



**SUGA TO STEP DOWN**  
Triggered by criticism over Covid pandemic, the Japan PM says he will not contest for party leadership  
**SEE PAGE 5**

# The Daily Star

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## SCHOOLS REOPENING

# Long wait is over Sept 12



- Hybrid learning method combining in-person and online class, TV learnings
- HSC, SSC, JSC, PECE examinees to join classes every day
- Students of other grades to attend classes one or two days a week

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

With Covid-19 infections gradually going down, the government is set to reopen schools and colleges from September 12, allowing students to attend in-person classes in phases after around 18 months of closure.

Education Minister Dipu Moni made the announcement while attending a programme in Chandpur yesterday.

She said the authorities had already made all arrangements in this regard and that they would strictly monitor whether health rules are properly maintained at educational institutions.

Officials of the ministries of education and primary and mass education said examinees of this year's four public examinations, including SSC and HSC tests, would attend classes every day at first after the reopening.

Students of other classes would have in-person classes once or twice every week. The number of the class days would be increased depending

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Premier all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan picked up two wickets but it needed a collective effort from the Bangladesh players to edge past New Zealand by four runs in the second of the five-match T20I series at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Tigers go 2-0 up with close win

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite a late twist, Bangladesh were able to scrape to a four-run win against New Zealand in the second game of the five-match T20I series at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

After putting up a decent total of 141 for six, courtesy of an unbeaten 37 from skipper Mahmudullah Riyad and a solid opening stand between Mohammad Naim and Liton Das, Bangladesh restricted New Zealand to 137 for five.

The win also means that Bangladesh now lead the five-match series 2-0 and have now won eight T20Is in a calendar year for the first time ever.

However, the game that looked to be well in Bangladesh's grasp even at the beginning of the final over, took an unexpected turn when ace left-arm pacer Mustafizur Rahman bowled a waist-high no-ball that eventually brought

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

## Covid daily deaths lowest in 11 weeks

Week's death toll drops by 237

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The fatalities from Covid-19 and new infections have dropped in the country last week compared to the previous week, according to data of the Directorate General of Health Services.

A total of 24,130 new Covid cases were recorded last week, down from 32,950 in the previous week (August 21-27).

The number of deaths also came down to 237 from 586 during the same period.

Meanwhile, 70 more people died from novel coronavirus in 24 hours preceding 8:00am yesterday. This is the lowest daily death from the virus recorded in the country in the last 11 weeks.

On June 19, the daily death toll was 67.

The total number of Covid deaths in Bangladesh now stands at 26,432 and the death rate is 1.75 percent, said a DGHS press release.

A total of 29,438 samples were tested across the country during the 24 hours. At least 3,167 new infections were logged in this period, taking the total number of infected people to 15,10,283.

The current positivity rate is 10.76 percent while the overall positivity rate is

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

## Ties with Turkey finding new turfs

Resolving past row, Dhaka and Ankara bolster relations

PORIMOL PALMA

Coming out of past diplomatic rows, Bangladesh and Turkey are deepening relations as the latter seeks to regain its position in the Muslim world, while Dhaka looks for strong allies on the global stage to resolve the Rohingya crisis and boost trade, analysts have said.

Turkey, a NATO member with a strong military power, is an influential voice at the UN, OIC and other global forums and has been supportive of Dhaka's stance on the Rohingya issue, a much sought-after help for Bangladesh.

Bangladesh also wants increased trade with Turkey, which Ankara wants to push to \$2 billion from the current two-way annual trade worth \$1 billion.

Recent progress is already strengthening defence cooperation that signifies the depth of the relations, foreign policy analysts observed.

"In the last 10 years, Turkey has advanced a lot, especially in military technology, while Bangladesh drew global attention for its economic growth. So we see the areas of convergence are growing and so are the relations," said M Humayun

"In the last 10 years, Turkey has advanced a lot, especially in military technology, while Bangladesh drew global attention for its economic growth. So we see the areas of convergence are growing and so are the relations."

M HUMAYUN KABIR  
PRESIDENT, BANGLADESH ENTERPRISE INSTITUTE (BEI)

Kabir, president of Bangladesh Enterprise Institute (BEI).

REBUILDING RELATIONS

Turkey, which sided with West Pakistan during Bangladesh's Liberation War in 1971, recognised Bangladesh in 1974 and opened its embassy in Dhaka another two years later.

The relations had grown since then, but it took a nosedive in 2012 when Ankara started condemning the International War Crimes Tribunal's prosecution of Jamaat-e-

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

## Does Boat Club have permission?

BNP MP asks parliament

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A BNP MP in parliament yesterday demanded that the home minister state whether the much-talked about Boat Club in the capital has government approval and whether the inspector general of police has the government's permission to be the club's president.

Harunur Rashid made the demand while speaking on a point of order.

"I don't know whether any chief of the police department ever became a member or had responsibilities in establishing any such club in the 50-year history of Bangladesh," he told the session with Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury in the chair.

The MP from Chapainawabganj-3 then asked Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

## Baradar to lead new Afghan govt

Say Taliban sources; heavy fighting reported from Panjshir Valley

AGENCIES

Taliban co-founder Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar will lead a new Afghan government set to be announced soon, sources in the group said yesterday, as its fighters battled forces loyal to the vanquished republic in the Panjshir Valley north of Kabul.

But the new government's most immediate priority would be to avert the collapse of an economy grappling with drought and the ravages of a 20-year conflict that killed around 240,000 Afghans before US forces completed a tumultuous pullout on August 30.

At stake is whether the Taliban can govern a country facing economic meltdown, a humanitarian disaster and threats to security and stability from rival jihadist groups, including a local offshoot of Islamic State.

Baradar, who heads the Taliban's political office, will be joined by Mullah Mohammad Yaqoob, the son of late Taliban co-founder Mullah Omar, and Sher Mohammad Abbas Stanikzai, in senior positions in the government, three sources said.

"All the top leaders have arrived in Kabul, where preparations are in final stages to announce the new government," a Taliban official told Reuters, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The announcement, earlier expected to be made after Friday afternoon prayers, would now not happen until today at the earliest, a Taliban spokesman told AFP.

Haibatullah Akhundzada, the Taliban's supreme religious leader, will

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



## FAKE COVID TEST

# Court accepts charges against Regent's Shahed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court has taken cognisance of the charges framed against 14 officials of Regent Group, including its Chairman Mohammad Shahed and Managing Director Masud Parvez, for issuing fake Covid-19 certificates and illegally charging patients for tests and treatments.

The 12 other charge-sheeted accused are Regent Group Public Relations Officer Tariqul Islam Shibli, Project Officer Rakibul Islam Sumon, Human Resources Officer Amit Banik, Health Technologist Hatim Ali, Administrative Officer Ahsan Habib Majumder, Regent Hospital Uttara Branch Managing Director Md Mizanur Rahman, employees Abdur Rashid Khan Jewel, Shimul Parvez, Dipayan Basu, Polash Ali, Shaykhul Islam and driver Abdus Salam.

Ten of them, including Shahed and Parvez, are now behind the bars.

Metropolitan Magistrate Mohammad Jashim yesterday accepted the charges brought against them after scrutinising the case dockets and other relevant documents.

The magistrate issued arrest warrants against four fugitives - Shimul, Dipayan, Shaykhul, and Polash Ali - and directed

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



A large field just outside the Khan Saheb Osman Ali Stadium in Narayanganj's Fatullah has been under water for several months as there is no drainage system in place. The stadium cannot be used for months every year due to this perennial waterlogging problem. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

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## BANGLADESH-INDIA Airlines operate flights from tomorrow

RASHIDUL HASAN

Biman and US-Bangla airlines will resume flight operations to India under an air bubble agreement between Bangladesh and India from tomorrow after a four-month hiatus over coronavirus restrictions.

US-Bangla Airlines resume flight operations on Dhaka-Chennai-Dhaka route and Biman Bangladesh Airlines on Dhaka-Kolkata-Dhaka and Dhaka-Delhi-Dhaka routes from tomorrow.

Novoair said they will not operate flights under the air bubble agreement.

An air bubble arrangement is a temporary arrangement between two countries aimed at resuming air travelling while regular international flights are suspended due to coronavirus restrictions. Airline companies from both countries get the opportunity.

The Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB) on September 2 accepted the proposal of the Indian Ministry of Civil Aviation on the resumption of flights from today.

CAAB issued a circular Thursday night clearing the way for the resumption of flight operations between the two countries.

The CAAB circular said the air bubble agreement will be in effect until the resumption of scheduled international passenger flights between the two countries.

Travellers from India must be in quarantine at home for 14 days and follow the other protocols, including getting tested for coronavirus from a PCR lab.



# TANGENTS

BY IHTISHAM KABIR



Image processing computer by Vicom, circa 1985.

PHOTO: IHTISHAM KABIR

## Becoming an Engineer

I went to the U.S. on a scholarship as an undergraduate Physics major. After a semester, however, I was having trouble believing fundamental concepts of modern physics. So I changed my major to Electrical Engineering. Being strong in mathematics I jumped right in and earned decent grades. The switch did not cost me extra semesters. But troubles of conviction continued nagging me. I could not envision a career designing electric circuits.

Then one day a teacher told me about a nascent field of Electrical Engineering that married mathematics and engineering with photography. I took to this subject, image processing, like a fish takes to water.

After completing a Masters in it I looked for a job. This was 1983 when America was in a recession. It was very hard for a foreign student to find American employment. Sending out resumes proved fruitless so I volunteered at an engineering symposium in my university and met people from industry. From there I got a software job at a Silicon Valley start-up company making an image processing computer.

I quickly found my employer had draconian policies. Everyone was required to work six days a week. Further, after working all day, we had to resume work after dinner. Our dictatorial president smoked profusely, and his secretary (whom we called The General) was always rushing into his office with a lighter to light his cigarettes. The product, being expensive, failed to sell. The company went bust. It was a blessing in disguise because I immediately landed another software job. My new company, with normal work hours, was called Vicom. It, too, made an image processing computer, but reasonably priced. Vicom was led by Dr. Bill Pratt, a founding father of image processing. I was delighted to work with him.

That was my entry to Silicon Valley. It was going to be my home for the next two and a half decades.

In 1983 the valley was a sleepy region of Northern California just waking up to the prospect of changing the world. Technologies developed in the valley were coming together – computers, software, digital pictures and sound, networking, and integrated circuits which compressed all these functions into a silicon chip – and many saw this as a source of untold power and wealth. Graduates of the best universities arrived every day for this gold rush.

Fresh arrivals were often nerdy: unkempt appearance, thick glasses, hair that needed brushing and poor interpersonal skills. However, if you hung out on Saturday afternoon at Computer Literacy bookstore or the cavernous electronics store Fry's, you saw the techies in true form, bubbling with enthusiasm like kids in a toy store.

On my second day at Vicom I got a coding assignment. I saw it as both a test and an opportunity to prove myself and wrote the software quickly. But its output (result) was unexpected. All eyes turned on me as I was the newcomer: was my software buggy? However, working virtually non-stop for two weeks, I proved my software was correct. The flaw arose from a subtle misunderstanding of the computer's hardware. Bill and I came up with an alternative approach. The output worked fine this time. We ended up writing a paper and presenting it at an international conference. (Once in a while I find someone citing this work in their thesis and feel tremendously gratified.)

The road ahead beckoned. I was on my way to becoming an engineer.

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

# Reform 'discriminatory, unjust' Hindu laws

Demands Bangladesh Hindu Law Reform Council

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terming traditional Hindu laws "discriminatory and unjust", a newly formed organisation, Bangladesh Hindu Law Reform Council, yesterday demanded that the antiquated laws be reformed and codified to reflect the concerns of women, children and other marginalised communities.

They called for elimination of gender inequality from the Hindu Law of Inheritance Act, equal guardianship under the Hindu Guardianship Act, reform of the Hindu Adoption Act, introduction of the Divorce Act and compulsory marriage registration.

They placed these five-point demand at a press conference in Dhaka Reporters' Unity.

In her keynote speech, Dhaka University Associate Professor, Dr Moyna Talukdar, president of the organisation, highlighted that the traditional Hindu laws were discriminatory towards women, children, people with disabilities and the transgender community.

These laws have remained unchanged for almost a century and have not been codified,

### FIVE-POINT DEMAND

- Eliminate gender inequality from Inheritance Act
- Equal guardianship under Guardianship Act
- Reform Adoption Act
- Introduce Divorce Act
- Make marriage registration compulsory

which are hampering the rule of law, she added.

Dr Talukdar pointed out that the laws were adopted during the British rule and were not compatible with traditional Hinduism.

"Although these laws were prevalent in the name of religion, the relationship of these with the religion is nominal in reality. There are clear provisions in Hinduism that women can divorce and remarry, but women can't do this under existing Hindu laws. Husbands can marry as many times as they want, but women can't ask for divorce, or remarry," she observed.

Highlighting inequalities and inconsistencies in existing laws, she said that the Hindu Inheritance Act denies a daughter

the right to her parents' property, while the right to adopt also belongs to men, who can only adopt male children.

Pulak Ghatak, general secretary of the organisation, said the organisation had launched on September 1, with a 101-member executive council, with the objective of uniting the nation behind these demands.

"Some are opposing the demands to protect vested interests. But a majority of practitioners of the Hindu religion, women of the community, Buddhists and all humanitarians want to reform the law," he said.

Rights activists Reena Roy, Lakshmi Rani Barai and DU Associate Professor Niru Barua, among others, present at the press conference.

# BRT to open in Dec next year

Says Quader

BSS, Gazipur

Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday hoped the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) from Gazipur to Dhaka airport would be opened in the next year along with much-anticipated mega projects -- Padma Bridge, metro rail and Karnaphuli tunnel.

He said this while visiting the ongoing works of the BRT project at Tongi in the district.

Quader, also general secretary of Awami League, said the ongoing construction work of the BRT project from Gazipur to Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport is causing huge sufferings to people of Gazipur and northern districts as well.

The drainage system on either side of the road remains in a poor condition, which is exacerbating public sufferings during monsoon, he said.

"I hope people won't have to suffer during the next monsoon and vehicle movement will continue smoothly on this route," he said.

The minister said the BRT project progress stood at 63.27 percent.

"I hope it will be possible for the prime minister to inaugurate the BRT project in December next year along with much-anticipated major mega projects -- Padma Bridge, metro-rail and Bangabandhu tunnel under Karnaphuli in Chattogram," he said.



## A DAY OF PROTESTS



The capital's Jatiya Press Club area was buzzing with demonstrators yesterday. Clockwise, Old Dhaka residents held a human chain to point out the reported failure of Dhaka South City Corporation's mosquito control measures. To protect Chattogram city's CRB area, known as the "oxygen centre" of the city, many protested the government initiative to build a hospital there. Meanwhile, others held up placards demanding affordable daily produce and rations for those in need.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

# Death anniv of Rama Chowdhury observed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The third death anniversary of freedom fighter and writer Rama Chowdhury was observed in Chattogram yesterday.

Marking the day, Rama Chowdhury Smriti Sangsad in association with CRB Rakkha Sammilito Nagarik Samaj paid homage to Rama at her sculpture in the city's CRB area.

A cultural programme, in which poems and songs written by her were performed, was organised there in the afternoon. A discussion was also held.

Rama died at CMCH on September 3, 2018.

She was born at Popadia village in Boalkhali, Chattogram on October 14, 1941. She graduated in Bangla from Dhaka University in 1961 and started teaching at a school.

During the war, her husband left her as she refused to leave the country. On May 13, 1971, Pakistan army men burnt down their house and raped and tortured her.

None of her relatives or neighbours gave her shelter after her house was torched. She had to live in the open with three kids and often went hungry.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

# Another dies of dengue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One more dengue patient died while 255 others were hospitalised in the 24 hours till 8am yesterday.

According to the Directorate General of Health Services, among the new cases, 22 are from outside Dhaka.

As per DGHS data, 49 people have died of dengue in the country this year. All of them succumbed to the disease in July, August and September. Twelve people died in July, 30 in August while seven have died in September so far.

With the new cases, a total of 880 people have been diagnosed in the first three days of the running month. A total of 11,236 people was infected with dengue this year so far.

At least 7,698 patients were hospitalised in August, 2,286 in July, 272 in June, while 43 were infected in May.

Although most patients who were hospitalised have so far been released, 1,257 are still undergoing treatment at hospitals, the DGHS data shows. The number of patients hospitalised in Dhaka currently is 1,120 while the number outside Dhaka is 137.

Amid the rise in dengue cases, DGHS on August 23 announced six hospitals in Dhaka dedicated to treating dengue patients. They are Sir Salimullah Medical College Hospital in Dhaka, Shaheed Ahsan Ullah Master General Hospital in Tongi, Railway General Hospital at

Kamalapur, 20-bed Aminbazar Govt Hospital, Lalkuthi Hospital in Mirpur, and 31-bed Kamrangirchar Hospital.

Meanwhile, LGRD Minister Tazul Islam yesterday claimed that the multi-dimensional initiatives by the government and a change in season will decrease the dengue infection rate by the end of this month.

The minister was speaking at a shadow parliamentary debate titled "Civics' Active Participation in Decreasing Dengue Outbreak" at the capital's Bangladesh Film Development Corporation (BFDC).

He also said they would consider paying compensation to the families of those who died from dengue, if they apply for the compensation.



PHOTO: RAJIB RATHAN

With little space for his feet, a boy precariously places himself on top of a rickshaw-van, trying his best to hang on to the vehicle. His family was moving to a new house, and the little one was tasked with keeping an eye on the furniture and pillows tied to the van. But this whole arrangement of trying to keep the belongings safe is in turn putting him in danger. This photo was taken on Thursday from port city's Monsurabad area.

## Expand climate relations with Bangladesh

Momen tells COP26 President Alok Sharma

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has proposed the UK to expand their bilateral climate relations especially in transferring green technology, promoting green investment, and supporting climate mitigation projects such as building embankments to protect people from sea-level rise and river erosion.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen made the proposal as he held official talk with COP26 President-Designate Alok Sharma at 9 Downing Street in London Thursday. They discussed hosting a Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF)-COP26 joint event on the side lines of the COP26 in Glasgow in early November.

Momen briefed Sharma on the COP26 agenda for Bangladesh focusing particularly on loss and damage and the proposed CVF-COP26 Leaders' Summit under Bangladesh Presidency.

Sharma assured Bangladesh of the UK's continued support for its climate initiatives covering areas, including collaboration to promote green financing and investment, and technology transfer for a green future.

## NEWS IN brief

### Press club of India to set up 'Bangabandhu Media Centre'

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The Press Club of India will set up a media centre honouring Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, marking his birth centenary.

The "Bangabandhu Media Centre" at the Press Club of India located at Raisina Road in Delhi is expected to be inaugurated by Information Minister Hasan Mahmud on September 6, according to a tweet of India Today Foreign Affairs Editor Geeta Mohan yesterday.

The media centre will have digital facilities and an exhibition hall on the first floor. The Indian High Commission in Bangladesh confirmed the news as well.

Information Minister Hasan Mahmud is visiting India from September 5 to 8.

### 3 held with 31 passports in Benapole

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Benapole

BGB members claimed to have detained three people along with 31 Bangladeshi passports while they were trying to enter India through Benapole International check post.

They were detained from the International Passenger Terminal on Thursday night. The detainees are Shaon Hossain Jibon (30), Anisur Rahman (41), and Abu Sayed Tushar (40). BGB members took position in front of the passenger terminal after receiving news that a large number of passports were being "smuggled" to India through the Benapole check post, said Lt Col Selim Reza, commander of 49 BGB Battalion.

### 13 Indian fishermen arrested

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

Coastguards arrested 13 Indian fishers and seized a trawler from their possession for illegally entering Bangladesh maritime area in Mongla on the Bay of Bengal on Thursday night, said sources at Bangladesh Coast Guard.

Fishing nets and other goods were also seized from their possession, said Lt M Mamunur Rahman, operations officer, Mongla, Coast Guard West Zone.

Mongla Police Station Officer-in-Charge Mohammad Monirul Islam said the coast guard members handed over the 13 Indian fishers to the police station. They will be produced before court soon, he added.



MORE NEWS

Lanka imposes price controls to tackle food shortages

Sri Lanka yesterday imposed price controls on key foods as the government stepped up the use of emergency powers to counter shortages. Queues formed outside state-run supermarkets even before they opened to sell sugar seized from private dealers at less than half the price being charged on the open market 24 hours earlier.

Islamic State 'Beetle' pleads guilty to murdering US hostages

A British-born man who was a member of a team of Islamic State militants in Syria nicknamed "The Beetles" and accused of beheading American hostages pleaded guilty on Thursday to eight US criminal charges including lethal hostage taking and conspiracy to support terrorists.



Thai PM faces confidence vote

Several thousand people gathered in Bangkok to call for the resignation of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha yesterday, one day before lawmakers hold a no-confidence vote over his government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



A man clears debris away from a friend's home that was damaged by a tornado in Mullica Hill, New Jersey on Thursday after record-breaking rainfall brought by the remnants of Storm Ida swept through the area.

PHOTO: AFP

Japan PM to resign over Covid response Sets stage for new leader

REUTERS, Tokyo

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga yesterday said in a surprise move he would step down, setting the stage for a new premier after a one-year tenure marred by an unpopular Covid-19 response and sinking public support.



Suga, who took over after Shinzo Abe resigned last September citing ill health, has seen his approval ratings drop below 30% as the nation struggles with its worst wave of Covid-19 infections ahead of a general election this year.

Suga did not capitalise on his last major achievement - hosting the Olympics, which were postponed months before he took office as coronavirus cases surged.

His decision not to seek reelection as ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) president this month means the party will choose a new leader, who will become PM.

There is no clear frontrunner, but the popular minister in charge of Japan's vaccination rollout, Taro Kono, intends to run, broadcaster TBS said on Friday without citing sources.

Before Abe's record eight-year tenure, the country had gone through six prime ministers in as many years, including Abe's own troubled first one-year term.

He said he would hold a news conference as early as next week. He is expected to stay on until his successor is chosen in the party election slated for Sept. 29.

The winner, assured of being premier due to the LDP's majority in the lower house of parliament, must call the general election by Nov. 28.

'China our most important partner'

Taliban say they will rely on Beijing funds for economic recovery

AGENCIES

Taliban claim China to maintain embassy in Kabul, hail new Silk Road

US has no plans to release billions in Afghan assets, Treasury says

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid has told an Italian newspaper that the group will rely primarily on financing from China following the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan and its takeover of the country.

In his interview published by La Repubblica on Thursday, Mujahid said the Taliban will fight for an economic comeback with the help of China.

The Taliban seized control of Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, on August 15 as the country's Western-backed government melted away, bringing an end to 20 years of war amid fears of an economic collapse and widespread hunger.

Following the chaotic departure of foreign troops from Kabul airport in recent weeks, Western states have severely restricted their aid payments to Afghanistan.

"China is our most important partner and represents a fundamental and extraordinary opportunity for us, because it is ready to invest and rebuild our country," the Taliban spokesperson was quoted as saying in the interview.

He said the New Silk Road - an



infrastructure initiative with which China wants to increase its global influence by opening up trade routes - was held in high regard by the Taliban.

There are "rich copper mines in the country, which, thanks to the Chinese, can be put back into operation and modernised. In addition, China is our pass to markets all over the world."

Another Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen announced that China promised to keep its embassy in Afghanistan open and to increase humanitarian aid to the war-ravaged country.

Abdul Salam Hanafi, a senior Taliban official in the group's political office in Doha, Qatar, "held a phone conversation with Wu Jianguo, deputy foreign minister of the People's Republic of China," Suhail Shaheen wrote on social media.

China also issued a statement saying that it "affirms" its ties with Afghanistan and that it wishes Afghans well as they rebuild their country.

Afghanistan desperately needs money, and the Taliban is unlikely to get swift access to the roughly \$10bn in assets here mostly held abroad by the Afghan central bank.

The Biden administration has no plans to release billions in Afghan gold, investments and foreign currency reserves parked in the United States that it froze after the Taliban's takeover, despite pressure from humanitarian groups and others who say the cost may be the collapse of Afghanistan's economy.

The funds are a key instrument for the West to pressure the Taliban to respect women's rights and the rule of law as the former insurgents have promised.

Any unfreezing of these assets may be months away, financial experts said.

Earlier this week, UN chief Antonio Guterres warned of a looming "humanitarian catastrophe" in Afghanistan and urged countries to provide emergency funding as severe drought and war have forced thousands of families to flee their homes.

Guterres expressed his "grave concern at the deepening humanitarian and economic crisis in the country," adding that basic services threatened to collapse "completely".

Quotes of the day



The sooner the Taliban will enter the family of civilised people, so to speak, the easier it will be to contact, communicate, and somehow influence and ask questions.

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN



It was carried out by an individual, not a faith, not a culture, not an ethnicity. He alone carries the responsibility for these acts.

NZ PM JACINDA ARDERN ON KNIFE ATTACK INCIDENT



SEPTEMBER 04

476 - Romulus Augustus, the last emperor of the Western Roman Empire, is deposed by Odoacer, a German barbarian who proclaims himself king of Italy.

1975 - Egypt and Israel signed an agreement in Geneva providing for Israeli withdrawal from Sinai and establishment of a new UN buffer zone.

SOURCE: WEBSITES



Relatives mourn during the funeral of Palestinian Ahmed Saleh, who was shot dead by Israeli troops during night clashes the Israeli-Gaza border fence, at Jabalia refugee camp northern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

MYANMAR CRISIS 23 troops killed in clashes near China border

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar ethnic rebels have killed at least 23 government soldiers in days of fighting near the Chinese border, a spokesman for the group said yesterday, in the latest clashes likely to worry powerful neighbour Beijing.

The country has been in turmoil since a military coup in February, which sparked huge pro-democracy protests, a bloody crackdown and renewed fighting in ethnic border areas.

Clashes broke out in Mongko, Shan state, on August 28 when troops tried to seize a base from the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), the group's spokesman and local media reports said.

Fifteen soldiers were killed on August 28 and eight more in renewed clashes on September 1, he said, adding one MNDAA fighter had been killed.

AFP has not been able to verify the casualty figures.

Myanmar has more than 20 ethnic rebel groups, many of which hold territory in the country's border regions.

Turning household waste into electricity

THOMSON REUTERS FOUNDATION

Until four years ago, garbage disposal meant one thing to Savitri Bai Patil - stinking, putrefied heaps of trash spread around her neighbourhood in Pune, in western India.

But now the streets of the Ashok Meadows housing complex where she lives are clear, with workers picking up garbage from residents' doorsteps each day and turning some of it into electricity.

Since 2017, the complex has fed its food waste into a digester that converts it into biogas used to light the area's streetlights, park, social club and gym.

"Clean energy from our rancid food leftovers, vegetable peels and other such throwaways? It is unbelievable how the concept of waste management has changed in

the past few years," Bai Patil, 62, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Biogas generators like the one used in Ashok Meadows are now installed in more than 75 locations across India.

Developed by Xeon Waste Managers (XWM), based in Pune, the EnergyBin systems let communities turn waste into free, renewable energy, said company president Jalaj Kumar Chaturvedi.

"It is a common sight to find overburdened landfills with garbage that grows by the day. But since these EnergyBins dispose of the waste at the source itself, the landfills are spared," he said.

According to Ashok Meadows resident Rishika Mahalley, the complex's system - operated and maintained by residents - has helped

solve the problem of how to dispose of the nearly a tonne of garbage produced each day by the complex's 550 homes and common areas.

Before the community bought the generator, which produces 50 kilowatt-hours of electricity each day, at the cost of 2.3 million Indian rupees (\$31,000), it struggled with unreliable municipal garbage collection, which often left waste piling up, Mahalley noted.

Mahalley said before the plant was installed the complex spend about 550 rupees (\$7.50) a day on electricity for streetlights and other common facilities - a cost that has now virtually disappeared.

It also saves the residents up to 6,000 rupees (\$82) every month on municipal garbage disposal costs, she said.

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## The audience will get to see me in a new avatar on stage: Azizul Hakim

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

*Azizul Hakim, having worked in the entertainment industry for more than four decades, is a respected name in the television industry.*

*The veteran actor has enamoured the audiences with his notable performances in dramas such as: "Kon Kanoner Phul", "Shingsoptok", "Somoy Oshomoy", "Din Rattrir Khela", "Nokhroter Raat". Azizul Hakim became a household name with his performances in movies such as "Shonkhoneil Karagar" and "Padha Nodir Majhi".*

In a candid conversation with The Daily Star, the multifaceted actor opens up about returning to theatre where he first made his name.

**You started your journey in theatre. How does it feel to return to stage after such a long time?**

Theatre is where I belong -- this is my home and this is where I first realised that I have truly become an actor. Due to my busy schedules, I had to stay away from the stage. My last performance with my group, Aranyak Natyadal, was in the drama "Joy Joyonti". Apart from that, I would also occasionally perform with the group for the drama "Ora Kodom Ali".

I will finally be returning to stage once again with a new drama titled "Jonoker Ontrojatra" at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy. Currently we are busy with the rehearsals but we are scheduled to go on stage in December,

added the actor.

The television veteran also shared his excitement on relinquishing his passion for stage once again.

The sheer experience of working in theatre is quite different from working in any other medium. Theatre is the only platform where you can experience audiences' reaction directly. You were infected with Covid-19, and were admitted to hospital. You have returned tele-fictions recently. How did you prepare yourself for coming back to the stage?

It is true that acting in television and theatre is quite different. On stage, you need to deliver the dialogues in front of the audience, and for that, you need to have a strong presence. Thanks to everyone's prayers and blessings, I was able to recover early and come back to acting.

As an artist, I get a sense of satisfaction working in the stage and as I love theatre, I am able to pursue my passion whole-heartedly. I think I am quite prepared to hone that aspect of me again.

**How do you think theatre helps someone become a better actor?**

Theatre acts as a basic medium for you to polish your acting skills. One can truly learn the crafts of acting by working in the theatres. There is no alternative to stage. Just like a student needs to go to school for his education, an artiste can maneuver his artistic skills only in theatres.

**Do you feel like television viewership has dropped over the years?**

Earlier on, people used to watch only one channel. Now we have many options for channels. Most of the channels showcase different kinds of content.

I feel like the viewership has been divided -- and so it feels like the viewership has decreased. However, that's not really the case at all. Viewers are busy watching dramas in different channels, which cater to their choice.

**What does acting truly mean to you?**

Acting is my first love. It is something that runs within my blood, and I think of it has an act of devotion. If you want to become a true artiste, you need to channel all your passion and energy in it.

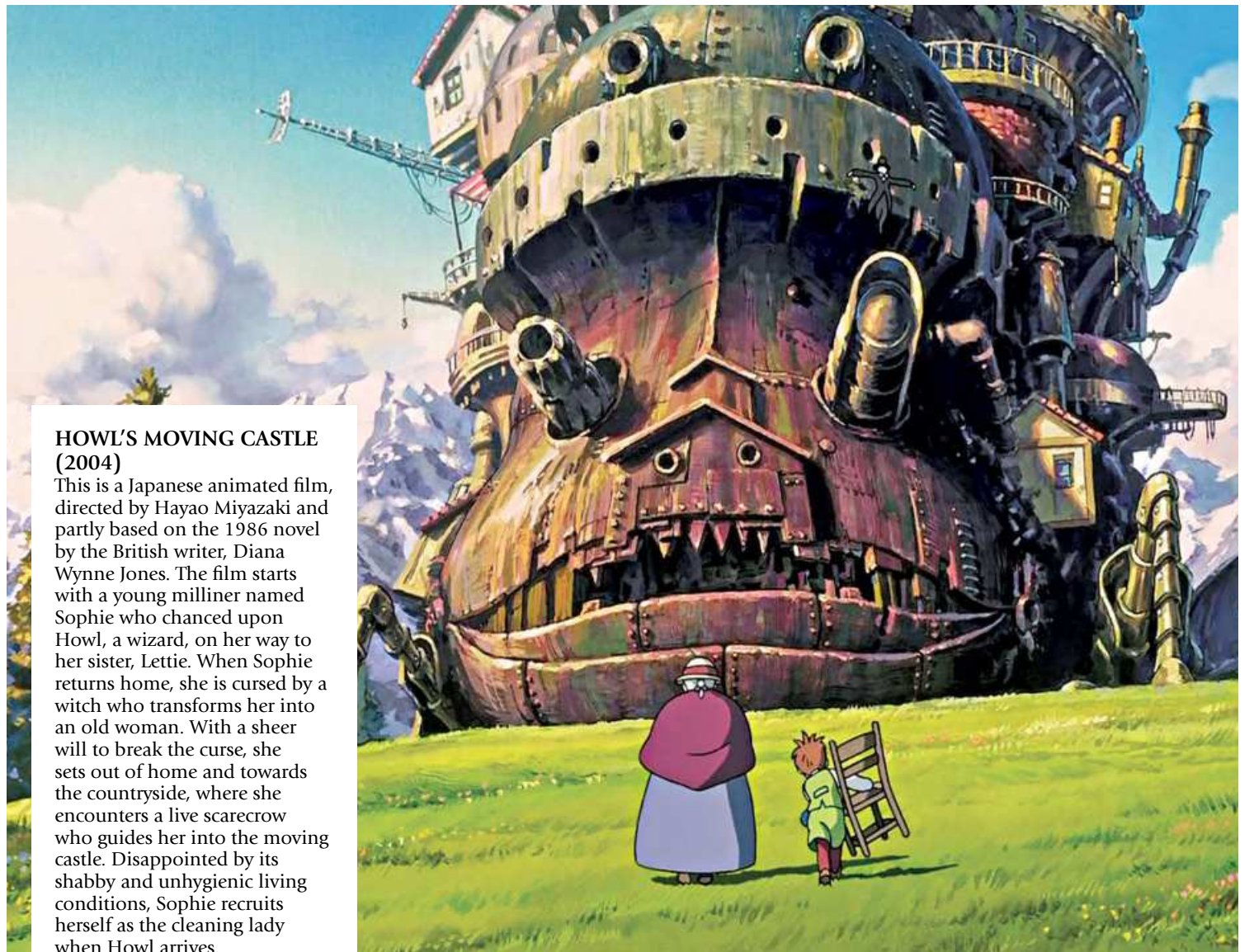
*Translated by Rakshanda Rahman Misha*



# 5 fantasy novel adaptations that deserve your attention

FARAH KABIR

*Ever since the massive success of "Game of Thrones", fantasy novels have been a valuable commodity. Many well-known books of this genre have already been adapted or reimagined for the screen. We have put together a list of old and latest fantasy novel adaptations that you can watch on Netflix.*



### HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE (2004)

This is a Japanese animated film, directed by Hayao Miyazaki and partly based on the 1986 novel by the British writer, Diana Wynne Jones. The film starts with a young milliner named Sophie who chanced upon Howl, a wizard, on her way to her sister, Lettie. When Sophie returns home, she is cursed by a witch who transforms her into an old woman. With a sheer will to break the curse, she sets out of home and towards the countryside, where she encounters a live scarecrow who guides her into the moving castle. Disappointed by its shabby and unhygienic living conditions, Sophie recruits herself as the cleaning lady when Howl arrives.



### THE WITCHER (2020)

"The Witcher" is a Polish-American action adventure drama created by Lauren Schmidt Hissrich, on the basis of the book of the Polish writer, Andrzej Sapkowski. Henry Cavill, Freya Allan and Anya Chalotra are its leading stars.

Geralt of Rivia is a witcher or a mutant who hunts monsters. He is depicted as the balance between humans, who are the real monsters as they are always on the brink of harming each other. One of the key phrases used throughout Season 1 of the show is "the lesser evil", meaning that we are all wicked but it is important to identify who or what poses a lesser threat during conflicts and thus, eliminates the greater evil. Season 2 of "The Witcher" is expected to be streaming from December 17, 2021.

### THE KING: ETERNAL MONARCH (2020)

This is a romantic South Korean TV series, written by Kim Eun-sook. Although the series was released first, it has been converted into a novel duology. The TV series has 16 episodes, with the lead cast Lee Min-ho, Kim Go-eun, Woo Do-hwan, Kim-Kyung-nam, Jung Eun-chaee and Lee Jung-jin. The story revolves around two parallel worlds. The King of South Korea, Lee Gon searches for a lieutenant who saved his life when his father



was killed by his half-uncle, Lee Lim, who sought ownership of the kingdom and a magical flute. The flute was broken into two by Lee Gon, when he held it against the sword with which Lee Lim tried to kill him.



### STARDUST (2007)

A romantic adventure film based on Neil Gaiman's 1997 novel, "Stardust" is directed by Matthew Vaughn. It stars Charlie Cox, Robert De Niro, Sienna Miller, Jason Flemyng and Michelle Pfeiffer. Tristan, a young man from the town of Wall in England crosses a bordering wall to the forbidden magical kingdom of Stormhold to collect the fallen star for Victoria, the woman he is in love with. Upon reaching the site, he discovers that the star is a woman named Yvaine. As Tristan tries to get the star back to his home before Victoria's birthday, his life gets intertwined with a witch who seeks the heart of Victoria which would assure immortality. Stardust will arrive on Netflix in Bangladesh on September 15.

### RAGNAROK (2020)

This is a Norwegian fantasy drama based on Norse mythology, with a modern twist. The show is created by Adam Price. Edda, a town in Norway faces the worst effects of climate change and environmental pollution caused by the Jutul industries, run by a family of giants who are primarily in charge of the town. To stop their activities and prevent an impending apocalypse, Magne, a teenage boy, learns that he is the reincarnation of Thor, the God of Thunder, and fights against



the Jutuls. In a fight to save his brother, Laurits, Magne kills one of the Jutuls. Later, he is deeply stricken by his conscience, and prays for his powers to be taken away. The series currently has two seasons.

## Visualising the present through Anup's art

FARAH KABIR

*Anup Roy is a contemporary artist, adept at painting modern-day objects in his own style. He has completed his Bachelor's in Painting at the Fine Arts Department of Chittagong University, and is currently doing his masters. In a recent conversation with The Daily Star, the artist talks about his ongoing venture as an artist, and more.*



ARTWORK BY ANUP ROY

**How does your work comment on current social and political issues?**  
An artist will never reveal his true intentions. Different artists grow up in different surroundings and this affects the art they create. I cannot put my art into definition. It all depends on the perspective of the onlooker.

However, I do see myself while painting. When I began exhibiting my works, I had to adapt to the city lifestyle, which was very different from my village.

Despite being busy in the strife of life, I found myself stuck. To compete with recent times, we all make plans of leading a better



PAINTING BY ANUP ROY

life, in a more advanced city. In the process of making these plans, we ground ourselves, which becomes very mechanical. I believe that many others are thinking in the same way. Therefore, mechanical living is the most important theme of my paintings.

**How did you develop your career as an artist?**

I have always wanted to become an artist. When I was in standard two, I used to steal my uncle's paintings and try to recreate them.

This helped me discover that I was good at it, and kindled an interest towards art. My mother has always supported me as she wanted me to become a painter. My teacher

from college named Binoy Sardar, used to motivate me by saying, "Do anything and everything but do not quit painting". I also receive a lot of help from my seniors and teachers in my university, and am still in the process of developing my career.

**Can you tell us about your recent exhibition at EMK Centre?**

We were a group of four artists who worked on line-based paintings and drawings. I created three pieces. The first was focused on themes of both mechanical life and admission of love or proposal. It had two forms- a woman and a man.

The second was about women's condition in mechanical living, and their fulfilled and unfulfilled desires during these bustling times. The third contained a man and a form of a man with a fox's head seated at a table, and a snake appearing in the backdrop, all wanting to get hold of Aladdin's lamp.

**How do you navigate the art world?**

It is difficult to practice art in Bangladesh. Most of us feel lost after completing our studies, in thoughts about our career, the kind of life we want to lead and about our family. We are pressured to get employed so that we can support our family. This heavily impacts potential artists. Those employed in the corporate sector, do not even have the time to think about creating art, and thus become lost from its world.

Bangladesh also does not have a stable art market to help artists make a decent income. It becomes difficult when we cannot gather art materials, which requires a good amount



PAINTING BY ANUP ROY

of money. Very few artists have overcome their challenges whilst holding on to their passion, although their living standards may not be high.

Nevertheless, artists capture time through their art, which is subject to constant change. Hence, they must be positive about the time they spend, fulfill what is required and pace with it.

*The author is a freelance journalist. Email: farahkabir5@gmail.com*



PHOTO: COURTESY



## The other keeper feels ghosted like a middle child

### THE CLUELESSPONDENT

Following the head coach's decision to split the wicketkeeping duties for the ongoing unilaterally-confidence-booster five-match T20I against the team whose neighbour got thumped 4-1 of late, every Khalid, Nakib and Faisal in the host country has an opinion on this matter.

The whole nation cannot seem to stop buzzing on this issue since the day before the series began and had typically split up into two major camps in no time.

One camp, composed of old guards and conformists, is against this splitting business altogether. They deem it to be radically insulting for the Elder Keeper to share the prestigious keeping duties with the Young.

The other camp, the self-proclaimed so-called Keeper of the Faith, reckons the Young has more than earned it, which the first two games of the series so far cannot prove otherwise. In the next two matches the Elder is set to be the glove-bearer, as promised by the coach.

Now, who gets to keep for the fifth game will be decided by the coach after the fourth, which led to an overwhelming cloud of uncertainty that possessed the crickizens of United States of Merepoor to no end.

One local cricket fan witted or Witter, "I can't take it anymore! Elder or Young? Young or Elder? Who will keep for the fifth! The coach should totally declare it immediately to mentally ease us fans before

the all-important, must-win next match tomorrow! We all need this win, more than ever, to keep the momentum boosting out of proportions before the world cup! Come on, coach! You can do it! Reveal it ASAP #riseofthemomentum."

However, something strange happened recently -- the "Middle Child Support Group (MCSG)" and "Raise Middle Child Awareness (RMCA)" entered the mix of cricketing discussion. It all happened when the opener Lit AF, also the Middle Keeper of the team, when asked how he was feeling post-match yesterday, replied: "At least I could've been considered [for the fifth game] just out of formality's sake, just saying."

The interview then ended following a bit

of awkward silence.

Formed by mostly lone wolves and previously assumed to be in exile or deactivated, both RMCA and MCSG activists are attempting, and struggling, to make the footage viral ever since Lit AF's interview got aired. They have labelled this string of events as a sample of society's classic mistreatment of the middle child, which cannot remain normalised any longer.

"For years we the middle children have been ignored, treated like we were invisible at the dining table, in decision-making. Isolated, taken for granted, and forgotten. When will this culture of passive oppression stop? Not that we ever demanded any slice of the pie, all we want is acknowledgment of

our existence. Is it all too much to ask for! #MiddleChildIsReal #MiddleChildExists #ActNow."

It's been five hours at the time of writing this, and yet no leading news portals have covered this seemingly bizarre Middle Child outburst. One public figure, who is a journalist from a leading tabloid named Fast Photon, had joked about this and posted on Witter: "This Middle Class issue seems kinda cute and I'm slightly tempted to cover it if only I can come up with a clickbait headline."

Comments seemed to have flooded under the aforementioned tabloid journalist's post, mostly from RMCA activists where all of them have written the same thing: "It's Middle Child not Middle Class, damn it!"



## Dhoka police take up journalism

Launch news website to celebrate their achievements

### SERV E LANCE, CHAPASTHAN

Dhoka police yesterday launched a news website, exclusively to share news, updates, and their latest accomplishments with the people of the country.

The news portal named Dhoka News Portal (DNP) will be a bold new addition to the already growing organisation that also runs business enterprises and serves as an aide to the government in maintaining law and order, ensuring women are safe and stay at home at nights, making sure the youth do not do drugs and other important social activities.

The main patron of the news portal will be none other than the man who has already accomplished the task of leading the law enforcement agency, and the editor and publisher will be the agency's very own publicist, also a high-ranking police official.

"This is a big step for us. As you know, we are often maligned and misrepresented by regular media, which is a shame because all we are trying to do is save the

nation, one criminal at a time," said Zen Al Zir, the main patron of the news portal.

He also said, this would shelve the need to arrange regular press conferences, thus saving crores of taka and also allow their officers to try their hands in some much-needed creative pursuit.

Editor and Publisher and Publicist of the law enforcement agency Baamru Zaman said he looks forward to dipping his toe in this unexplored field and he feels confident to take up the challenge as one famous journalist, who now runs one of the leading English dailies in the country once told him people can become accidental journalists and all they needed was to find their passion and have a curious mind.

Needless to say, Dhoka police is all too curious about anything and everything that people do, write or say in private, said Baamru, boasting that his disciplined force is going to excel in investigative journalism.

## US Open places toilets on court after controversy over long bathroom breaks

### THE NUMBER 2 CORRESPONDENT

To stop complaints about long bathroom breaks taken by players during matches, the US Open authorities have placed porta potties on court.

British tennis player Andy Murray started the controversy after losing the first-round match to Stefanos Tsitsipas of Greece, who spent a total of 15 minutes in the toilet during the near five-hour game (match).

Murray complained about it in the press conference for 10 minutes -- nearly as much time as Tsitsipas was in the toilet -- and now that he has free time after being knocked out in the first round, has spent every day tweeting about it.

While many thought it was a case of sour grapes from the Scottish athlete, the crowd booed Tsitsipas in his subsequent matches whenever he took a bathroom break, and he did take quite a few. Many other players joined in the criticism.

In a sport already highly prone to whining from its players at every injustice -- imagined or real -- the authorities had to act quickly.

"We cannot give these guys any excuse to complain and moan more than they already do," said an official

whose name this correspondent forgot to ask. "They have been complaining about line calls forever and so we have replaced linespersons with machines.

"Similarly, we decided to put two porta potties in each court -- one for each player -- so that they can get their opponents out of the toilet and not complain to the umpire about it. There will also be a timer on the

door, and when the time is up the door will open automatically."

This would also have the added benefit of speeding up proceedings.

If both players go to their respective toilets at the same time, the one to come out first will be awarded a point.

If both come out at the same time, the umpire will have to say "Deuce", regardless of what they did in there.



REPRESENTATIONAL IMAGE

## Lax policing of mask use a cause for concern

*New wave of awareness needed to tackle the upcoming wave of the pandemic*

**M**ASKS help save lives. There can't be a clearer or more powerful message than this to stem Covid-19 infections, especially at a time when the supply of vaccines has been consistently inconsistent, to say the least. Yet it continues to be ignored. Large numbers of people are still seen on the streets without their faces covered, with little or no initiative from the authorities to enforce the safety guidelines. This is especially disconcerting given recent warnings by experts that another wave of Covid-19 might be just around the corner, despite a steady dip in infection and death rates over the last three weeks. Against this backdrop, a new survey shows that there is no alternative to proper mask wearing as it can reduce the chances of contracting Covid-19 up to 34 percent.

The study—conducted by researchers from Stanford Medicine School and Yale University between November 2020 and April 2021 in rural Bangladesh, and involving nearly 350,000 individuals in 600 villages—is said to be the largest of its kind. Among its major findings are: a) Awareness campaigns can increase the use of masks up to three times; b) Surgical masks are more effective than fabric ones in preventing transmission; and c) Wearing masks properly reduces the symptomatic infection rate by 34 percent among the most vulnerable group aged 60 and above. These findings are more or less consistent with that of other studies on mask-wearing norms that invariably conclude that while getting people to wear masks consistently is no easy task, it is not very difficult either with proper interventions, including strict monitoring by law enforcement agencies, exemplary initiatives by local leaders, free mask distribution, and other promotional activities.

Such preventative strategies assume additional significance when you consider the poor state of mass inoculation in the country, with only 4 percent of the population fully vaccinated so far. This state is a far cry from the official target of vaccinating 80 percent (135.1 crore) of the population in the country. If the vaccination campaign continues at its current pace, it may take around 10 years to reach that target. This simply can't be the way forward. Although the prime minister is confident that the government can get more than one crore doses of vaccines every month—and the health minister has recently claimed that the government purchased vaccines worth about Tk 3,000 crore within a short time—our past experience with assurances vs reality regarding vaccine delivery makes for guarded optimism. In any case, with widespread vaccination still a work in progress, our best line of defence remains preventative strategies like masks.

We urge the government to provide a renewed focus on enforcing mask-wearing among other safety guidelines—by engaging local administrations, political parties and faith leaders to give the awareness campaign a boost—while urgently securing vaccines, both through purchases and local production. Law enforcement agencies also must step up their game to ensure that people wear masks.

## Public hospitals must be freed from outside influences

*Increase security at hospital premises, but also ensure proper services for patients*

**I**T is disappointing to know that regular services at Patuakhali Medical College Hospital (PKMC) are being disrupted by a variety of factors and outside influences, including the activities of private clinic/hospital brokers, ambulance staffers, and representatives from pharmaceutical companies. As per a report by *The Daily Star* on Thursday, agents of private medical services are seen loitering inside and outside the hospital every day, approaching patients and trying to lure them away from the PKMC. This state of affairs—a common sight in most public hospitals—shows, once again, that even a pandemic couldn't bring the change so essential in the public healthcare system. The quality of public healthcare in general—and the services provided by hospitals in particular—continue to be a source of frustration in the country.

At different wards of the PKMC, our reporters last week witnessed "the hyperactivity of brokers, representatives of pharmaceutical companies and private ambulances" as patients were persuaded to go to private clinics to get X-rays done at a cheaper rate, while pharmaceutical company reps took photos of patients' prescriptions. We also cannot help but be concerned at the claim of the president of Patuakhali Ambulance Owners' Association—justifying why private ambulances were parked inside the hospital premises—that the public hospital only had two ambulances of its own. Obviously, this is an insufficient quantity of emergency vehicles for a district-level hospital to have, and it is perhaps understandable why the services of private ambulances would be needed. Even so, we wonder why there are not enough ambulances at this hospital in the first place, given the Covid-19 pandemic and now the dengue outbreak.

The activities of private healthcare company representatives at public hospitals is nothing new, but they are especially harmful during a pandemic when patients need to be able to rely on the country's public healthcare system. In any case, these agents must not be allowed to cause disruptions in public hospitals.

We hope the letter that the PKMC's superintendent sent to the Patuakhali deputy commissioner on August 27, seeking legal intervention, will help stop this nuisance there. Most importantly, security measures are needed to screen and prevent private agents from even entering the hospital premises.

However, we must also urge the authorities of public hospitals to acquire adequate healthcare resources from the government, so that patients do not feel the need to turn to private healthcare providers of dubious backgrounds.



SHAMSAD MORTUZA

**T**WO news reports caught my attention on Friday: one was about a wild elephant being electrocuted, and the other was about the dwindling international funds for the Rohingya

refugees. It made me wonder how their travel paths and fates are intertwined, and how they have become critical ecological, political, and international issues for our hill tracts. It made me think of a personal encounter I had with a wild elephant in the hill tracts of Chattogram.

Once, when trekking along the Naikhongchhari range, my team and I



**Deforestation is a big reason why elephants often stray from their usual routes and end up invading human habitats, searching for food.**

PHOTO: MA AZIZ

were chased by a wild elephant. Our guide pushed us into a narrow bushy trail and made us run for 20 minutes towards the opening of another hill. I was travelling with our university's nature club. It was one of the scariest moments of my life, to say the least. The other was having to climb a tree to avoid two rhinos chasing one another in Nepal's Chitwan forest, but that's another story. To add to our fear, the guide was saying how this particular elephant had killed five people that year. It was a lone elephant that got separated from its herd after a local woodcutter hit one of its ears with an axe. The injured elephant could not travel with its pack and was left behind to fend for itself. This

Conservation Division. Incidentally, this is the same period when we have had a huge inflow of humans from Myanmar. The establishment of Rohingya camps and other government agencies in Teknaf and Ukhiya upazilas disrupted the main roaming grounds of elephants, making the "human-wildlife conflict" inevitable. Between 2003 and 2016, a total of 227 people were killed by elephants. The death numbers of both humans and elephants are worrying. In 2015, the elephant population in Bangladesh was between 280 and 290, which is under threat of further decline.

In my personal anecdote, I hinted at why that particular elephant was ticked. It

animals are in proportion to their size; they require up to 300 kilograms of vegetables and 200 litres of water every day. The cultivated crops in the land along their travel route are easy sources of food for them. We often hear news of wild animals raiding farmlands and destroying agricultural fields. In 2019, the government paid Tk 53 lakh as compensation to people whose crops were damaged by the elephants.

The over-consumption of food and water by the elephants can negatively impact other livestock. I have already mentioned how accidental encounters can cause casualties. Living in fear of a marauding herd can also cause trauma

to local people as their normal lives are disrupted because of these animals. They are known for waylaying people (not for extortions like in the city, though). Hence there are often mixed feelings over the killing of elephants, especially among those who have to share space with them. Elephants are also killed by poachers for their ivory tusks. Often, we hear news of elephants being shot down or electrocuted, despite the government initiatives to protect and conserve them.

We need to remember that we share the planet with other species who have equal rights to exist. This planet is home to both humans and other animals. Then again, how do we designate a large area of protected land for this animal, especially in a country with a dense population and fewer natural resources? And even when we have a protected range, these animals are drawn to human habitation, since it is an easy source of food. While it takes seven to eight hours of grazing in the wilderness for the elephants to be fed, they can get filled in two hours when feasting on agricultural land. In many cases, electric fences are used to contain the elephants. However, they are hardly any match for the tusks which do not conduct electricity, and elephants are smart enough to recognise that. Sometimes, the fences are brought down by the humans who need the grassland for their cattle. So, there is the other concept of organic fencing in which chilli fences and bee hives are used to keep the elephants away.

The migration patterns of the elephants are changing because of deforestation, particularly after the resettlement of the Rohingyas. The UNHCR and the IUCN have taken some steps to foster "safe co-existence" between wild animals and sprawling refugee settlements. These include awareness programmes to teach the refugees to respond properly when encountering an elephant or stopping them from entering the camps. Some watchtowers have already been erected, and large decoy elephants are installed to ward off the animals.

But the challenge now is to keep the pressure intact on the international community to allow the refugees to return to their homeland. With the new spotlight on Afghanistan, it is feared that the Rohingyas are about to be the forgotten people all over again. The appeal for repatriation needs to be made through multiple channels and ways. The protection of wildlife is one of them. We need nature activists to talk about wildlife conservation and reforestation. We need energy specialists to talk about the need for alternative fuel supply for the local inhabitants to stop them from going to the forest for firewood. We need humanitarian stories to highlight the issue. Indeed, both humans' and elephants' lives matter.

Shamsad Mortuza is acting vice-chancellor of the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB), and a professor of English at Dhaka University (on leave).

## PROJECT SYNDICATE

# A rare triumph of US bipartisanship



KOICHI HAMADA

**A**FTER months of negotiations, the United States Senate recently passed a USD 1 trillion infrastructure bill. Passed by a vote of 69 to 30, it was an impressive

display of bipartisanship at a time of deep polarisation. While there are still challenges ahead—in particular, disagreement over the USD 3.5 trillion budget blueprint that was subsequently passed by the House of Representatives along the party lines—the approval of the infrastructure bill offers a useful case study of what makes bipartisan deals possible.

The US has a long history of bipartisanship, from the Great Compromise of 1787 to Lyndon B Johnson's Great Society initiative in 1965 to the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990. As the late senator John McCain proved in 2017, when he defended the Affordable Care Act from efforts by his fellow Republicans to repeal it, even one or two defectors from a party can prove transformative.

But such defections are difficult to come by in a deeply two-party system in which the two sides at times seem like they live in a different reality (as is true of climate change or voter fraud). In such a context, crossing the party line can be perceived as a betrayal, threatening transgressors' position within the party and hurting their re-election chances.

A cornerstone of modern political science is that political actors behave rationally. Simply put, people will not initiate, join, or support any action that would undermine their own well-being. Given this, a policy can win bipartisan support only if it simultaneously advances the interests of both sides.

So what do America's two main

parties want? Republicans tend to support unbridled competition, with the expectation that markets will naturally reward people in the ways they deserve and provide for people in the ways they need. Democrats argue that public intervention is crucial to correcting imbalances and protecting the disadvantaged.

Public infrastructure investment is thus a more natural cause for Democrats. But while Republicans might not like the idea of large-scale public investment generally—they prefer tax cuts to spending increases, and would prefer lower social spending—they do recognise that the private sector depends on public infrastructure, from roads and bridges to internet service. They might not like entitlements, but they do want the economy to run—and their constituents to keep voting for them. That means meeting certain basic needs.

This is one way that leaders achieve what the political scientist John AC Conybeare called "leadership surplus". After competing with other potential leaders for ascendancy, they "maximise their surplus or profit by providing collective goods against taxes, donations, or purchases promised in the election process".

Another way to accumulate a leadership surplus and pass broadly beneficial legislation is to find areas of common interest and show the other side how their priorities overlap. Moreover, leaders must sustain bipartisan buy-in while negotiating the details. For example, even if both sides see the need for modern, functioning physical infrastructure, progress can be stymied by disagreement on how to pay for it.

Republicans, at least when they are out of power, express concern about the growing budget deficit, which would ostensibly increase the tax burden on future generations. But this introduces an ideological constraint that has little merit: standard economic theory holds that future generations' welfare depends on

the total national resources left to them, not on their resources minus their tax obligations.

Of course, Modern Monetary Theory would take this a step further, stating that a country like the US can accumulate virtually unlimited amounts of debt. Of course, this remains controversial—and certainly unconvincing to US Republicans. But the standard view is enough to demonstrate that investing in resources like infrastructure will bolster long-term



US Capitol Hill.

PHOTO: REUTERS

welfare, regardless of the size of the public debt. It is the politician's job to make the case to ideological opponents in language that is most convincing to them.

There are also other means of securing bipartisan support for a policy or bill. Consider so-called pork barrel politics: the practice of slipping a localised project into a budget, in order to secure a particular legislator's vote. This is often considered to be an abuse of the political system, not least because such provisions might have little to do with the legislation to which they are attached.

as years of congressional paralysis clearly demonstrates. The bipartisan vote for the infrastructure bill in the US, therefore, should be commended. One hopes it will serve as a reminder to both sides that, as contentious as the political climate gets, common ground can be a rewarding place.

Koichi Hamada, Professor Emeritus at Yale University, was a special adviser to former Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe.

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(Exclusive to *The Daily Star*)



# More women are falling through the cracks now. Time to take control.



**T**HERE is mounting evidence from around the world that the Covid-19 pandemic has not been gender-neutral. In the developing world, women are bearing the brunt of the secondary effects of the

pandemic—both economically and socially. In Bangladesh, like the rest of the world, women are more likely to be employed in the informal sector, making them more vulnerable to job losses and income shocks. Women, as healthcare workers and primary caregivers at home, have also been at the forefront of the battle against Covid-19.

According to World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report 2021*, the overall gender gap in Bangladesh has widened by 0.7 percent compared to the previous year. The remarkable progress that Bangladesh had achieved over the past decades in ensuring gender parity in education, health and overall women's empowerment has been threatened by the pandemic fallout. This is alarming, because the inability to provide opportunities to and ensure rights of women and girls will inevitably slow down economic development. At the same time, it will hinder Bangladesh's pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Current evidence from around the world suggests that although men and women are equally likely to be infected by Covid-19, men are at higher risks of dying. However, the emergency healthcare measures adopted in response to the pandemic often cause a diversion of resources from areas such as reproductive and sexual healthcare, depriving women of vital support and potentially leading to higher maternal and neonatal deaths. This requires urgent attention, because disruptions in maternal and child healthcare services could reverse decades of progress while putting millions of lives at risk.

Due to the prevalence of high inequality in the intra-household allocation of resources, women in Bangladesh are more likely to experience food insecurity. According to the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling's (Sanem) nationwide household survey conducted in 2020, as a result of the pandemic, the average per capita food expenditure declined by 30 percent, 15 percent and 2 percent in extremely poor, moderately

poor and vulnerable poor households, respectively. This reduction in food expenditure can further exacerbate the pre-existing gender differences in food insecurity, and result in poor health and decreased nutritional intake for women.

A major cause for concern in most developing countries, including Bangladesh, is the failure to ensure equal access to safe and effective Covid-19 vaccines. According to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), out of the 5.8 million people who received the first dose of the vaccine during the first vaccination campaign that ran from February 7 to April 26, only 38 percent recipients were females. This clearly depicts that even vaccine uptake exhibits gender differences, which can lead to a profound setback for ensuring women's rights. In many cases, women's ability to access vaccines is limited due to limited mobility, restricted access to resources, lack of decision-making power, and lack of technological know-how. Hence it is crucial that the authorities responsible for vaccine management and distribution consider ways to overcome gender-related barriers to enabling access for women.

In Bangladesh, the government proactively ordered the closing of all educational institutions on March 17, 2020, which exerted varying degrees of impact on education and student development. The transition to digital learning platforms was fraught with many difficulties, since we did not have much prior experience in distance learning. The

online. The gender gap in the use of digital technology is particularly prominent in the country. According to a Sanem study on gender and youth inclusiveness in technology, the percentage of female youth who have used the internet at least once in their lifetimes is only 24 percent at the urban level and 14 percent at the rural level. A recent study published in the *GAMA Mobile Gender Gap Report 2021* showed that only 19 percent of women in Bangladesh use mobile internet, as opposed to 33 percent

women are engaged in informal, insecure and low-wage employment and in industries such as hospitality, travel, textile manufacturing, and retail, most of which have been severely affected by the pandemic. According to the Sanem employment and migration survey conducted in 2021, 16.1 percent of female wage earners lost their jobs, as opposed to 7.1 percent of male workers. Several studies also found that women entrepreneurs faced severe challenges in accessing the fiscal stimulus

quarters of the total unpaid work globally. Similarly, a Sanem study conducted in 2019 found that working women spend almost 2.4 times more hours performing unpaid domestic work compared to working men in Bangladesh, while unemployed women spend 3.75 times more hours in unpaid domestic work compared to unemployed men. The struggle to balance between family and work responsibilities has been aggravated by the pandemic, discouraging women from participating in paid labour and worsening gender inequalities across the country.

As seen during other major economic, political and health crises, reduced access to justice and essential services as a result of the Covid crisis were associated with a rise in cases of gender-based violence around the world. Several studies in Bangladesh conducted during the pandemic confirmed the same. In the first 10 months of 2020 alone, Brac's Human Rights and Legal Aid Clinics reported to have received over 25,000 complaints of gender-based violence from across the country. While data is a crucial tool to understand and analyse the impact of pandemics such as Covid on gender-based violence, collecting data is difficult due to the victims' reluctance to report domestic violence, lack of awareness regarding human rights, and the inability to ensure privacy and safety of victims.

Despite the disproportionate impact of the pandemic on the lives and livelihoods of women, they have been conspicuously absent from the policy discourse surrounding recovery plans. Gender-blind policies which fail to sufficiently address the challenges and vulnerabilities facing women will not be able to initiate an inclusive and sustainable recovery process. Developing targeted policies and initiatives to help women overcome the existing structural loopholes, and enhancing their participation in Covid recovery process and decision-making are imperative to ensure sustainable recovery. To enable better understanding of on-the-ground realities, it is crucial that women are included at all levels of decision-making. It is important to realise that women are a vital force in the post-pandemic recovery process. If the emerging gender gaps in education and employment are not addressed in time, the country will be deprived of half of its human potential.

Syeda Tasfia Tasneem is a former intern at South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (Sanem) and currently pursuing her Master's in development economics. This is the abridged version of an article written for Sanem's monthly publication, *Thinking Aloud*, September 2021 edition.



**Bangladesh needs to address the emerging gender gap in education, employment and healthcare sectors caused by Covid.**

PHOTO: SK ENAMUL HAQ

*According to a WEF report in 2021, the overall gender gap in Bangladesh has widened by 0.7 percent compared to the previous year.*

of men. Moreover, internet penetration among women in Bangladesh is also lower than India and Pakistan, where 30 percent and 21 percent of the female populations use mobile internet, respectively.

Evidence from past epidemics suggests that sustained school closures widen gender gaps in education by increasing female dropout rates, incidences of child marriages and unanticipated pregnancies. Even before the pandemic, Bangladesh was among the top 10 countries in the world having the highest rate of child marriage, with over 38 million child brides who were married before the age of 18. According to a Unicef study, 10 million more girls globally are at risk of becoming child brides over the next decade as a result of the pandemic.

In addition to the health and education related challenges, the Covid outbreak has had a major economic toll on women. This is because a high proportion of working

packages announced by the government for micro, small and medium enterprises.

Women looking to re-enter the workforce will also face the need to adapt to the emerging automation and digitisation trends that have transformed jobs and, in many cases, continuing employment may require the ability to telecommute. As men have greater access to digital devices and the internet and are more likely to be preferred for jobs that require remote work, women will be at a disadvantage and will face the need to reskill or change occupations. This essentially means that the pandemic's disproportionate impact on women's jobs and incomes will persist in the future and have long-term implications.

Simultaneously, pandemic induced quarantine and stay-at-home measures have caused the burden of domestic and unpaid care work to explode. According to International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates, women perform over three

## Public space, Covid, and the right to recreation



**A**S the Covid pandemic drags on and schools and universities continue to remain closed, children and youth in particular are tired of being cooped up at home. Serious as they are, it is not just the loss of livelihoods

and education that affect us; we need to have social contact, relaxation, and recreation.

Realising this basic human need—and taking into account a significant reduction in travel as many people work remotely and learn again to cook for themselves—many cities around the world are dedicating road space that was formerly reserved for the automobiles to cycling, walking, or outdoor play. Rue de Tivoli, a major boulevard in Paris, has thus been repurposed and is now lively with people safely getting their exercise—and fun—outdoors. Other cities around the world have seen a surge in pop-up bicycle lanes and have widened their footpaths.

And what have we done in Dhaka? Parks and fields have been shut down, and all our car-free day programmes such as in Uttara and on Manik Mia Avenue have been stopped. Prior to Covid, the first Friday of every month, from 8am to 11am, one side of Manik Mia Avenue would transform into a lively space where young children played games under the watchful eyes of their parents, while the youth played football,

volleyball and cricket, or rode bicycles or roller skates. A similar scene occurred in Uttara every Friday morning, and on a small street at Mohammadi Housing Society in Mohammadpur one Saturday a month. Streets were transformed from being dominated by motor vehicles to places where young people could actively enjoy themselves, the sound of laughter and shouts echoing, people standing outside chatting with friends and strangers. Liveable, lively streets.

Children and young people are resilient and creative. Some climb over boundary walls to access fields when the gate is locked. Others take over streets at quiet times to play cricket or football. They are almost exclusively male and they know that their behaviour is frowned upon. Children should be encouraged to play outdoors rather than prevented, and girls should feel equally welcomed.

What if, instead of trying to protect

*During Covid, and well into the future, we need to acknowledge and prioritise the need people have for open public spaces, such as parks and fields, and ensure that those spaces are not destroyed in the name of "development".*



**File photo of children playing on a car-free Manik Mia Avenue in Dhaka before Covid-19 stuck Bangladesh.**

PHOTO: ORCHID CHAKMA

people by trapping them indoors, we tried to understand better the way Covid is spread? Enclosed indoor spaces can be dangerous, especially when they lack sufficient ventilation. Being outdoors, especially if not in a crowd, is quite safe. For people in cramped homes, it can be safer to spend time outdoors than inside, and exercising in a park or on a street is vastly safer than exercising in a gym.

It is relatively simple to address the social and psychological needs of young people by allowing them access to open spaces outdoors. And while I am focusing on young people, the need for recreation and social interaction is true for all ages.

During Covid, and well into the future, we need to acknowledge and prioritise the need people have for open public spaces, such as parks and fields, and ensure that those spaces are not destroyed in the name of "development". During Covid, and beyond, we can repurpose the most abundant public space—our streets—either temporarily (a few hours a week) or permanently into a true public space, no longer dominated by the

private vehicles. On a more modest scale, we can convert some parking spaces, temporarily or permanently, into small parks, once again returning some of our public space to public use.

Where would all the cars go, then? Truthfully, we'd be better off with far fewer of them. Yes, some people will be inconvenienced. They may have to learn to adjust their routine to stay closer to home or, like the majority in the city, rely on other forms of transport. In return, we could provide opportunities for physical and mental health, nay, happiness, to many.

Our lives have changed in so many ways due to Covid—why not voluntarily embrace a change that would permanently reduce congestion, pollution, and deadly crashes while making Dhaka more liveable? Let's liberate more of our public space for public use and relegate the automobile, rather than our children and youth, to lower priority.

Debra Efrogmson is executive director of the Institute of Wellbeing in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and author of "Beyond Apologies, Defining and Achieving an Economics of Wellbeing".

### QUOTABLE Quote



**AGNÈS VARDA**  
(1928–2019)  
French film director

*The first feminist gesture is to say: "OK, they're looking at me. But I'm looking at them." The act of deciding to look, of deciding that the world is not defined by how people see me, but how I see them.*

### CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

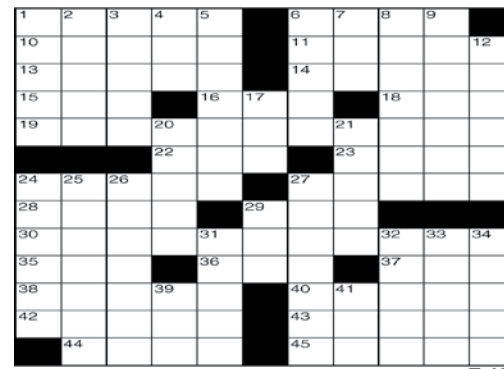
**ACROSS**

- 1 Paint-spilling sound
- 6 Served perfectly
- 10 Partly: Prefix
- 11 Tricks
- 13 To the time that
- 14 Float along
- 15 Play division
- 16 Spike of film
- 18 Knight's title
- 19 Stephen King book
- 22 Gallery fill
- 23 Mid-March day
- 24 Anarchic events
- 27 Sanctify
- 28 Land unit
- 29 Snapshot
- 30 Stephen King

**DOWN**

- 1 Hunker down
- 2 Party drink
- 3 Coffee bar order
- 4 "Do— say!"
- 5 Boat steers
- 6 Said further
- 7 Nasty dog

- 8 Series unit
- 9 Gives the meaning of
- 12 Emphasis
- 17 Have lunch
- 20 Out of style
- 21 Nada
- 24 Betrays
- 25 Crane of Sleepy Hollow
- 26 Pizzeria herb
- 27 Two-piece suits
- 29 Old hand
- 31 Accumulate
- 32 Similar
- 33 Bile producer
- 34 Nourishes
- 39 "The Simpsons" bartender
- 41 "Roses — red"



### YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



### BETLE BAILEY

### BY MORT WALKER



### BABY BLUES

### BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO [dsopinion@gmail.com](mailto:dsopinion@gmail.com).

# FEMALE WARRIORS

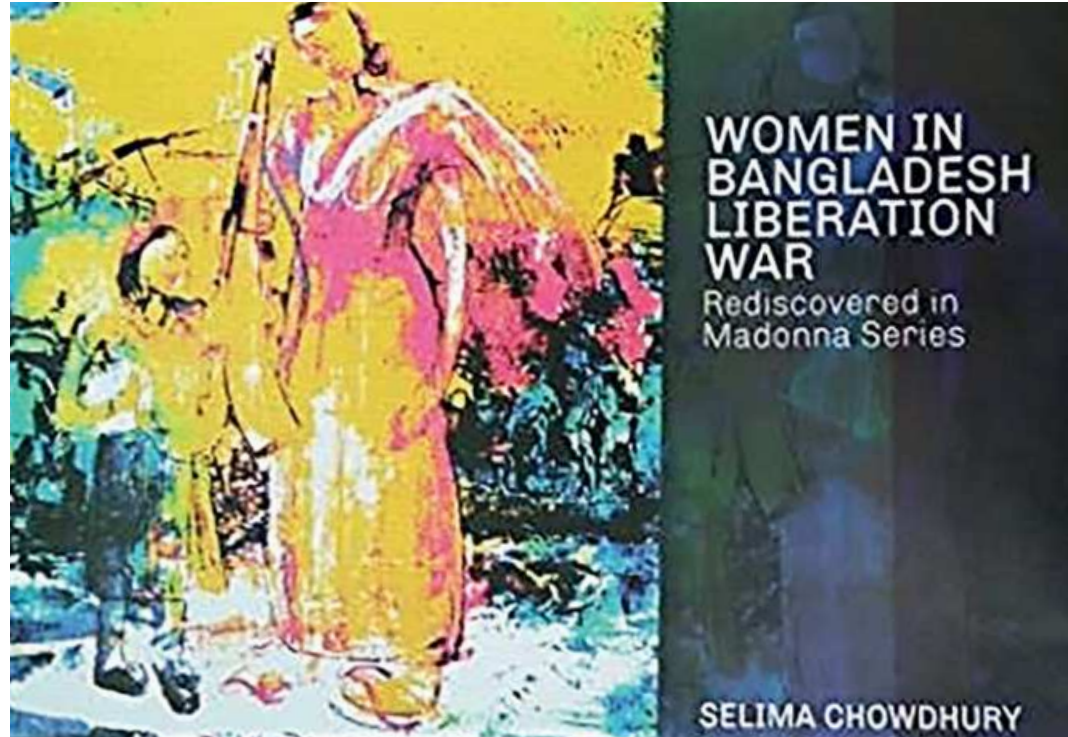
*Women in Bangladesh Liberation War: Rediscovered in the Madonna Series.*  
Selima Chowdhury. ISBN: 978-9843436252. Bangladesh National Museum, 2018

REVIEWED BY KAISER HAQ

I had decided to write a brief review of Selima Chowdhury's book when it was first published, but what with one thing or another making me put it off, a couple of years rolled by, and we found ourselves caught up in a pandemic with no end in sight. Perhaps it's just as well, for I can now review it alongside a recently published Bangla translation by Ashfaq Khan. The appearance of these two books is cause for celebration, for it is rare for a critical work in one language to be translated into the other. In fact, sadly, it is only rarely that we come across critical studies of our art. One hopes Selima's endeavor will inspire others to take up the pen.

The mainspring of her imagination is her experience of being with her protective mother during the terrible days of the independence war. Her mother figures, on the one hand, are related to the Madonna of European art, and non the other, she is a woman warrior who will fight for her child, who is a Christ-like figure. Rokeya depicts women as vibrant personalities playing the crucial roles of helper and care giver to fighters.

Chowdhury's study is sharply focused on a particular body of paintings by a well-known woman artist of the country, but she does a good job of contextualizing it by sketching in the historical background, the author's biography, the Bangladeshi art world, and in particular the portrayal of the independence war of 1971 in paintings, graphic art and sculpture. Comparative comments serve to enhance our understanding of Rokeya's achievement, and also add to our knowledge of Bangladeshi art in general.



The key to Selima's critical approach is Feminism, which through its varied ramifications has made us more sensitive to the uncritically held assumptions that often skew our view of life and art. Characterizing the country as feminine (it is after all the motherland) leads to an identification of womanhood and nationhood; and, following male stereotyping, womanhood is characterized as weak, vulnerable, and in need of protection, which of course is the responsibility of men. From this follows the plethora of images of youths bearing arms to liberate the motherland from the

diabolical occupation forces that sexually assault women. This stereotypical pattern, as a student of mine recently explained in a Masters dissertation (Nasreen Tamanna, *The Depiction of Women in the Bangladesh Liberation War: A Comparative Study of War Based Films and Novels*, ULAB), is pervasive in our cinema as well. Portraying women as victims only renders them passive, deprives them of agency, and perniciously perpetuates patriarchal values.

Selima "deconstructs" (in a broad sense, not a strictly Derridean sense) these stereotypes

by pointing out the insensitive and inhumane attitude to the victims, the "Birangona," by their self-proclaimed protectors, and the "feminization" of the latter when they themselves are the victims of the enemy. She goes on to highlight the pictorial strategies whereby Rokeya avoids falling into these stereotypical modes. Rokeya is inspired by the ideal of empowering women, and depicts them as active agents. The mainspring of her imagination is her experience of being with her protective mother during the terrible days of the independence war. Her mother figures, on the one hand, are related to the Madonna of European art, and non the other, she is a woman warrior who will fight for her child, who is a Christ-like figure. Rokeya depicts women as vibrant personalities playing the crucial roles of helper and care giver to fighters.

Selima concludes: "Rokeya has empowered the women and has attempted to challenge the patriarchal society of Bangladesh by depicting the sufferings and contributions of women during *Muktijuddho* in the light of feminism." If one has to point out something significant that one misses in Selima's analysis, it is an examination of the technical aspects of painting and graphics. That is to say, the analysis is primarily thematic. An account of the technical dimension would have given us a more rounded view of the subject, for art is not made of ideas but emerges from a sensitive handling of the chosen medium; it is the finesse of the technique that evokes ideas. But Selima has made a good beginning, and one hopes she will attempt a study on a larger scale in future.

Kaiser Haq, a poet, essayist and translator, is currently professor of English at ULAB.

## Story of Bengal and Bengalis: The Bengali Homeland and its Inhabitants

Subir. ISBN 9788125050537. Notion, 2020

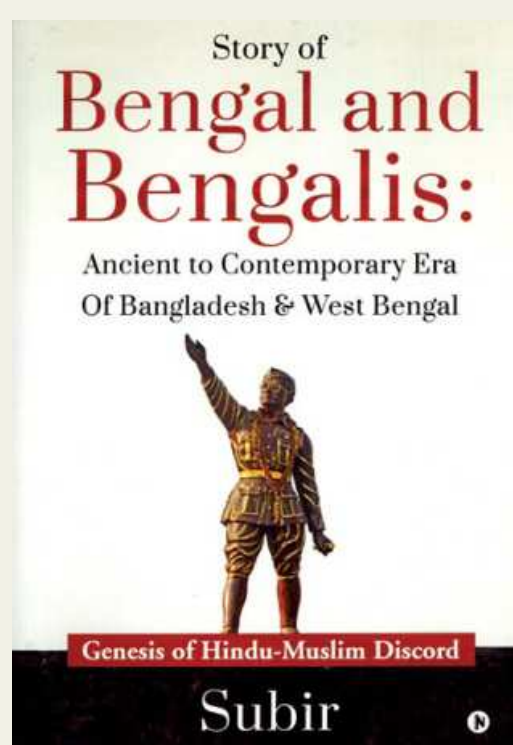
REVIEWED BY SYED MARGHUB MURSHED

With the onset of the new millennium in the 21st century, there seems to be a revival of interest in the space, in the eastern part of South Asia, historically known as Bengal, and the people who inhabit this space, the Bengalis. These Bengalis are people who derive their identity from the language they speak, and who retain this identity in spite of the political division of their homeland. More than a decade ago Ghulam Murshid's monumental *One Thousand Years of Bengali Culture* was published and so was Nitish Sengupta's seminal work, *Bengal Divided* that analyses the political vicissitudes of the people of Bengal from ancient times till it was partitioned. Other writers have now come forward to survey the landmark events that have had a significant bearing on the history of the land once called Bengal, and attempt to comprehend the subtle nuances peculiar to traditional culture of the Bengali people, as well as probe the complexity of the Bengali ethos. Among such works, Subir Deb's *Story of Bengal and Bengalis* is commendable.

Subir Deb, the author of *Story of Bengal and the Bengalis*, fashions himself simply as Subir in this aforementioned book published by the Notion Press. He was inspired to write this book after participating in discussions that take place in informal addas.

Subir begins his story of Bengal and Bengalis by discussing what he calls a bias against Bengalis. In his experience, as in that of many others, people who are classified as Bengalis, are very often at the receiving end of prejudice and discriminatory acts by people who are insensitive regarding their cultural susceptibilities. Subir's observations on the major milestones of the history of Bengal begin from the Vedic and Puranic periods, of the classic antiquity of South Asia and the advent of Buddhism and Jainism. He divides the history of Bengal into what he calls the Hindu period describing Bengal during ancient times, the Muslim period, which covers the history of medieval Bengal, and the Christian period in which he describes life in Bengal under British rule. This is followed by the secular period, describing events in Bengal after August 1947.

He describes the policies of the imperialist British rulers of India, who partitioned Bengal in 1905 without consulting its people and how the unity of Bengal was restored as a result of a protracted political movement, in 1911. Subir writes about the efforts of Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, to bring together the Hindus and Muslims of Bengal via affirmative action favoring Bengal's backward Muslim community. This was thwarted by the central leadership of the Indian national Congress (INC). His views on Gandhi's autocratic dominance of the INC and how his policies adversely impacted the



political fate of Bengal are presented from a Bengali perspective. Subir mentions how Gandhi prevented Subhas Bose from forming a Hindu-Muslim unity government in Bengal through a coalition ministry in which the Congress and Fazlul Haque's 'Krishok Proja Party' would, under the leadership of the latter, be partners. Subhas's virtual expulsion from the mainstream of the politics of the INC by Gandhi loyalists like Patel and Prasad (and even Nehru) are discussed by Subir in detail. Subhas however remained, even after being marginalized in the INC, the idol of both the Hindus and Muslims of Bengal, which he became as a result of his role in the demolition of the Holwell Monument in Calcutta (Kolkata). This monument, which was an arrogant symbol of British paramountcy in India, was considered by all Bengalis as an affront.

Subir describes how both Gandhi and Nehru criticized the formation of a provisional government of India and the raising of the Indian National Army (Azad Hind Fauj) by Subhas Bose. Subir quotes the British historian, Michael Edwardes, "it was not Gandhi's movement by fits and starts that led to the independence of India" and that India became free because a bankrupt Britain was pressured by its principle creditor, the United States of America, to grant India independence, in conformity with the principles of the Anglo American Atlantic Charter. In addition, according to Edwardes, Subhas Bose's raising of the Indian

national Army (INA) had shaken the confidence of India's British rulers about the reliability of the Indian army, manned mostly by hitherto loyal (pseudo) martial races, to safeguard British interests during any future political confrontation with the people of India." Though Subir does not mention it in his book, a similar comment on Subhas and the Indian National Army (INA) is attributed to Clement Atlee who was the British Prime Minister in 1947.

We are informed by Subir that Nehru admitted that his acquiescence to the partition of India was because he was exhausted and was keen to be in power. Patel in fact, welcomed the partition of India which he felt would eliminate the political nuisance value of Muslim leaders like Jinnah, the Muslim League and the Muslim community in independent India. Between the lines, Subir seems to hint that had Subhas been around in India in 1947, he would have opposed the partition of the country more vigorously than those who pushed him to the periphery of the Indian national Congress. As for the future of Bengal, both Gandhi and Jinnah were in favour of a United Independent Bengal, in 1947, that was proposed by Sarat Bose (the older brother of Subhas) in conjunction with H.S. Suhrawardy and Abul Hashem. Gandhi later withdrew his support for the proposal of an independent Bengal. The final decision about the fate of Bengal after the exit of the British from the subcontinent was taken at a meeting held in Delhi a few weeks before India was granted independence. Mountbatten presided over this meeting that was attended by Gandhi, Nehru, Patel and Baldev Singh on one side and Jinnah, Liaquat Ali Khan and Abdur Rab Nisrar on the other. Bengal was, irrevocably, partitioned on the basis of a decision taken at a meeting, in which no Bengali took part.

From what he calls the Christian period in Bengal, Subir moves on to the post-independence period in India which he calls the Secular Period. He writes extensively about the East Bengal refugees in India, displaced by the social destabilization and violence that occurred in the wake of the partition of the subcontinent and the advent of independence. According to Subir, the Indian Independence Act did not confer independence to India. He says India became independent after it was proclaimed to be a republic on the basis of its constitution. Subir notes the hostility that Bengalis in general and East Bengal refugees in particular encountered in Assam. He traces the origin of the anti-Bengali feelings in Assam to the time when the British ruled. The anti-Bengali sentiment in Assam was deliberately fomented by the British who introduced the infamous "Line System," a kind of apartheid

to segregate Bengali settlers in Assam from its indigenous people. The difficulties encountered by the East Bengal refugees in independent India are a recurrent theme in Subir's book. His book in fact begins with a tribute to those who had to leave their homes as a result of the process through which India's freedom arrived. Bangladesh's liberation struggle and the initial years of its existence as a sovereign state are also discussed in the section of Subir's book that he calls the Secular Period.

In the chapter on "Hindu Muslim Discord" Subir attempts to analyze, the roots of Hindu-Muslim antagonism. He is firmly of the opinion that the British rulers of India exacerbated Hindu-Muslim tension through their presentation of the history of India prior to the period of British ascendancy in the subcontinent. The events of the period preceding British rule in India were shown by imperialist historians like Vincent Smith and Valentine Chiron to be a chronicle of continuous conflicts between Hindus and Muslims. Subir praises the work of Sundar Lal, the Gandhian historian and Shashi Tharoor for their revision of the version of history that was imposed on the Indians during the pre-independence period, and presenting readers an authentic alternative view of history seen from a South Asian perspective.

In the final chapter entitled, "Little Nationalism," Subir talks of a sub-nationalism among India's Bengalis which he considers to be something healthy and positive. The author of *The Story of Bengal and Bengalis* is a person with a keen intellect, but without intellectual pretensions. He writes in a style that is relaxed and informal, almost conversational. Readers are encouraged to go through Subir's *Story of Bengal and the Bengalis* attentively as it is a veritable treasure trove of information. Through this review I wish to request the author to bring to the notice of the publishers of his book, Notion Press, the need to include an index of the books contents, at the end of the book, when its next edition is printed.

My most important takeaway from the *Story of Bengal and Bengalis* is a message that Bengalis on both sides of the political divide have to be conscious of their common identity. The Bengali homeland may be irreversibly partitioned, but the border separating the two Bengalis can someday become an invisible border like the border between the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland, in accordance with the provisions of the 'Good Friday Agreement.' Such a border would significantly expand cultural, economic and social interaction among Bengalis from both Bengalis and enrich their lives.

Syed Marghub Murshed is a retired civil servant.



**Bangladesh players could see the funny side of captain Mahmudullah's gesture, which was probably out of relief as the hosts scraped to a four-run victory over New Zealand in the second T20 International at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.**

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Tigers' positive intent shines through

SPORTS REPORTER

Following a string of low-scoring encounters at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur that began with the series against Australia last month, some runs were finally put on the board as the hosts managed to post 141 for six after skipper Mahmudullah Riyad elected to bat in the second T20I against New Zealand yesterday.

The surface played a lot better than in the first T20I, when the Kiwis were bundled out for their joint-lowest T20 total of 60 and suffered a seven-wicket defeat.

Bangladesh's positive intent was evident from the start and one should credit the team management for taking up the challenge after talk about batsmen not receiving adequate preparation for the upcoming ICC World T20 in mind.

After failing to fire in the first game, opener Naim Sheikh and Liton Das provided stability although the latter got a reprieve after being dropped very early in the innings.

The duo showed great maturity and, interestingly, it was the first time in seven T20Is in Bangladesh that a team completed the PowerPlay without losing a wicket.

Naim and Liton added 59 runs for the first wicket, Bangladesh's highest opening stand in their past nine T20Is with the previous best of 42 coming against Australia last month.

Liton was bowled for a 29-ball 33 while trying to drag the ball to the leg side off Rachin Ravindra. That sparked a mini-collapse, with Mushfiqur Rahim, who promoted to number three, registering his third duck in the last ten innings.

The wicketkeeper batsman missed a turning delivery from

Ravindra, losing his balance and finding himself out of the crease when opposing keeper Tom Latham dislodged the balls.

Shakib Al Hasan tried to counterattack, hitting struck two boundaries to off-spinner Cole McConchie, but the left-hander paid the price as he chased a third, handing an easy catch to long-off. He departed for 12, leaving Bangladesh on 72 for 3, having lost three wickets inside nine deliveries.

Naim could only look on from the other end as the wickets fell before attempting to steady the ship with skipper Mahmudullah Riyad at his side. However, the necessity of going for big shots saw a frustrated Naim caught at long on to become Ravindra's third victim. He scored a run-a-ball 39 which included three fours.

It was then Mahmudullah taking on

### SCORES IN BRIEF

#### BANGLADESH:

141 for 6 in 20 overs (Naim 39, Liton 33, Mahmudullah 37 not out, Nurul 13; Ravindra 3-22)

#### NEW ZEALAND:

137 for 5 in 20 overs (Latham 65 not out, Young 22, McConchie 15 not out; Mahedi 2-12, Shakib 2-29)

#### RESULT:

Bangladesh won by 4 runs to lead the series 2-0

#### PLAYERS-OF-THE-MATCH:

Mahmudullah



the bowlers, showing intent and remaining unbeaten on a 32-ball 37. Nurul Hasan Sohan scored 13 off nine balls as Bangladesh added 31 runs in the last three overs, but the main thing was the positive intent from the Tigers, which will boost the batsmen's morale in the coming days.

যে আলোয় একটু বেশিই  
সুন্দর হয় চারপাশ



## BETTER WICKET LEADS to competitive game

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh beat New Zealand by a narrow margin of four runs in the second T20I at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday to take a 2-0 lead in the five-match series and both captains argued that the pitch was better than the one which was on offer in the first T20I where the Kiwis were bowled out for their joint-lowest T20 score of 60.

The Tigers put on a solid batting display, putting on 141 for six with the top-order finding runs before skipper Mahmudullah Riyad put on the finishing touches. The Tigers' captain credited the bowlers for coming through in a wicket which fared better under lights, restricting the Kiwis to 137 for 5.

New Zealand put on a better show with the bat after swallowing a bitter seven-wicket defeat in the first game. Tom Latham's unbeaten 49-ball 65, laced with six fours and a six, took them within touching distance before they fell short by four runs needing six off the last delivery.

"Yeah, it was a great game to take it down to the last over considering how things went in the first game. I thought we learnt from the last game and we did that really well, especially with the bat. We were able to build partnerships and to take it down to the last over with a chance of winning," Latham said in the post-match presentation ceremony.

The Kiwi skipper reiterated that chasing 140-odd runs was going to be challenging but a better surface

produced better cricket. "Yeah, I think a better surface makes for a better game and that certainly was the case. The spinners did well and for us it was about executing our skills and we probably weren't there as we would have liked, but I still think 130-140 was a competitive score. We took it deep to give ourselves a chance," he concluded.

Riyad said that the bowlers were up to the task defending the 141-run total in a track that favoured batsmen more at night.

"Wicket was better here compared to the previous match. When we were batting, deliveries bounced irregularly but at night the wicket got better. Keeping that in mind, the bowlers did very well to defend the runs and credit goes to them."

Liton Das and Mohammad

Naim's 59-run opening stand created the platform for a good total and Riyad credited them for playing a vital role.

"It's difficult to bat against the new ball here. When the seam is hard, there is bounce and a few deliveries skid while there is some sharp turn on offer too. Liton and Naim did what was required in the Powerplay, providing the optimum start."

Mustafizur Rahman was Bangladesh's main weapon as Kiwis went into the last over needing 20 runs. A beamer went for four and he went back to basics in his final two deliveries to defend the score. "Mustafiz held his nerve well and we went really close. It was unusual, but I had quite a bit of confidence in Mustafizur," Riyad concluded.



**Lautaro Martinez (R) scored the opening goal as Argentina beat Venezuela 3-1 to maintain their unbeaten run in South American World Cup Qualifying at the in Caracas yesterday. (Inset) Brazil's Everton Ribeiro celebrates after scoring the decisive goal against Chile as the Selecao made it seven wins out of seven at the Monumental Stadium in Santiago.**

PHOTO: AFP/REUTERS



## Booters gear up to tackle Palestine

SPORTS REPORTER

Having watched the opening match of Three Nations Cup between hosts Kyrgyzstan and Palestine on Thursday night, Bangladesh head coach Masud Parvez Kaiser told in a video message sent by the Bangladesh Football Federation.

"Palestine is a physical team and not very mobile but Kyrgyzstan move fast and exchange their positions quickly. We are hoping that the boys will get ready before the match and put a good show in both matches," added the assistant coach.

Midfielder Sohel Rana and defender Saad Uddin are also optimistic as they worked on tactics to combat Palestine in training.

"We had practice with some tactical insights of how to play against Palestine. We all watched Palestine's match last night (Thursday) and know

training, so that they can implement those elements in the match," assistant coach Masud Parvez Kaiser told in a video message sent by the Bangladesh Football Federation.

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"We had practice with some tactical insights of how to play against Palestine. We all watched Palestine's match last night (Thursday) and know

their weak and strong points. We are hoping to produce a good result against Palestine and get prepared for the upcoming SAFF Championship," said the midfielder of Abahani.

Defender Saad said: "We are thinking match by match. Palestine are much stronger than us and the coach has been working accordingly. Jamie informed us about different info about Palestine and also in today's (Friday) training, so we are hoping for a good show on Sunday."

Palestine, ranked 102nd in FIFA Ranking, never lost to Bangladesh in five matches in which Bangladesh could only hold them to a 1-1 draw in now-defunct AFC Challenge Cup in 2006 but had lost all last four matches in between 2011 to 2020.

## POPE DRIVES ENGLAND TO LEA



**England's Ollie Pope plays a drive during the second day of the fourth Test against India at the Oval in London on Friday. The right-handed batsman led England to the lead after the hosts had found themselves in a spot of bother, losing at five down for 62, chasing India's first innings total of 191. Pope strung together an 89-run partnership with Johnny Bairstow as England closed in on the India total before stitching together a 71-run partnership with Moeen Ali to surpass the visitors' total. At Tea, England were 227 for seven, with Pope batting on 74 and Chris Woakes on four.**

PHOTO: AFP

## Afghan U-19s due today

SPORTS REPORTER

Afghanistan U-19 are due in Bangladesh today to play a five-match one-day series which will be followed by a four-day game. The series itinerary was rescheduled but despite the Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan, will go ahead as planned with all the matches taking place in Sylhet.

The visitors are set to arrive in Dhaka in two batches. The players will be transferred to Sylhet by September 5 before their first practice session on September 8 at Sylhet International Cricket Stadium.

This will be Bangladesh U-19s' first assignment since the Akbar Ali-led side won the Under-19 World Cup by beating India in Potchefstroom in February 2020. The one-day series will take place from September 10 till 19 before the four-dayer from September 22.

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# Marooned, they wait for relief

Flood hits 15 dists, crisis of food, drinking water acute

STAR REPORT

People in the remote shoals of the Jamuna are suffering immensely for want of drinking water and food.

Most of the flood victims are yet to get any relief assistance.

There is also a fodder crisis.

Currently, 15 districts in the country's northern and central parts are affected by floods. Of them, situation in at least 11 districts is going to worsen today, said the bulletin of Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre.

Out of 109 water monitoring stations, water level is rising at 54 points while it is overflowing the danger level at 22 points, the bulletin added.

Visiting Halidiya union, a char in the Jamuna of Gaibandha's Saghata, our Bogura correspondent yesterday found that several thousand people of the union have been marooned for last one week, but no one got any relief materials.

Pinjira Begum, 50, of Dakkhin Dighalkandi village, said, "We have been stranded since August 27, but no one gives us any relief. My husband is physically challenged. We have no boat. Therefore, we can't move to a safe place."

Nasima Begum, 35, said houses of 40 families in the village remained inundated for one week. River water is still increasing.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



Residents of Dakkhin Dighalkandi village in Gaibandha's Saghata upazila stand in knee-deep flood water as a boat approaches. The village has been inundated with flood water for the last week but no relief has reached the suffering villagers. They rush towards any approaching boats in the hope of relief. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

# 44 dead as flash floods hit US northeast

AFP, New York

Flash flooding caused by the remnants of Hurricane Ida killed at least 44 people in four northeastern US states overnight into Thursday, including several who perished in basements during the "historic" weather event officials blamed on climate change.

Record rainfall, which prompted an unprecedented flash flood emergency warning for New York City, turned streets into rivers and shut down subway services as water cascaded down platforms onto tracks.

"I'm 50 years old and I've never seen that much rain ever," said Metodija Mihajlov whose basement of his Manhattan restaurant was flooded with three inches of water.

"It was like living in the jungle, like tropical rain. Unbelievable. Everything is so strange this year," he told AFP.

Hundreds of flights SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

# NZ KNIFE RAMPAGE IS-inspired attacker shot dead, 6 hurt

AFP, Wellington

An Islamic State-inspired attacker injured six people in a New Zealand supermarket knife rampage yesterday, before being shot dead by undercover police officers who had him under round-the-clock surveillance.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said she was "gutted" the man, a Sri Lankan national, had managed to carry out his "hateful" assault even though he was on a terror watchlist.

She said the man, who arrived in New Zealand in 2011, entered a shopping mall in suburban Auckland and seized a knife from a display before going on a stabbing spree.

Six people were wounded, three critically, in the 60 seconds before surveillance officers opened fire.

Terrified shoppers fled for the exits and video footage shot by bystanders showed men running toward the incident before a barrage of shots rang out.

The attack has stirred painful memories of the Christchurch mosques shootings in March 2019, New Zealand's worst terror atrocity, when a white supremacist

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

## ROAD TO FREEDOM THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

### Bangladesh's reply to Yahya



The Bangladesh Mission Chief in Calcutta Hossain Ali in a brief function today hands over a cheque of 2,100 rupees to Kazi Nazrul Islam at the Christopher Road resident of the poet.

SEPTEMBER 4, 1971 SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

#### BANGLADESH MISSION PRESENTS CHEQUE TO KAZI NAZRUL ISLAM

Hossain Ali, the chief of the Bangladesh mission in Kolkata, today presented to the sons of Kazi Nazrul Islam a cheque for 2,100 rupees as pension for the poet. The amount represents a monthly grant of 350 rupees to the ailing poet for the last six months, since when the Pakistan government had stopped the grant after the army crackdown in Bangladesh on March 25, 1971. In his brief speech Hossain Ali paid glowing tribute to the writings of Nazrul Islam, which he believed would inspire all Bangladeshis to fight till freedom was attained.

'IT IS PLAIN SADISM'

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

# SSF bill placed in JS

Incorporates security of Bangabandhu's family members

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Special Security Force Bill-2021 was placed in parliament yesterday, incorporating a provision for state security for family members of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, and other "very important" persons.

Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Huq, also the in-charge of parliamentary affairs of the Prime Minister's Office, placed the bill, which was later sent to the parliamentary standing committee concerned for further examination.

The committee was asked to submit its report before the House within 30 working days.

The proposed law comes as the existing Special Security Force Ordinance-1986 was left void following a High

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

# China develops miniature copter for Mars missions



REUTERS, Beijing

China has developed a prototype miniature helicopter for surveillance work on future Mars missions, according to its space science agency, following the historic landing of a robotic rover on the Red Planet a few months ago.

The prototype is similar in appearance to the robotic helicopter Ingenuity, developed by Nasa for its Perseverance mission this year, according to a photograph posted on the website of China's National Space Science Center on Wednesday.

The agency said the helicopter could be a tool for China's follow-up exploration on Mars, but it

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

# BCL leader, 2 others held on rape charge

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

Three people, including Habiganj's Lakhai upazila Chhatra League Joint Convener Solaiman Hossain Rony, have been arrested on charge of raping a newlywed woman in front of her husband on a boat in a haor.

The other arrestees are: Mithu Mia, 21, and Subha Mia, 19, of Morakari village in the upazila.

Saidul Islam, officer-in-charge of Lakhai Police Station, said police arrested Subha on Thursday.

Besides, members of Rab-9 conducted a drive on Wednesday and Thursday and arrested Rony and Mithu.

The victim's husband on Thursday filed a case with the Habiganj Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-2 against eight people, including the three arrestees.

The husband said his SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

# Woman who complained against cop arrested

Rab says she is involved in human trafficking

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A woman was arrested by Rab from the capital's Rupnagar on charges of human trafficking on Wednesday, about two weeks after she lodged a complaint with police against a sub-inspector over stealing Tk 2.5 lakh during a raid at her home.

A Rab-4 team raided the house of Rasheda Begum, 53, in Rupnagar on Wednesday afternoon and picked her up along with one of her tenants Mahmuda Akter Mim, 24.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



An electrician on a ladder working on repairing an internet cable at the capital's Topkhana Road. He is perilously close to a high-voltage transformer, but he is conducting repairs without taking any visual safety measures such as wearing a safety harness. Such sights are common in the capital and could result in potentially fatal accidents. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Star HEALTHLINE

# What is Covid brain fog?

STAR HEALTH DESK

Brain fog is one of the rarer Covid-19 symptoms -- not talked about frequently. There are no complications in understanding brain fog: it's a cognitive dysfunction, a hazy feeling that bars you from concentrating, or remembering things.

If you got up from bed to do something during or after Covid-19 illness, but forgot what it was as soon as you're up, you might have brain fog. If you are thinking it will go away as soon as Covid symptoms

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



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