoku, cards and making crafts, painting. It is easy to do at home and can be stopped if the person gets fatigued. If activity feels good you can progress your activity gradually like practise stair climbing, go outside for walking, start outdoor activity and playing.

Precautions:

If activity increases your fatigue then pull back and take it easy. Do not do any weight lifting or strengthening exercises first because, it will worsen your symptoms. Consult with a physiotherapist regarding any exercise programme because, they can help you find the safest exercises that will alleviate your symptoms. Stop doing activities or exercises immediately and consult with a physician, if you develop any dizziness, chest pain, palpitation, shortness of breath and excessive fatigue or any other symptoms that you consider an emergency.

The writer is a neurodynamic specialist and clinical physiotherapist at BRB Hospital Ltd. Email: ranacrphysio@gmail.com

VITAMIN



Signs you are low on vitamin C

Our body does not make or store vitamin C, so we have to eat it every day. If you eat a balanced diet, it is pretty easy to get enough vitamin C. Adult women (who are not pregnant or breastfeeding) need 75 milligrams of vitamin C per day; men, 90 milligrams. A mere 1/2 cup of raw red bell pepper or 3/4 cup of orange juice will do it, while 1/2 cup cooked broccoli gets you at least halfway there. But sometimes these requirement is not met.

People with an overall poor diet, with kidney disease who get dialysis, heavy drinkers, and smokers often fall short of vitamin C. When you are slow on healing your wounds, you may be lacking vitamin C. Bleeding gums, nosebleeds, and bruises are also signs of vitamin C deficiency.

Early research has found a link between low levels of vitamin C and higher amounts of body fat, especially belly fat. Vitamin C deficiency also may cause vision loss and scurvy. Since vitamin C has several jobs related to your immune system, you are more likely to get sick and may have a harder time recovering. So, if you think that you are lacking vitamin C, you should take them as required.

HEALTH bulletin



Children of mothers with diabetes during pregnancy have an increased risk of eye problems

A new study published in *Diabetologia* (the journal of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes [EASD]) finds that mothers who have diabetes before or during their pregnancy are more likely to have children who go on to develop eye problems.

The research analysed the associations between maternal diabetes before or during pregnancy and the risk of high refractive error (RE): conditions in which there is a failure of the eye to properly focus images on the retina.

Earlier research has shown that individuals with severe RE may have congenital eye defects before birth, suggesting that the conditions to which the foetus is exposed in the uterus may play a role in the development of more serious RE in later life. Maternal hyperglycaemia (high blood sugar) during pregnancy may lead to elevated foetal blood glucose levels, which can damage the retina and optic nerve and may lead to changes in the shape of the eyes that ultimately cause RE.

The authors believed that exposure to the effects of maternal diabetes while in the uterus could negatively affect the development of the foetus and lead to high RE in later life. The researchers advise that early screening for eye disorders in the children of mothers with diabetes may play an important role in maintaining good eyesight health.

Extreme heat is a clear and growing health issue

STAR HEALTH DESK

Extreme heat is an increasingly common occurrence worldwide, with heat-related deaths and illnesses also expected to rise. The authors of a new two-paper Series on Heat and Health, published in *The Lancet*, recommend immediate and urgent globally coordinated efforts to mitigate climate change and increase resilience to extreme heat to limit additional warming, avoid permanent and substantial extreme heat worldwide, and save lives by protecting the most vulnerable people.

In alignment with the Paris Agreement, the Series authors call for global warming to be limited to 1.5°C to avoid substantial heat-related mortality in the future. Reducing the health impacts of extreme heat is an urgent priority and should include immediate changes to infrastructure, urban environment, and individual behaviour to prevent heat-related deaths. The Series is published ahead of this year's COP26 UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, UK.

Effective and environmentally sustainable cooling measures can protect from the worst health impacts of heat. These range from increasing green space in cities, wall coatings that reflect heat from buildings, and widespread use of electric fans and other widely available personal cooling techniques that have been shown by thermal physiologists to help people regulate their body temperature without exacerbating other types of physiological strain. While air conditioning is becoming more



widely available around the world, it is unaffordable for many of the most vulnerable, is financially and environmentally costly, and leaves many defenceless against extreme heat during power outages.

"Two strategic approaches are needed to combat extreme heat. One is climate change mitigation to reduce carbon emissions and alter the further warming of the planet. The other is identifying timely and effective prevention and response measures, particularly for low-resource settings. With more than half of the global population projected to be exposed to weeks of dangerous heat every year by the end of this century, we need to find ways to cool people effectively and sustainably," says Series co-lead author Professor Kristie Ebi from the University of Washington, USA.

According to a new Global Burden of Disease modelling study, also published in *The Lancet*, more than 356,000 deaths in 2019 were related to heat and that number is

expected to grow as temperatures rise worldwide. However, Series authors note, many heat-related deaths are preventable by mitigating climate change and reducing exposure to extreme heat.

When exposed to extreme heat stress, the body's ability to regulate its internal temperature can be overwhelmed, leading to heat stroke. In addition, physiological thermoregulatory responses that are engaged to protect body temperature induce other types of physiological strain and can lead to cardiorespiratory events. Effects from extreme heat are also associated with increased hospitalisations and emergency room visits, increased deaths from cardiorespiratory and other diseases, mental health issues, adverse pregnancy and birth outcomes, and increased healthcare costs. Older people and other vulnerable people who may be less able to take care of themselves in extreme heat (e.g., people isolated at home, people who have poor mobility) are also more likely to experience the health effects of extreme heat.

Extreme heat also lessens worker productivity, especially among the more than 1 billion workers who are exposed to high heat on a regular basis. These workers often report reduced work output due to heat stress, many of whom are manual laborers who are unable to take rest breaks or other measure to lessen the effects of heat exposure.

Finally, warming temperatures are exacerbating other environmental challenges, including adverse ground-level ozone concentrations, wildfires, and rapid urban population growth.

Call for experts to join Scientific Advisory Group for the Origins of Novel Pathogens

The World Health Organisation (WHO) issued an open call for experts to serve as members of the new WHO Scientific Advisory Group for the Origins of Novel Pathogens (SAGO).

The SAGO will advise WHO on technical and scientific considerations regarding the origins of emerging and re-emerging pathogens of epidemic and pandemic potential, and will be composed of a wide range of experts acting in their personal capacity. SAGO will also guide WHO on next steps for understanding the SARS-CoV-2 origins.

There have been an increasing number of high threat pathogens emerging and re-emerging in recent years with, for example, SARS-CoV, MERS-CoV, Lassa, Marburg, Ebola, Nipah, avian influenza, the latest being SARS-CoV-2. There is a clear need for robust surveillance and early actions for rapid detection and mitigation efforts, as well as systematic processes to study the emergence of these pathogens and routes of transmission from their natural reservoirs to humans. This is critical to helping WHO, Member States and partner institutions to prepare for future spillover threats and to minimize the risk of a disease outbreak growing into a pandemic.

From SARS-CoV-2, which continues to wreak havoc around the world, to the next "Disease X", this global framework to study the emergence of new and known high threat pathogens needs to be comprehensive and coordinated based on a One Health approach. It should also encompass biosafety and biosecurity. And it needs to be scientific, transparent, comprehensive, rapid and inclusive.

The SAGO will be multidisciplinary, with members who have a range of technical knowledge, field experience, skills and experience relevant to emerging and re-emerging pathogens. Up to 25 experts may be selected.

WHO welcomes expressions of interest from individuals with significant expertise in one or more technical disciplines outlined in the call for experts in order to ensure a One Health approach.

Source: World Health Organisation



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The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA SUNDAY AUGUST 22, 2021, BHADRA 7, 1428 BS

Day when govt turned terrorist

Changed our politics forever

ON August 21, 2004, our government became a terrorist organisation. In what followed, the state itself became accessory to that terrorist act. Some rogue elements may have thrown the grenades but when all the branches of the state—the executive, the judiciary and the legislative—collectively worked to save the criminals and divert attention elsewhere then the state itself became complicit. What was most disconcerting is that the type of grenades used in the attack showed that inroads had been made into the army itself.

We agree with the prime minister when she says that such an attack in broad daylight couldn't have happened without the support of the government of the time. The destruction of the evidence, the lack of seriousness in investigating the crime and the political effort to downplay the tragedy all indicate complicity of the government and the ruling coalition.

The attempted assassination of Sheikh Hasina dealt a severe blow to the prospect of democracy-building in Bangladesh. The two-party system—the AL and BNP alternating in power—which should have been a boon for a stable democracy, became a life and death contest for eliminating each other, not through public support but through violence as BNP-Jamaat's actions proved. The two parties, always bitter contestants for power, now became bitter enemies with the incumbent ready to resort to political assassinations to stay in power.

What could have driven the BNP leadership of the time to choose to kill their political opponent? A total disregard for democracy and constitutional politics. Nothing reveals their lack of commitment to democracy better than this incident. Whatever their protestations may be, the so-called debates in the parliament, the sham of a one-member judicial inquiry commission, and the repeated government assertions that the attack was due to internal factors within Awami League proved beyond doubt that the BNP-Jamaat government of the day had no intention to unearth what really happened, let alone dispense justice.

It happened 17 years ago. But its impact still reverberates in our politics. After the brutal killing of Bangabandhu and the killing of the four national leaders in jail, the August 21 grenade carnage, in which 23 AL leaders and activists died, including Ivy Rahman, wife of veteran AL leader and the future President, Zillur Rahman, remains as the most tragic example of politics of killings and assassination. It is truly a miracle that saved the present prime minister and the then opposition leader's life.

We must never allow the events of August 21 to ever occur again, and we must learn from that experience to strengthen our democracy.

Covid-19 vaccines being embezzled in the black market

Better planning of the special vaccination drive could have prevented this

IT appears that the peddling of Covid-19 vaccines on the black market—something we have feared to be an inevitability since February—is finally underway. According to a report published recently in *The Daily Star*, police arrested a 37-year-old man in the capital's Dakkhinkhan last Wednesday for selling Moderna vaccines at Sheba Clinic in the Chhalabon area. This is in contradiction to the government's order of allowing all eligible vaccine recipients to only get jabs from designated government facilities, free of cost. The arrestee was supposedly employed as a volunteer at an Uttarkhan vaccination centre during the special vaccination drive earlier this month. He had been inoculating people for Tk 500 a dose.

We agree with experts such as Be-Nazir Ahmed from the National Immunisation Technical Advisory Groups (NITAG), who told this newspaper that mechanisms of the vaccine drive need to be examined and loopholes in the entire vaccine supply chain system need to be identified. Otherwise, this could be only the beginning of more and more vaccines being administered out of the government's line of sight.

There have also been incidents of influential people, such as Rajshahi City Corporation mayor and four of his family members, getting the jabs at home, apparently unaware that this was not allowed. The mayor claims that the inoculations had taken place "about three months ago", though how that could excuse the incident is beyond our understanding. Even more bizarre is the fact of a Cumilla City Corporation councillor administering shots to over 100 people herself in her office on August 12.

While these irregularities regarding the country's vaccination drive are underway, so is the usual blame game that different arms of the government play against each other during such mishaps. The deputy commissioner of Uttara division police told our reporters that the Dhaka North City Corporation has been requested to check for missing Covid-19 vaccine ampoules and for details on the aforementioned vaccine peddler. But while the DNCC mayor said the police would have the city corporation's "full assistance", he also said "they would not investigate the matter themselves." Health officials from the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), on the other hand, fully blame the centres operated under the city corporations during the special vaccination drive for all the recent anomalies and irregularities. "Whatever" the case may be, we would urge concerned authorities and the government to prioritise the free and safe vaccination of citizens above all else. We understand the need to inoculate as many people as possible, as quickly as possible. However, we believe the quality of service while administering Covid-19 vaccine shots cannot be compromised in a bid to reach a certain goal number of people vaccinated.

There are no secrets in the world



BLOWN' IN THE WIND
SHAMSAD MORTUZA

I was watching a movie on Netflix. Suddenly, the voice assistant of the laptop, Siri, got activated and said, "Siri aha?". Then after a pause the colour bubble of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) ventriloquised

to add, "I didn't get that. Could you try again?" Normally I would have ignored such a minor glitch. Then I remembered the same thing happened the day before when I reached a particular spot of the movie that I had resumed watching. Intrigued by the *deja vu*, I stopped the player and moved back the time-slider by 10 seconds. There it was: Siri popped up again in an inquisitive tone. I noticed that the appearance of Siri coincided with a dialogue that contained the compound word "serial killer." The actor's enunciation of "serial" with a dropped letter 'l' made Siri interpret "serial" as

culture, particularly in speculative fiction, we have seen the use of a trigger phrase as a post-hypnotic suggestion. For instance, a deep-cover agent can be activated to do something once they hear a certain word. This trigger can practically be anything, even a piece of music. It's like a coded command specifically programmed into an individual to make her or him do certain things. In Steven Spielberg's 2001 movie *AI: Artificial Intelligence*, a trigger phrase was used for an android child to love the speaker permanently and unconditionally. In *Zoolander*, Derek was programmed to kill the prime minister of a country once he had heard the song "Relax".

My Siri experience led me to a blog of a consumer watchdog. The article essayed the Orwellian future that is already here. It says, "the gadgets eavesdrop on everything from confidential conversations to your toilet flushing habits". Google's "OK, Google" and Amazon's "Alexa", for instance, have the potential to convert all our voice data for massive information gathering and intrusive digital advertising. These devices

us complacent over the confidentiality issue, allowing business organisations as well as law enforcement agencies to derive information from smart devices. Then there are the hackers and identity thieves; they are the hustlers who thrive on this information highway.

The moment you use the voice assistants to search the web, launch apps, and use other interactive functions, Google can go for trigger recording. One such transcript, mentioned in the watchdog blog, shows Googling capturing this conversation: "If you ever get booked down to my house for some reason, the key safe for the back door is 0783." The user had unwittingly given away the passcode to his house while chatting with a friend. Just this morning, while watching a suggested video on Facebook, I heard one recently nabbed actress apparently giving her statements before the secret service. Now how a YouTuber sitting in North America would access the conversation is anybody's guess: we do not need artificial intelligence to demystify it. The fact remains, we are living in a world that does not like secrets.

German sociologist Georg Simmel was one of the forerunners to reflect on secrets. Secrets for him are all about ownership. It creates a relation between the secret's owner and the other who does not know it. Sometimes, we need to maintain secrecy to forge relationships. The fallacy of a Facebook fraternity is a case in point, where we create false impressions to make our "friends" like us. Social media also gives us the impression that we can be free by joining the masses.

In light of the fast changes in digital society, we need to rethink how we view secrets, especially in relation to our freedom.



The advent of technology has increased the enthusiasm of governments to gather, share, and cross-reference more and more data about its own people.

"Siri aha!" After solving the mystery of my "serial killer" (read, spoiler), I was happy to return to the thriller on serial killers. Then again, it made me eerily aware that I was not watching that movie alone; the AI embedded in my device was watching it with me.

It is not only Siri, other voice assistants are also known for remaining "awake" and listening to everything we say, hear or do. The digital assistants are designed to react only when they hear a supposed "wake-word". In the case of my laptop, Siri was the trigger-word. In popular

start tracking the moment they are turned on and keep on building profiles of the users as potential customers.

Say, for instance, an algorithm in the device identifies statements of interest, e.g. "I love tea", and the company will target the speaker for related advertising. While there is comfort in knowing that the Internet of Things (IoT) can be used to help us remotely manage our smart TVs or ACs with the sound of our voice, the reality is that these devices are snooping on us to draft a pattern of our activities. The convenience aspect of it often makes

There are human and non-human trackers out there to make us all "transparent citizens" or automatons without freedom. Is it a good thing for an individual, even for a state, to be in a system that has no secrets?

Adam and Eve did not have to worry about their secrets; the moment they had one, they had to hide. When Robinson Crusoe was marooned on an island, he did not have to worry about his secrets. But we do not live on an island; we live on continents with multiple territorial, social, political, and cultural borders.

Our availability as well as our willingness to make ourselves revealed out in the open has allowed external agencies to feed on us. In an information society, individual secrets, state secrets, and the secrets of technology, however, got intertwined.

The advent of technology has increased the enthusiasm of governments to gather, share, and cross-reference more and more data about its own people. The state encroaches on our private lives in the name of security. We share our secrets with the state—through the biometric ID cards, bank chips, TINs—thinking that it is our duty to be transparent citizens. We lose control of our freedom so that the State can take control of our lives. Unfortunately, the use of such data by the other categories is shrouded in mystery. State secrets often assume the aura of control, if not an abuse of power.

The myth of security often makes us forget that our secrets are but manifestations of our freedom. In light of the fast changes in digital society, we need to rethink how we view secrets, especially in relation to our freedom. With more and more of our lives being monitored and controlled online, the future of secrecy is anybody's guess. For Simmel, "the secret is one of man's greatest achievements." But now it seems, more than ever, with no control over our secret lives, human beings are less likely to remain either free or sane. The nexus of digitisation, secrecy, privacy, and transparency is going to impact our freedom and our essential humanity. Otherwise, only machines will be on cloud nine!

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

The sinister carnage of August 21, 2004



STRAIGHT LINE
MUHAMMAD NURUL HUDA

IN the unfortunate annals of our political history, the month of August perhaps witnessed more macabre incidents than others. While the tragedy of August 15, 1975, when Bangabandhu

along with most of his family members were brutally done away with, has indelibly made a deep imprint on constitutional and orderly political progression, the gory misdeeds of August 21, 2004 when clearly Sheikh Hasina was targeted for murder had very ominously impacted our political discourse. Sadly, we have to recollect that in the suspected conspiratorial attack on August 21, more than 20 persons were killed and 200 suffered painfully persistent crippling injuries. For many, it was a deliberate attempt to wipe off all the senior leaders of the oldest political party of the country.

It would not be an exaggeration to observe that the corroding contours of our confrontational politics were ominously exposed in the mindless violence of August 21, 2004. There is also a premonition that, aggravating such a scenario was the suspected State complicity in the perpetration of organised acts of violence and the inordinate delays in providing relief to the victims. The alleged authoritative connivance and condoning of the failures of law enforcing agencies in carrying out the statutory duties is definitely a worrying blot on the ethos of public service.

We have to unfortunately "recollect that the investigation of the above incident was not taken in right earnest that it deserved and the first indication of that was the unpardonable failure to protect and preserve the scene of occurrence. There was allegation that physical evidence was tampered with and destroyed. The field units did not act with desired speed and circumspection." The suspicion is, were they acting so at the behest of someone or a quarter very high? Quite clearly, the culpability of all concerned need to be fixed and proved. One needs to know whether sworn officials had hesitated to enforce the law and if so why.

Unfortunately, a judicial enquiry into the incident by an honourable judge of

the apex court was done perfunctorily and reportedly pointed the accusing finger to an agency of a foreign country without presenting credible supportive evidence. The initial criminal investigation that was marked by the "Joi Miah" charade was a most disgraceful act in that it raised doubts about the very integrity of investigators and the reliability of a vital organ of the State.

As a mark of its probity, the then government brought some foreign experts

government. One has to admit that this was, quite clearly, in poor taste and had an abysmal lack of sensitivity.

It is also a sad commentary on the politics and politicians of Bangladesh that like the tragedy of August 15, 1975, the slaughter of August 21, 2004, also did not stir the national conscience until a favourable political scenario emerged. It would thus appear that the guarantee of fair play and justice in our country has to wait for regime change. We may have

violence? Is not the undermining of civil society by the encouragement of politics based on division and acrimony, a pathetic and deplorable sight?

The nation will not witness a repeat of August 21, 2004 if our politicians inculcate a temper which does not press a partisan advantage to its bitter end, can understand and respect the political adversary, and feel a unity between all citizens. They are expected to demonstrate that democracy depends



Awami League leaders and members of Sheikh Hasina's personal security wing shield her during the grenade attack on an AL rally in the city on August 21, 2004.

COURTESY: MAYOR MOHAMMAD HANIF FOUNDATION

to assist the investigation but it was too little too late as vital physical evidence was allegedly destroyed and the local investigators reportedly were found less than proactive.

Indiscreet acts and irresponsible utterances in the political circles were no less complicit in confounding a tragic incident that demanded swift remedial action and compassionate response from colleagues in the art of politics. Sadly, people in high positions in the then establishment put the blame on Awami League leaders by insinuating that they had caused the grenade attack on the rally to discredit their opponent in

to admit that extreme actions leading to annihilation of political adversary, though reprehensible, were a sad reality of our society in the not-too-distant past.

The question is, do we have to agree with the cynical observers of our political scene who say that there is a functional utility of violence for politicians? Do most acts of violence characterising Bangladeshi society at all levels have an irreducibly political context? Must not Bangladeshis feel ashamed as politics, apparently, has started acquiring a pejorative connotation by the allegation of its manifest association with conflict and

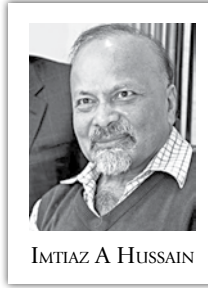
upon habits of consent and compromise which are attributes of responsible society. The spirit of moderation has to prevail to protect us from degenerative division and hatred.

The events of August 21 will undergo judicial scrutiny and those culpable would be punished bearing in mind that the actual fact or truth may not always be provable in a court of law. For democracy to strike a firm root in Bangladesh, the narcissistic and fascist proclivities lurking in many hearts in the political arena have to be tempered in public interest.

Muhammad Nurul Huda is a former IGP of Bangladesh.

Afghanistan, Taliban and the United States

'Damned-if-I-do, damned-if-I-don't'



FULL US troop withdrawal from Afghanistan was announced by President Joe Biden on April 14, 2021. It raised eyebrows but did not ruffle public feathers. The sudden and complete mid-August pull-out did. Desperate Afghans

running to cling on to a military transport plane taking off exposed how pathetic the plight was.

Two such war-related photos once shook the world and left some lessons. The first photo, no less of an Afghani, portrayed Sharbat Gula, a captivating green-eyed Pashtun girl driven by Soviet troops into Pakistan's Nasir Bagh refugee camp, the second of "napalm girl," Phan Thi Kim Phuc, a naked 9-year-old with a burned back screaming as she fled Viet Cong bombings in 1972. Whereas the former graced the June 1985 *National Geographic* cover and the latter won a photography Pulitzer Prize, some such accolade surely awaits this month's Kabul escapade.

Germany's sedate Chancellor, Angela Merkel, called this rushed exit a "mistake"; whispering UK willows alluded to it as "the biggest foreign policy disaster since Suez" (in 1956); and French President Emmanuel Macron's desire of "strategic autonomy from the United States" strengthened. China saw that exit as US "humiliation" and Russia its consequences as "horror." Both gleefully constructed Taliban deals.

The United States did that too. Stanford historian Robert Crews calls Donald J Trump's March 2020 Taliban deal as the exit "roadmap". "We're dealing very well with the Taliban," spoke Trump on September 18, 2020. "They're very tough, they're very smart, they're very sharp," he continued, "[b]ut, you know, it's been 19 years... even they are tired of fighting." His May 2021 exit deadline was stricter than Biden's.

Analysts wonder why this hullabaloo. That exit was being suggested by at least five slow-moving dynamics: (a) the "sinking-in" failure; (b) coffer considerations; as well as

(c) changes in domestic priorities of policy-supplying country; (d) neighbourhood climate of the policy-recipient country; and (e) the global context.

Except for "westernising" Kabul and modernising Bagram Airfield (located 40kms north of Hamid Karzai International Airport), US and NATO troops simply could not transplant any "anti-terrorism" mindset among Afghans, who know more about war than the typical US citizen, after 9/11. Particularly difficult to harness was the countryside. Malleable *Loya Jirga* representatives and a public largely untutored in 9/11 conversations did not gel with foreign troops, with US troops now, or with Soviet troops in the 1980s. Carrying a 40-year psychological toll of swaying battles, Afghan citizens only rallied to what they knew well: faith (read: Islam), and ethnic identity. Reforms centrally initiated at the centre hardly trickled down, the urban-rural gap widened, and appropriate integrative infrastructures remained pipe-dreams. How Afghan unity was hijacked by mostly Kabul-based mercenaries, gold-diggers, and drug-traffickers exposed why a 300,000-strong army simply collapsed with US departure and after 20 years of training. Staying and defending a marriage is fine, but not a mirage. President Ashraf Ghani's cowardly escape with his loot dramatised the longest US war as being nothing more than a security soap opera.

Though security considerations made development unproductive and costly, behind the military bandwagon numerous academic, business, gender, social, and welfare global groups entered a once-forbidden country, exposing possibilities and opening hitherto closed segments, particularly among women. Negotiating with Taliban in Qatar raised policymakers' hopes, but not *vox populi's*. Hoof-sounds of the Taliban Trojan Horse were heard loud and clear, far and near.

Once bitten, today's twice shy Taliban has become more worldly, socially savvy, experienced, and youthful enough to go the distance, even if this compromises its own brand of Islam. It can look US negotiators eyeball-to-eyeball and enter cities without blazing guns. Hard-line fall-backs cannot be ruled out, but if "carrots" could convert

fearful, fed-up, and uprooted rural dwellers, why turn to "sticks"? Though a smaller Al-Qaeda faction remains a Taliban partner, Imran Khan, the Pakistani leader whose instrument the Taliban is, remains wary of fundamentalism spilling over. Only seething countryside anger pitting Pashtuns, Hazara, Nuristanis, Tajiks, Turkmenis, and Uzbeks against each other could derail immediate Taliban prospects.

Secondly, "coffer considerations" haunts

and fifth dynamics portrayed domestic US priorities, Afghanistan's fluctuating neighbourhood pulse, and in-flux global order stakeholders. Envisaged in 2013, the USD 62 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project opened Gwadar Port as China's outlet to the strategic Straits of Hormuz and economically ever-bountiful Africa. India followed suit building Iran's Chabahar Port from 2015 to plant its own Persian Gulf flag and divert Afghanistan from

Turkmenistan (and later Uzbekistan). Among new members, India and Pakistan moved from "observer" status to "full membership", with Afghanistan and Iran tip-toeing them. As goals and interests proliferate, this originally soft-power non-US bulwark loosens further.

Reduced US profile where the "great game" was historically played can be seen as globally destabilising, but it has never been a US "game". Alongside Australia, Japan, and the Philippines, the United States sees the South China Sea as its new Alamo. Still, any China-US contestation differs from the Cold War Soviet-US rivalry: its *economic* premises rather than geopolitical; globally pivotal commercial exchanges between the two protagonists, China and the United States; and looser alliances than the NATO/Warsaw Pact counterparts. All told, the South China Rubicon is all set to displace the "graveyard of empires," that is, Afghanistan, from behind the "global-order" steering-wheel. China's Belt and Road Initiative guaranteed that on land by neutralising Afghanistan's "graveyard" potential, and on sea through a string of artificial islands.

Afghanistan free-riding US economic and security resources generalises the apt "damned-if-I-do, damned-if-I-don't" phrase for the United States, Taliban, and Afghanistan: any policy/decision of anyone will fetch inevitable condemnation from a single, few, or all others, just as not making a policy/decision, will also be finger-pointed on all fronts. When one country or group faces that predicament, a balancing act typically comes from the actions of others; if two countries or groups err similarly, order can still be brought, though the climb becomes more uphill. With all sides similarly oriented, mitigating factors vanish. Anything can happen, even without invoking domestic public considerations, a louder clout today than ever before. Whether it is the US exit, Taliban takeover, or missed Afghan opportunities, the blame-game innings is unlikely to end soon, but that is just what opportunists of all stripes need to thrive. They win because "Rome" slept.

Dr Imtiaz A Hussain, Head, Global Studies & Governance Program, Independent University, Bangladesh. Jessica Tarila Suma, Lecturer, Global Studies & Governance Program, Independent University, Bangladesh.



President Biden delivers remarks on August 16 about the situation in Afghanistan for the first time since the Taliban's takeover.

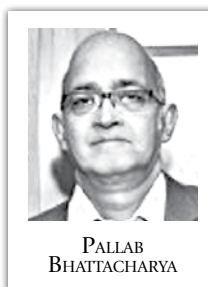
PHOTO: AFP

the United States. When 9/11 happened, the United States concluded its longest 20th century economic expansion (1992-2001). By contrast, the stagnating post 2008-11 Great Recession decade saw healthy global competition turn nastier, long-term jobs displaced by fickle and fluid alternatives, technological shifts from hardware to software becoming institutionalised, spiking migrant flows fuelling populism, and obviously Covid pandemic hammerings. No democratic public can forever fund a lost cause against that backdrop. President Trump made this his election talking-point. President Biden independently followed suit. Changes undergird the third, fourth,

Pakistani ports. Taliban retaking Kabul now puts Pakistan behind the region's steering-wheel, meaning the next move is India's. Two masks must be removed: Pakistan's remodelling Taliban to make it receptive enough for Uyghur-suppressing China; and India's superficial SCO membership, given its friendly Russian stripe, even friendlier US colours.

As relative US global salience diminishes, the China-Russia SCO (Shanghai Cooperative Organisation) influence grows. Often falsely dubbed as "China's NATO," this loose multilateral 2002 construction originated from multilateral 1996-1998 Shanghai Five deals, bonding Kazakhstan, Kirghizstan, and

India's Taliban challenge and Afghan policy



THE joke going around in diplomatic circles in New Delhi is that the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan was much smoother than the change of guard at the White House after Joe Biden won the presidential elections

in the world's biggest democracy. It is a deceptive calm that preceded and followed the ultra-conservative group's seizing the levers of power in Kabul on August 15. What lies behind the smoothness and calm is the danger of a radical ideology that has serious security and geostrategic implications not just for India, but for South Asia as well. It is nothing more than a geographical indicator that Afghanistan is a member of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) given the dysfunctional nature of the forum.

As the second coming of the Taliban to power—the first time was in 1996 with horrific consequences for Afghanistan—plays out, one of its first announcements was to establish an Islamic Emirate. New Delhi seems to be reworking its Afghan policy. On August 18 and 19, Prime Minister Narendra Modi deliberated with his top cabinet colleagues and National Security Adviser on the developments in Afghanistan and the way forward for India. Clearly, India does not have many options as the rise of the Taliban has clearly led to a new power shift and set off jockeying for influence by regional powers like China, Russia, Turkey and Afghanistan's next door eastern neighbour Pakistan. This is an area of great concern for India, according to strategic affairs experts.

The Taliban regime in Afghanistan of the 1990s was recognised by Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the UAE. Russia and China had

not recognised the Taliban then but they are now falling head over heels to embrace the group. This is a big change from 1996. China, with its deep pocket, is not only looking at making investments in the Afghan economy, but also taking its Belt and Road Initiative to that country to complement its project already going on in Pakistan. China is particularly keen on tapping the deposits of copper, iron ore and lithium which is important for the electric vehicles of the future. There could be a *quid pro quo* between China's financial muscle to help out the Afghan economy, heavily dependent on foreign aid, and mineral mining rights.

The assessment in the strategic establishment in New Delhi is that Pakistan, which has for decades invested heavily in the Taliban by supplying it with funds, weapons and intelligence, is in the driver's seat on matters relating to Afghanistan and will now try to whittle down India's role in the economic development of that country. Pakistan is looking to benefit from a friendly regime in Kabul to take advantage of Afghanistan's extremely strategic location as a transit hub linking South Asia with Central Asia and beyond. So, India's challenges today are quite different and complicated. Will India finally reconcile itself with recognising the Taliban?

After being so closely tied to the governments in Afghanistan over the last two decades, India, which did not recognise the Taliban in 1996, is in no hurry to recognise the new dispensation in Kabul this time around. How India reworks its Afghan policy will depend a lot on a number of variables. Will India go with the western democracies and other Asian countries it has strong relations with based on shared values of democracy, fight against terror and a rule-based international order? Indian Foreign Minister S Jaishankar's recent visit to the US and Qatar is aimed at, among other things, to ascertain the thinking in Washington and

the influential Gulf country about the future of Afghanistan. As part of the same exercise, a team of Indian officials led by Deputy National Security Adviser Pankaj Saran was in Moscow this week meeting Russian National Security Adviser Nikolai Patrushev.

Right now, India is waiting to see the contours of the new power structure and the character of a new government that is expected to emerge in Afghanistan. Senior Taliban leader Amir Khan Motaqi has already held talks with former President Hamid Karzai and senior leader Abdullah Abdullah. India is also keeping a close watch if the talks on the future government could include non-Talibans in view of the ethnic diversity of Afghanistan—Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras. What India is looking at with keenness is can Afghanistan come up with a system that can preserve the gains of the last two decades. After its military prowess shown in the speed with which it captured Afghanistan this time, the Taliban is under no obligation to share power with anyone else. Buoyed by its military victory, the Taliban will try to dictate terms from a position of strength.

Some strategic affairs experts in India rue that New Delhi should not have hesitated to reach out to the Taliban, a policy that sees India squeezed out of the big picture of international power-play in Afghanistan. Such an outreach would have required India to make deft diplomacy and a subtle shift from its stand of looking at the Taliban from a UN-designated terror outfit.

India may be wary of the Taliban but it is far from abandoning the people of Afghanistan where there is considerable goodwill generated by India's soft power in constructing welfare projects in all the 34 provinces of that country like roads, power, dams, hospitals, setting up educational facilities and giving scholarships. Being mindful of this even after the Taliban takeover on August 15, India was quick to announce

e-visa facility for Afghans, wanting to come to India in view of the situation in that country. India is also considering offering help to Afghan students who have taken admission in Indian universities but are unable to come to the country due to the flight disruptions in Kabul. To sustain its image as a reliable development partner, India may have to rethink on its decision to reopen its shut diplomatic missions in Kabul, Kandahar and Mazar-e-Sharif. To sum up, India has to find a way to stay invested in Afghanistan post-Taliban takeover.

Much will depend on how the Taliban conducts itself in Afghanistan, deals with the international community, if it distances itself from various terror groups, including Al Qaeda, which helped it, and how it deals with Pakistan, the principal backer of the hardline Islamist group. If the Taliban sticks to its medieval mores like in the 1990s, oppressing women and indulging in revenge killings, it could run the risk of once again becoming an international pariah. Post-takeover, initial vibes emanating from Kabul is that the group is trying to signal its transformation into a force of moderation by promising no reprisal violence and that women are welcome in government offices. During the talks on government formation with Karzai and Abdullah Abdullah, Motaqi reportedly pledged to form an "inclusive" government that would give representation to all ethnic groups. So, the Taliban seems to be making the right noises, keeping an eye on the international community in a bid to get acceptance and legitimacy. But these words need to be verified on the ground in the months to come.

The Taliban must realise that winning a military victory is quite different from the challenges of governance, the foremost of which is to ensure development projects of the last 20 years in connectivity network, energy supply, healthcare facilities and several community development projects.

A key marker of India's response to the

new regime in Kabul will, of course, be the Taliban's relations with Pakistan. The Taliban has close links with Tehreek-i-Taliban of Pakistan and other anti-India terror groups like Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba. Recently, TTP leader Mufi Noor Wali Mehsud has thanked the Taliban leader Haibatullah Akhundzada for releasing their deputy leader Maulvi Faqir Muhammad from Bagram high security prison—from where around 7,000 hardcore terrorists were freed by the Taliban. The issue is: will Pakistan stop using cross-border terrorism as an instrument of state policy and give more stress on geo-economics rather than geo-politics? It does not look like it.

The question also is: will the Taliban be able to snap its ties with non-Afghan terror outfits which will try to extract their pounds of flesh for having helped the Taliban. One must remember that Jaish chief Maulana Masood Azhar was taken directly to Mullah Omar (who had led the Taliban's charge in Afghanistan in 1996), in Kandahar after he was freed by India in return for the safe release of passengers of the Indian Airlines flight hijacked from Kathmandu in December, 1999.

The change of guard in Kabul has set off security concerns for India and some other parts of South Asia. India will have to be on guard against the possibility of the Taliban sending its fighters or helping other terror groups to Jammu and Kashmir. Both India and Bangladesh must recognise that Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh has its roots in an earlier Afghan war. The JMB was founded by Afghan war veterans, and how the outfit went on a rampage in Bangladesh in the early 2000s is well-known. The Taliban recruited a large number of fighters from Bangladesh in the 1990s and some from India. The spill-over of the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan may result in a rise in extremism not only among radicals in Bangladesh and Rohingyas there, but also in India.

Pallab Bhattacharya is a special correspondent for The Daily Star.

QUOTABLE Quote

MARGARET ATWOOD
Canadian poet and novelist (born November 18, 1939)

An eye for an eye only leads to more blindness.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Olympic awards
- 7 Mass unit
- 11 Egypt neighbor
- 12 Doily stuff
- 13 Comfort for a losing fan
- 15 Precious ones
- 16 Went out, as a fire
- 18 Egyptian goddess
- 21 Diamond scores
- 22 Pricey stadium spot
- 24 Play division
- 25 Suit accessory
- 26 Take to court
- 27 Chapel worker
- 29 Flex

DOWN

- 1 Comic Bernie
- 2 Mess up
- 3 Calendar box
- 4 Tolerates
- 5 Like some jackets
- 6 Sweeping story
- 7 Like patent leather
- 8 Unrefined
- 9 Trick taker, often
- 10 Director Brooks
- 14 Kid's transport
- 16 Old gold coin
- 17 Prologue
- 19 "Ghosts" playwright
- 20 Wide inlet
- 21 Drake's music
- 22 Sermon topic
- 23 Marked a ballot
- 25 Gear part
- 28 Rocket sections
- 29 Snoopy, for one
- 31 Mideast peninsula
- 33 Tire holders
- 34 Rent out
- 35 Heady brew
- 36 Try out
- 37 Bit of humor
- 38 Stunned wonder
- 39 Bro's sibling

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FRIDAY'S ANSWERS

LOA F S P A B L O
A L L O W A P R O N
D E F O E G E E S E
T A C O W E S
F U E L R O D S
O S L O D A K O T A
R E S O W S I M O N
E R A S E S N A T O
E L E C T R O N
P U B D E L I
O R A T E A G I L E
M A J O R S H R E W
P L A N S S T A G E

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

'Need to change the behavior of our wickets'

While the members of Bangladesh's limited-overs squad are preparing for the upcoming five-match T20I series against New Zealand with the ICC World T20 in mind, Test captain Mominul Haque has been silently working on his game at the Masco Shakib Cricket Academy on the outskirts of Dhaka under coach Mohammad Salahuddin. After watching the methodical batsman go through a skills training session, The Daily Star's Mazhar Uddin caught up with the 29-year-old to discuss his lonesome practices outside Dhaka, his expectations from the Test unit and the challenge to improve Bangladesh's pace-bowling unit. The excerpts of the interview are below:

The Daily Star (DS): What is the reason that you are practising here, far away from Mirpur? Is it to silently work on your skills?

Mominul Haque (MH): (Smiles) Not really. To be honest, you need a guide to practice. Although everything was prepared for me at Mirpur, I come here in the off-season and work on my game under Salahuddin sir. There is still a long time to go before the next Test series; maybe around three months. There's no other reason.

DS: As the Test captain, what was your reaction when Bangladesh beat Australia for the first time in T20Is?

MH: It was fantastic. The way Bangladesh dominated four games and won the series was outstanding. I never imagined we would be able to win the series 4-1. We managed to beat Australia once in Tests and once in ODIs, but I am really proud of what our team has achieved this time. It's a new beginning for us. We were unable to do well consistently in the T20 format so I think we needed something like this before the World Cup.

DS: How difficult is it to stay focused here while the team is busy playing limited-overs games on the international circuit?

MH: It's difficult when there is a long gap. I once played a Test match against England after five months and since then I managed to adjust to that. It is really difficult to play a Test match after a gap of five months no matter how many domestic games you play during that period. But we don't get to play a lot of Tests and results are also not that satisfying. I have adjusted to the situation and try to mentally prepare myself and play.

DS: You were suddenly handed Test captaincy in 2019 after Shakib Al Hasan was banned and you won the first away Test match in Zimbabwe. As the captain, what do you want to see from the Test team in the coming days?

MH: We won in Zimbabwe but that doesn't mean we have done a lot in Test cricket. I



think we have had bigger challenge like the two Tests against Pakistan and New Zealand. Regardless of conditions and opposition, I believe it's important to have the team perform. Everyone has to contribute and if you look at the stats, you will notice we win matches across all formats when everyone performs as a unit. So, I think if we can perform collectively then we can improve as a Test team. I would also like to add that we now have pacers who can take 20 wickets in a Test match in tandem with spinners. I think it is important for fast bowlers to know how to perform abroad in foreign conditions so I think it's important for us to work on all three departments.

DS: There has been a lot of talk about the pitches at home, where the pacers don't get enough assistance so they struggle when they go

abroad. What is the solution?

MH: I think we need to change the behaviour of our wickets. I have said this previously as well. When you have bouncy pitches, you will see pacers more interested in bowling. As a captain, when I include two or three pacers in the playing eleven during first-class competitions but then witness the pitch not offering enough for seamers, it's honestly disappointing from a bowler's point of view. You may have a few flat pitches where seamers can learn reverse swing, but the majority have to be seaming wickets where fast bowlers will get more purchase. Then you will see the enthusiasm among pacers and the craze will grow rapidly. So I think the change to pitches is very important if our pacers want to dominate abroad.



KINGS SURVIVE Bengaluru scare

SPORTS REPORTER



Bashundhara Kings were held to a goalless draw by Bengaluru FC in their second Group D match of the AFC Cup at the male National Stadium in Maldives yesterday.

The Bangladesh champions, who started their campaign with a 2-0 win against Maziya S&RC on Wednesday, were given a stern test by the ISL outfit, who had lost their opening match 2-0 against ATK Mohun Bagan.

Kings will wrap up their campaign against Mohun Bagan on Tuesday. Only one team from the group will qualify for the inter-zonal semifinals.

Although Bengaluru coach Marco Pezzaiuoli made three changes to his starting eleven, Kings coach Oscar Bruzon decided to stick with the same players, who had dispatched the Maldivian champions with ease.

The Bangladesh champions looked comfortable defending their own in the first half, not being too adventurous as they waited for the opposition to move out of their comfort zone. Robson Robinho was the most threatening for the Kings as he almost snuck in through the Bengaluru defence on 21 minutes only to be brought down on the edge of the box.

Jonathan Fernandes, the other Brazilian in Kings' ranks, had a swerving shot thwarted by Bengaluru keeper Gurpreet Singh on 35 minutes before Bishwanath Ghosh made an excellent tackle to deny Roshan Singh from

releasing a shot on goal following a nice one-two with Sunil Chhetri.

Robinho almost gave Kings the lead 10 minutes into the second half as he latched on to a square-pass from Biplu Ahmed and managed to poke the ball towards the goal, but Sandhu's outstretched left-foot took the pace off the ball before Roshan raced back to clear the ball from in front of the goal.

While Bruzon's single substitution – Mohammad Ibrahim on for Mahbubur Rahman Sufil – brought a little more cutting edge to Kings' attacks, the Bangladesh champions were made to work hard to keep their fort safe as a string of substitutions saw Bengaluru dictating terms in the final third. The last 20 minutes belonged to the Indian side as Chhetri, Alan Costa and Cleiton Silva combined to pound the Kings' goal with countless attacks.

Anisur Rahman Zico made a double save on 71 minutes before keeping out Cleiton's left-footed shot had 10 minutes later, but in the meanwhile, was lucky to see Costa's header bouncing off the crossbar and not completely crossing the goal.

While the possession was equally dominated by both teams, the difference between the number of attempts – six for Kings against 14 for Bengaluru – suggest Bruzon would be relieved to have come away with a point. Zico admitted that in the post-match interview. "They (Bengaluru) played with great intensity as they needed a victory to stay in the competition. We did well to come out with a draw. Now the next match against Mohun Bagan will be our final."

NEWS IN BRIEF

'Ronaldo guarantees a large number of goals'

Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri said Cristiano Ronaldo has told him that he will stay at the club this season, something the new boss believes guarantees goals for the Serie A giants. "He is an added bonus for us, because he guarantees a large number of goals. Obviously, we also have to work as a team to get the best out of an individual."

PSG's Messi returns to Barcelona

Lionel Messi, who was left out of Paris Saint-Germain's squad for their Ligue 1 encounter against Brest on Friday, has returned to Barcelona with his family, reported Spanish outlet Mundo Deportivo. According to the report, Messi, who has spent most of his life in Barcelona since joining the Spanish club in 2000, went back to Catalonia to spend time in his home at Castelldefels. He is reported to stay in Barcelona until Sunday.

PCB delays camp

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has reportedly delayed its scheduled training camp and the announcement of the Pakistan squad for their upcoming three-match ODI series against Afghanistan, to be played in Sri Lanka next month.

The Pakistan cricket team were supposed to start their training from today in Lahore but with the recent crisis in Afghanistan due to the Taliban take over, the PCB is waiting for Afghanistan Cricket Board's (ACB) confirmation about the series.



A houseful Anfield erupts as Sadio Mane's strike in the 69th minute sealed the fate of the game in Liverpool's favour after Diogo Jota's 18th minute goal against Burnley yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Jota, Mane delight returning fans

REUTERS, LIVERPOOL



Liverpool made it two wins from two at the start of the new Premier League season as they cruised to a 2-0 home victory over Burnley on Saturday.

With Anfield in fine voice, at capacity for the first time since Liverpool's Champions League defeat by Atletico Madrid in March last year, the visitors looked like they might become the first Burnley team since 1897 to win back-to-back league games at the famous stadium after making a bright start.

But, for the second time in as many games, Diogo Jota settled Liverpool nerves, scoring his first Anfield goal since November last year. Jota edged Liverpool in front with his second goal in as many games in the 18th minute, a brilliant header in front of a first full Anfield in 17 months.

Burnley, the team who last season ended Liverpool's 68-match unbeaten

home league run, a record that stretched back almost four years, had chances to level, but their final ball was lacking at the crucial moment. Ashley Barnes thought he had levelled early in the second half, only to be denied by the offside flag, with Liverpool capitalising on their reprieve in the 69th minute, as Sadio Mane drilled home their second.

The hosts pressed for a third, urged on by a buoyant crowd, but they settled for two, and a second clean sheet of the campaign, to go top of the standings, and leave Burnley pointless from their opening two matches. This comfortable victory means Jurgen Klopp's side are unbeaten in 12 matches in the league – the longest run in the division. With Virgil van Dijk back in defence, they look a formidable unit once again.

Prior to Liverpool's first home game of the season there was a moving tribute to the former players, management staff, directors and fans who have died in the 17 months since a capacity crowd was last inside Anfield.

Goalless draws at BNS

SPORTS REPORTER

Both matches of the Bangladesh Premier League ended in goalless draws at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

In the first match of the day, second-placed Sheikh Jamal Dhanmondi Club were held to a goalless draw by already-relegated Brothers Union. The draw ended Sheikh Jamal's five-match winning streak even though the three-time champions are still in second position with 46 points from 22 matches. The second match saw Rahmatganj MFS and Muktiyoddha Sangsada fire a blank, leaving Rahmatganj in ninth position with 22 points and Muktiyoddha in 11th position with 19 points.

SAFF fixtures rescheduled

SPORTS REPORTER

The fixtures of the South Asian Football Federation (SAFF) Championship have been rescheduled, confirmed the regional football's governing body yesterday.

While the championship will start as previously stated October 1, the gap between matches has been increased from two days to three days in accordance with FIFA guideline for Tier-1 matches.

As per the new schedule, Bangladesh will play their four group matches against Sri Lanka, India, Maldives and Nepal on October 1, 4, 7 and 13 respectively. The final of the five-team event, to be played between the top two teams of the round-robin stage, will be held on October 16.

Akbar wishes to serve the national team

SPORTS REPORTER

While left-arm pacer Shoriful Islam is on his way up and making a name for himself in the Bangladesh cricket team, Akbar Ali, the wicket-keeper batsman who led the Under-19 team during their maiden World Cup glory last year, is hoping to soon be capped for the national side.

"Our main goal is to feature for the national team one day and to serve the country for a long time. Our immediate objective will be to rectify our mistakes so that we can at least improve our game a little before being called into the main team," said Akbar before leaving the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) headquarters in Mirpur yesterday for Chattogram, where he will be part of BCB's High Performance (HP) squad's training camp.

The HP squad's training camp will start at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram from 22 August and is scheduled to continue till October 8.

The BCB has announced a 22-member HP squad for the camp, who will play three one-dayers and two four-day matches against the Bangladesh A side during their camp in the port city. The three one-dayers are scheduled for September 2, 4 and

6 while the four-day matches will be played on September 9 and 15 respectively.

Even though it has been challenging for the BCB to arrange camps and programmes for players out of the national squad during the Covid-19 pandemic, the cricket's governing body of the country must ensure players like Akbar remain involved in such training camps to avoid fading away just after a few glimpses at the age-level.

The camp will be held in a bio-secure environment. Chairman of the High Performance Committee Naimur Rahman met the HP squad on Friday and stressed the importance of the HP programme for the players in terms of reaching greater heights. He also reminded the players of the gravity of maintaining the bio-secure protocol during the ongoing pandemic.

HP Squad: Tanzid Hasan Tamim, Parvez Hossain Emon, Munim Shaharier, Shahadat Hossain, Mahmudul Hasan Joy, Towhid Hridoy, Anisul Islam, Imranuzzaman Imran, Akbar Ali, Minhajul Abedin Afridi, Rakibul Hasan, Hasan Murad, Tanvir Islam, Rishad Hossain, Shafiqul Islam, Mukidul Islam, Tanzim Hasan Sakib, Shahin Alom, Sumon Khan, Noman Chowdhury, Rejaur Rahman, Ruhel Mia.



Bangabandhu Tunnel
is being built with BSRM

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SHAH CEMENT

Travellers in limbo as India flights uncertain

RASHIDUL HASAN

The Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh and the two local airlines are yet to get the requisite approval from India to resume flights to the neighbouring country from today, leaving hundreds of passengers who bought tickets in a state of suspense.

Different Indian media reported yesterday that the scheduled Biman flights from today have been called off as the two aviation authorities could come into an agreement on the resumption of flights, which has been on pause for four months after the second wave of coronavirus cases in India.

Earlier on August 18, Biman announced the resumption of flights to Kolkata and Delhi from today under the "air bubble" agreement. There would be two flights to Delhi and three flights to Kolkata every week.

Following the announcement, hundreds of Bangladeshis, most of whom are patients and students and were waiting for long to fly to India, bought tickets.

One such passenger is Sharifa Begum from Rajbari, Faridpur. She bought tickets to Delhi for her 11-year-old son's treatment and booked doctor's appointments and hotels accordingly.

"But the flight cancellation has put us in a big problem," she said.

AMRI Hospitals said it processed 300-400 visa invitation forms for Bangladesh patients who were scheduled to visit next week, reports The Times of India.

Most of them have emergency surgeries or treatment lined up, according to Rupak Barua, chief executive officer of AMRI.

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The family on the boat consider themselves lucky because the tin-roof could be saved from being washed away by the swollen Teesta river in Gangachara, Rangpur. Many other families in the region are losing their homes and belongings to erosion and floods.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

DENGUE MENACE 80 children in treatment at Shishu Hospital

Breaks previous record of 69

HELEMUL ALAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Dhaka Shishu Hospital yesterday gave treatment to 80 dengue infected children admitted to the facility, the highest ever at a time.

In 2019, when the mosquito-borne disease was quite prevalent, 69 children with dengue were at the hospital at one time, said its Deputy Director Prabir Kumar Sarkar.

The number of dengue patients is increasing and children are particularly vulnerable, he added.

Since January, 356 children have taken treatment at the hospital. Six of them died, said Epidemiologist Kinkor Ghosh.

He added that over 58.5 percent of the child patients were from Dhaka North City Corporation areas, 31.5

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'I will go insane if I do not get bail'

Says Pori Moni to her lawyers who did not file a petition; actor sent to jail

COURT CORRESPONDENT

Pori Moni yesterday expressed displeasure with her lawyers in the courtroom for not filing any bail petition in the narcotics case.



"Why are you not petitioning for bail?" the disgruntled actor asked at the end of yesterday's hearing.

After the hearing, Pori Moni was sent to jail by Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Ashek Imam after Kazi Golam Mostafa, an inspector of Criminal Investigation Department and also the investigation officer of the case, produced her before court with police forwarding report on completion of her one-day remand in the third phase in the case, court sources said.

She was taken to a women's prison in Gazipur yesterday, said the court police.

The defence did not file any bail petition with the court for Pori Moni yesterday.

Soon after the magistrate ended the

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ROAD TO FREEDOM THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

Reluctant candidates in Dhaka

AUGUST 22, 1971

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

SHIP SABOTAGE SHATTERED PAKISTAN

The Daily Telegraph reported that no candidates could be found for the 79 constituencies which had been declared vacant by the Martial Law Authority in East Pakistan. Civil servants and the more "dovish" members of the martial law authorities had so far been unable to persuade people to stand as candidates, either for the Muslim League or one of the other recognised parties, added the report.

The London-based daily commented, "For it is well known that candidates will be wide open to threats and harassment from the Mukti Foj guerrillas. Supporters of Bangladesh are likely, too, to make the life of any candidate's family difficult and unpleasant, even if they do not use bullets or bombs."

In another report, the daily stated that supply ship sabotage shattered confidence of West Pakistan. It may be mentioned here that Bangladeshi guerrillas had sunk several Pakistani supply vessels in the previous week, seriously interrupting the flow of soldiers and military supplies from West to East Pakistan.

The guerrillas had also begun attacks on well-guarded military targets. Nearly a thousand minor bridges and culverts, and 157 major road and rail bridges had been destroyed. The army had not been able to repair the most important of the rail bridges, connecting the main port of Chittagong with Dhaka. It was

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Two held for gang-rape of teen

Another held for violating girl with challenges

STAR REPORT

Police arrested two men on charge of gang-raping a teenager, making a video of the incident and then stealing her jewellery in Noakhali's Begumganj upazila.

Meanwhile, a grocer was arrested in Gafargaon upazila of Mymensingh yesterday noon alleged for raping of speech-impaired girl, while a madrasa girl was raped in Bogura on Friday night.

In Noakhali's Begumganj, the victim's mother filed a case under Women and Children Repression Prevention Act and Pornography Act accusing Abdur Rahman, 28, and Md Ibrahim, 24, with Begumganj Police Station yesterday morning, said Md Kamruzzaman Siddik, officer-in-charge of

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Woolly mammoth walked far enough to circle Earth twice



THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

He was huge, hairy and boasted two enormous tusks: researchers say they have discovered a woolly mammoth called Kik who traipsed almost far enough in his life to circle the Earth twice.

Experts say the work not only sheds light on the movements of the giant proboscideans, but adds weight to ideas that climate change or human activity may have contributed to the demise of most of the creatures about 12,000 years ago.

Dr Clément Bataille, a researcher from the University of Ottawa and co-lead author of the research, said it highlighted the importance of

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

Dhaka, Beijing ties deepened in pandemic

Says Momen

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh-China relations have further deepened during the pandemic, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen told Xinhua news agency.

"From the very beginning, they [China] have been very supportive," Momen said in an exclusive interview on the sidelines of the agreement-signing ceremony between Bangladesh and China on vaccine co-production on Sunday.

Xinhua published the interview yesterday.

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PRAYER TIMING AUGUST 22

	Fajr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
JANAM	4:30	12:45	4:45	6:33	8:00
JAMAAT	5:05	1:15	5:00	6:36	8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

HASINA'S MOTORCADE

Convict in attack case held after 17 years

STAR REPORT

Detectives have arrested a convict in a case filed over the attack on the motorcade of the then opposition leader and incumbent Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in Sathkira in 2002.

Arifur Rahman Ranju, 42, was arrested in Dhaka's Hazaribagh area on Friday, AKM Hafiz Akhter, additional commissioner of the detective branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told journalists at a press briefing at DMP media centre yesterday.

A former Chhatra Dal leader of a college in Sathkira, Ranju was sentenced to 10 years in prison in the case, he added.

A Sathkira court in February this year jailed 50 people, including former BNP lawmaker Habibur Islam Habib of Sathkira-1 constituency, to different terms over the attack.

During the verdict, 34 of them were present in the courtroom. The others were on the run.



Members of Fire Services and Civil Defence trying to cut the cab of a truck to rescue its driver. He got trapped after a head-on collision between the truck and a bus. The accident happened near Ghatail Bus Stand in Tangail town yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

India okays world's first DNA-based Covid-19 shot

AFP, New Delhi

India has authorised the emergency use of a second homegrown Covid-19 vaccine, which is also the first approved for children older than 12 in the country.

India's Department of Biotechnology on Friday announced its approval for ZyCoV-D, by Indian pharmaceutical firm Zydus Cadila, as the "world's first and India's indigenously developed DNA-based vaccine for Covid-19."

The approval for ZyCoV-D, which can be applied using a needle-free injector, comes with vaccination rates picking up across the country over the last few weeks.

"This three-dose vaccine... when injected produces the spike protein of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and elicits an immune response," the biotechnology department, which partnered with Zydus Cadila, said in a statement.

"The plug-and-play technology on which the plasmid DNA platform is based can be easily adapted to deal with mutations in the virus, such as those already occurring," it added.

ZyCoV-D is now the sixth vaccine to be approved by New Delhi after Moderna, Oxford-AstraZeneca's Covishield, Covaxin -- which was developed by Indian firm Bharat Biotech, Russia's Sputnik V, and Johnson and Johnson.

More than 574 million jabs have been administered so far in India.

The country broke its daily record earlier this week by administering more than 9.2 million vaccine doses in the mass vaccination programme which began in mid-January.

India hopes to inoculate its entire eligible population by the end of December. But with only about 10 percent -- or 127 million people -- having received both doses of a

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