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SECOND EDITION



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"If Covid cases surge, the government will shut down educational institutions without any hesitation."
EDUCATION MINISTER DIPU MONI

"We're four major democracies with a long history of cooperation. We know how to get things done and we are up to the challenge."
US PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN TELLS QUAD MEMBERS

"We must state that Israel, the occupying power, has one year to withdraw from the Palestinian territory it occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem."
PALESTINIAN LEADER MAHMUD ABBAS

LAW FOR EC APPOINTMENTS It's needed more than ever now

Say experts about constitutional provision citing little public trust in polls body, apathy to voting

ASHUTOSH SARKAR and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR



With the national elections about two years away, the framing of a specific law as mandated by the constitution for appointments of election commissioners is back to the fore against the backdrop of widespread mistrust in the Election Commission and an alarming apathy among voters. The state has barely four months to appoint new election commissioners as the five-year tenure of the incumbent chief election commissioner and four other commissioners ends on February 14. Though over 49 years have passed since the constitution prescribed a specific law for appointing CEC and ECs, successive governments chose not to enact one. Most of the South Asian countries, however, have similar laws in place. In the absence of the law, the appointments of election commissioners with no specific criteria defined regarding their qualifications or what will lead to the disqualification often triggered widespread controversies.

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Thick clouds overcast the sky over the Buriganga in Sadarghat, Dhaka, yesterday afternoon. The gloom was accompanied by a cool breeze and a shower after a couple of days of sweltering heat and humidity.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Formulate law to form new EC

53 eminent citizens urge govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 53 eminent citizens yesterday called upon the government to reconstitute the election commission under an act of the parliament citing Article 118(1) of the constitution. The term of the current Nurul Huda commission will end in February 2022. Hence, the initiative to reconstitute the election commission must begin immediately with the enactment of a law as per the constitution, they said in a joint statement. "We urge the government to take urgent steps in this regard to enable the election commission to take the necessary lawful steps for conducting elections independently and without any external influence. At the same time, we urge the government to start thinking of reforms so that the civil administration and the law enforcement agencies can impartially

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Will charge cars in areas like Gulshan, Baridhara

Says DNCC mayor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Mayor Md Atiqul Islam yesterday said that car users must pay additional taxes to use their vehicles in the capital's affluent areas, like Gulshan and Baridhara. On the occasion of the World Car-Free Day yesterday, the mayor, in a programme organised by Dhaka Transport Coordination Authority [DTCA] at Malibagh-Khilgaon area, shared the city corporation's "planning" in this regard. The DNCC mayor said, "The number of vehicles has increased and gridlocks have gotten worse. Under the circumstances, we're contemplating tax on vehicles in affluent areas." "From Gulshan-1 to Gulshan-2, Kakoli to Gulshan or Baridhara, only cars and cars. In a family -- father, mother, son and daughter -- everyone has individual cars. Due to this overwhelming number of vehicles, there are congestions on roads. People are cursing out but no one is considering why the situation is so bad. "By reducing the number of cars, it is possible to reduce the traffic jam along with air pollution," he added.

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Plot on to tarnish country's image

PM tells a reception by US AL, says 'some of those elements stay abroad'

BSS, New York

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said people who do not believe in Bangladesh's independence are out to tarnish the country's image at home and abroad by hatching conspiracies. "They are the enemies of the country's people," she told a reception accorded to her by the US chapter of Awami League at New York LaGuardia Airport Marriott Hotel on Friday night. Joining the reception virtually, Hasina said some elements staying abroad are indulged in plotting against the government to taint the country's image at a time when it has taken Bangladesh to a dignified position.



The premier, also the AL president, called upon all to remain alert so that none can play ducks and drakes with people's fate. Politics is not meant for enjoyment rather it is for sacrifice, she said, adding Ziaur Rahman, HM Ershad and Khaleda Zia never thought about the welfare of the people, rather they touted power as "a means for enjoyment and making some quick bucks". Highlighting the country's stunning development, Hasina said Bangladesh has become a role model of uplift before the entire world due to the relentless efforts of her government. Referring to some elements who are calling the AL government illegal, she said, "My question is how they get the chance for uttering those words?" The AL chief said they are getting the scope for criticising the AL by taking advantage of the "Digital Bangladesh vision" which was materialised by her government. "If they had an ideology, they could never do that. They are basically criticising the government after being paid by the BNP-Jamaat clique."

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Schools will be closed if infections surge again

Says edu minister

UNB, Dhaka

Education Minister Dipu Moni has said educational institutions will be closed if there is any possibility of Covid cases going up. "But no such situation has arisen anywhere so far. If any report indicating a rise in the cases comes, we will take steps," she told reporters after the inauguration of Bangabandhu-Bapu Digital Exhibition at the capital's Shilpakala Academy yesterday.

"We don't want to bring the pre-primary level students to educational institutions now. After three weeks, we will make a decision in this regard," the minister said. Dipu Moni said the pandemic is not over yet and people must stay careful although the daily infection rate has dropped below 5 percent. "We'll have to keep eyes on the situation. Anyone can fall sick anywhere -- at home, on the way

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Watchdog, new laws not needed

E-commerce industry stakeholders call for strict enforcement of existing laws

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

There is no need to form a separate regulatory body for the e-commerce sector as the existing legal framework is sufficient to ensure discipline, said industry stakeholders yesterday. The capacity of the Directorate of National Consumers' Right Protection (DNCRP), the state agency responsible for hearing and addressing consumer complaints about goods and services, needs to be enhanced to weed out deceitful practices in the sector, said AKM Fahim Mashroor, chief executive officer of Bdjobs.com and AkerDeal.

"We do not want a new regulatory body for e-commerce. The DNCRP needs to be made more effective -- it needs to enforce the regulations strictly. It is time to hold the organisation accountable." Mashroor's comment came at a webinar organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue styled 'Challenges in the E-commerce sector: What should be done?'. The central bank also has a big role to play in ensuring that consumers are not duped as the advance payments to e-commerce companies are made through the payment gateways. There are transaction records available, which could have been utilised to detect foul play.

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Feminist icon Kamla Bhasin passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Feminist icon, activist, development worker, educator, writer, poet, advocate for peace and mentor to multiple generations of women's rights activists in the subcontinent and beyond, Kamla Bhasin passed away at the age of 75. She was considered one of the best gender trainers in the region and a tireless advocate of women's rights. She was diagnosed with late-stage cancer earlier this year and breathed her last at 2:45am Saturday, confirmed Khushi Kabir, women's rights activist and long-term comrade of Kamla. Kamla Bhasin was the founder and advisor of Sangat, a South Asian

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



A long queue of migrant workers at the Dhaka airport before their flight to Saudi Arabia yesterday afternoon. On Friday night, many of the workers going to Saudi Arabia were not allowed to board their plane as they didn't get the second dose of a Covid-19 vaccine.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Still no Covid tests at HSIA

Authorities now wait on trial run results

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Despite several promises by government high-ups and the prime minister's instruction weeks ago, RT-PCR labs at the Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport are still not serving passengers, especially migrants heading to the UAE. The authorities were only able to set up the labs yesterday after missing several dates promised by even ministers. Only 100 tests were done on trial yesterday. The samples tested were not even of passengers. After setting up six RT-PCR testing facilities at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport premises, officials concerned yesterday said the labs would first hold trial tests before opening

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Everyday we say to other
Thanks, Sorry, Grateful and Please

But we never say to MA
I am Grateful

মহাদায় গড়ি সমতা

Manusher Jonno Foundation and its Partner Organisations
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BANGLADESH UPDATE

816
New cases in 24hrs

15,50,371
Total cases

27,393
Deaths

15,10,167
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE

4,754,847
Deaths

232,156,772
Total cases

REPATRIATION OF ROHINGYAS

Dhaka seeks EU's support

UNB, Dhaka

Bangladesh has sought effective measures by the European Union for creating a conducive environment in Myanmar for sustainable repatriation of the Rohingyas sheltered in the country.

Raising the issue, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said Bangladesh is facing enormous social, economic and environmental cost by sheltering over 1.1 million Rohingyas.

The minister held a bilateral meeting with Josep Borrell, high representative of the European Union for foreign affairs and security policy, and vice-president of the European Commission (HRVP) on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly in New York recently.

Borell thanked Bangladesh for the humanitarian gesture to the Rohingyas, and assured that EU would work with Bangladesh and the international community to ensure sustainable repatriation of the Rohingyas.

The issue of climate change was discussed in the bilateral meeting.

Momen briefed the HRVP about the role of Bangladesh as the president of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF), said the foreign ministry yesterday.

He raised the issue of the \$100 billion annual climate fund pledged by the developed countries, and requested the EU to fulfill the commitment.

The minister stressed the importance of allocating 50 percent of the climate financing for adaptation measures.

He explained the importance of loss and damage incurred because of river erosion, intrusion of salinity, rise in sea level, floods and draughts.

Momen emphasised sharing of responsibility for the climate migrants -- the people uprooted from their homes and traditional jobs because of impacts of climate change.

He also explained the need of creating high and wide embankments in the coastal belt, and in the areas prone to river erosion. He invited public funding and private sector investment from the EU in developing the embankments, with roads, solar panels and windmills on those.

Borell said significant efforts would be needed to contain the temperature rise.

He was of the view that there would be social and economic shocks in the effort of addressing the challenges of climate change.

The foreign minister agreed with the HRVP, and sought technology transfer for coping with the mitigation targets.

Talking about trade with the EU, Momen thanked Borell for providing duty-free market access to Bangladeshi products under the EU's EBA scheme.

He also thanked the EU high representative for allowing continued market access to Bangladesh till 2029, and requested the EU to provide GSP+ facilities once the EBA facilities to Bangladesh will be over in 2029.

The HRVP assured the minister that he would convey the request with positive recommendation to the EU authorities concerned.

Feminist icon Kamla Bhasin

FROM PAGE 1

Feminist Network, co-chair of the worldwide network, Peace Women Across the Globe and South Asia Coordinator of One Billion Rising.

Though she was Indian by citizenship, Kamla identified herself as a "South Asian" who transcended jingoistic national boundaries and believed that the power of love and camaraderie could bridge the economic, political and religious divides in the subcontinent.

She began promoting peace and understanding between the countries and their people in 1975.

"One of my slogans is 'I am not a wall that divides, I am a crack in that wall. So, all these walls of nationalities - Bangladeshi, Pakistani, Indian, we become cracks in these walls and we go across borders and make friends. Pakistani women were the first to apologise for the genocide here [Bangladesh] - Pakistani feminists," Kamla said in an interview with The Daily Star in 2016.

She had a special relationship with Bangladesh -- for over four decades, she worked closely with women's rights activists and NGOs in Bangladesh, conducting participatory, experiential, capacity-building workshops for women and men, focused on gender, feminism, sustainable development and human rights.

Her death was mourned by generations of activists in the country yesterday.

Born on April 24, 1946, in the district of Mandi Bahauddin, which is now in Pakistan, her family shifted to Rajasthan in India after partition. She earned her MA from Rajasthan University and then went on to study Sociology of Development at University of Münster in West Germany.

She began her career working for the empowerment of the rural and urban poor in 1972, with a voluntary organisation in Rajasthan, India. From 1976 to 2001, she worked with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN, supporting innovative NGO

initiatives for the development and empowerment of marginalised people, especially women, in South East Asia and South Asia.

In 2002, she left her job at the UN to dedicate her time to Sangat, a network that has brought together thousands of women across the region in a common understanding on gender, poverty and social justice.

Kamla believed and taught that the struggle for gender equality was not a fight between men and women.

"It is a fight between two ideologies -- two ways of thinking -- one is that patriarchy is better, men are superior. The other says no, equality is better, men and women are different and equal and equality is good for all. And that men must realise that unless women are free men cannot be free," she would say.

She wrote extensively on gender, women's empowerment, participatory and sustainable development, participatory training, media and communication. Her books have been translated in over 30 languages. She prided herself on writing books in accessible language for activists and development workers. She also wrote numerous children's books on the themes of freedom and equality.

She penned songs, poems and slogans advocating peace and feminism.

Kamla loved to joke, sing and dance and her laughter, like her love, was infectious, remembered by her friends and comrades, as condolences poured in from across the globe yesterday.

She believed South Asia needed a "cultural revolution to change our language and traditions such as those that prevent women from participating in the last rites."

"Schools, madrasas and media have to start this cultural revolution. Media is responsible for spreading patriarchy. There may be one good article in favour of gender equality but then most of the advertisements continue to be patriarchal. So, I think we need a cultural revolution, a new Mukti Andolon," she said.

Formulate law to form new EC

FROM PAGE 1

perform their duties during elections."

Although the constitution explicitly mandates the appointments to the election commission "subject to the provisions of any law", no government has taken such an initiative in the last 50 years, they said.

Before the appointment of the last two election commissions, the president constituted on an ad hoc basis two search committees under the chairmanship of Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain, the present chief justice of the Supreme Court.

"The Rakibuddin commission and the Nurul Huda commission, constituted on the recommendations of those two ad hoc search committees, have brought our electoral system to the brink of collapse through their nakedly biased conducts, creating among the people widespread distrust in the election commission and serious concerns about fair elections."

The proposed law must specify the qualifications of the chief election commissioner and the other commissioners and include a provision for the formation of a search committee with non-partisan individuals acceptable to all related stakeholders.

The mandate of the search committee must be to prepare, following a transparent process, a panel of honest, non-partisan and reputed individuals, meeting the qualifications laid down

in the law for recommendation to the president for appointment to the election commission.

To ensure transparency, the proposed law must include provisions for making public the names of individuals initially being considered for appointment to the election commission, holding public hearings and publishing a report providing the rationale for recommending the individuals to the President for the appointment."

The eminent citizens hoped that the law ministry will take the initiative on an urgent basis to enact the law for reconstituting the election commission with appropriate initiatives.

"We as citizens stand ready to provide the necessary assistance by providing feedback," they added.

Serajul Islam Choudhury, professor emeritus of the Dhaka University; Amir-Ul-Islam, member of constitution formulation committee; M Hafizuddin Khan, Akbar Ali Khan and Rasheda K Choudhury, all advisers to former caretaker government; Abdul Matin, former justice of the Bangladesh Supreme Court; M Sakawat Hussain, former election commissioner; Hameeda Hossain, human rights activist; Salehuddin Ahmed, former governor of the Bangladesh Bank; Ali Imam Majumder, former cabinet secretary, signed the statement among others.



An artisan working on the idols of Hindu gods ahead of the Durga Puja at Sree Sree Jagannath Mandir in Barishal city.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

It's needed more than ever now

FROM PAGE 1

The current Election Commission has drawn flak from many opposition parties, election watchdogs, and civil society members over holding of the 2018 national election. It has also come under fire from different quarters for low voter turnout in local body elections, by-polls and many candidates getting elected unopposed.

Election experts blamed the EC for the failure to ensure free and impartial elections, which has caused people and many political parties to lose interest in polls.

The use of EVM (electronic voting machine) in elections by the EC has also come under scrutiny with some claiming that the machine was introduced to enable polls irregularities.

The current commissioners assumed office on February 15, 2017. As there is no specific law, the president had formed a search committee earlier that year for appointing the CEC and other commissioners.

Since 1972, most of the governments constituted the EC by appointing persons of their choice.

Article 118 (1) of the constitution says, "There shall be an Election Commission for Bangladesh consisting of [the chief election commissioner and not more than four election commissioners] and the appointment of the chief election commissioner and other election commissioners shall, subject to the provisions of any law made on that behalf, be made by the president."

Noted jurist Shahdeen Malik yesterday told The Daily Star, "The formation of a law for an Election Commission is now urgent than any other time for the interest of holding free and fair elections."

He said, "If a law is formulated, the government cannot appoint the chief election commissioner and other election commissioners of its own choice because it is the law which will determine the qualification of the candidates for the posts."

He also said once the law is enacted, the government will have no control in the formation of selection committees. "If the EC is constituted through formulating a specific law under the constitution, it will be more impartial than the existing commission led by the chief election commissioner [KM Nurul Huda]."

He also said, "The present EC has succeeded in making the voters reluctant to go to the polling stations and also in making the candidates disinterested to

contest the elections... It has turned the elections of the country into a farce."

Malik then pointed out that the present search committee for recommending the names of EC has "no legal basis."

Referring to the appointment of ECs in neighbouring countries, Malik earlier told The Daily Star, "Most countries in South Asia have enacted laws and we don't have to reinvent the wheel. The current practice of the so-called ad-hoc search committee is nothing but a sham."

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir on September 13 said their party wanted a permanent solution to the issue over the formation of an Election Commission. "But before that, we want a neutral government under which a neutral Election Commission will be formed."

On September 15, Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader demanded enactment of a law in line with the constitution to have the "permanent solution".

Awami League General Secretary and Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader on September 18 said the ministry concerned was working for the formation of the EC as per the constitution.

He alleged that the BNP came up with a new conspiracy ahead of the formation of a new commission.

Contacted, Election Commissioner Rafiqul Islam said, "The constitution mentions that a specific law has to be formulated. It is obligatory. But no government has done that so far. It is not our duty to make a law. Personally, I feel if the government seeks EC's support, we should provide it."

Law Minister Anisul Huq recently told The Daily Star that the present government is considering with utmost importance the issue regarding the formulation of a law for appointing election commissioners.

He, however, did not say exactly when the government would take steps to formulate the law or rules.

Regarding the current appointment procedure of the EC, the law minister said, "The government is functioning under the constitutional provisions and there is no violation of the provisions."

PAST INITIATIVE
Election Commission sources said that the then EC prepared a draft law in 2007-2008 and submitted it to the caretaker government. And the then government advised the EC to submit the draft to the new government.

After further review, another draft was prepared in 2011.

Plot on to tarnish country's image

FROM PAGE 1

Hasina said military dictators Zia and Ershad had come to power by violating the country's constitution, and the court declared their governments illegal.

She said Khaleda Zia was jailed for embezzling orphans' money, while her son Tarique Rahman was convicted in the 10-truck arms haul case and the August 21 grenade attack case.

The FBI of the United States had revealed the information regarding their involvement in corruption, the PM said.

Hasina said the BNP even paid money to kidnap and kill Sajeeb Wazed Joy in the US.

She said the people of the country have voted AL to power boycotting the BNP. The premier urged the BNP to take part in the next general election if they have faith in people's mandate.

Hasina said when the AL came to power after 1975, the people of the country first realised that the government is for serving the people and for the welfare of the people.

"Whenever the Awami League remains in power, Bangladesh continues to march forward."

The PM mentioned two reasons for her travel to New York by a Dreamliner of the Biman Bangladesh Airlines with the first being giving money to the state-owned carrier instead of others and thus keeping the money at Bangladesh's hand.

She said her government is pursuing a process to resume Biman's flights on Dhaka-New York route.

Hasina said, "A section of people is spreading falsehood that sacks and trunks filled with foreign currency were brought to New York by Biman aircraft."

She asked the rumour mongers to say "where those sacks and trunks go".

The PM reminded all that BNP chief Khaleda Zia went to Saudi Arabia taking 150 suitcases full of money when she was in power and kept those by hiring lockers there.

She also said then (state) minister of Khaleda Zia's government Babar was held with several lakhs of US dollars at a US airport and he was later released following the intervention from the local Bangladesh embassy.

'INVEST IN MOTHERLAND'
Speaking at a press conference after the civic reception, the prime minister urged the Bangladeshi expatriates in the US to invest in their motherland taking the opportunity of her government's attractive offers for investment.

"You, the Bangladeshi expatriates, along with US nationals can invest in Bangladesh," she said.

Hasina told the expatriates that her government was offering attractive stimulus packages and advantages to the investors from home and abroad.

PM REACHES WASHINGTON DC
The Bangladesh premier reached Washington DC yesterday morning (US time) from New York, wrapping up her week-long official visit to attend the 76th United Nations General Assembly at the UN Headquarters. "A VVIP chartered flight of Biman

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the draft "Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioner (Appointment Procedure) Act, 2012," prepared in November 2011.

The draft proposes constituting the EC with the CEC and four election commissioners. One of the commissioners will be a woman. It suggested that the president should appoint commissioners who are skilled, honest, righteous and neutral.

APATHY TO ELECTIONS

In an ominous sign for democracy, the practice that candidates get elected unopposed has gripped the recent parliamentary by-polls as well as local body elections. These elections also witnessed low turnouts.

Even a few years ago, these elections would be held amid much enthusiasm and fanfare irrespective of how the national polls had gone, experts said.

For example, last week, 160 union parishads went to elections and of them 43 chairman candidates were elected uncontested, which means around 29 percent chairmen were elected without a single vote being cast.

In elections of 456 upazilas, held between March and June 2019, 94 chairman candidates were elected unopposed.

Of the 94, at least 93 were AL candidates.

The Sylhet-3 by-polls, which were held on September 4, saw only 34 percent voter turnout. The picture was grimmer in the Dhaka-10 by-polls on March 21 last year, which saw a turnout of only around five percent.

Local government and election expert Professor Tofail Ahmed said, "The country is witnessing a suffocating period. The voting system and culture has been damaged. Political democracy is already demolished. Politics is a profitable business now so there is no place for democracy there."

Election watchdogs and civil society members have criticised the current EC over the holding of the 2018 national election tainted with alleged irregularities including ballot stuffing.

At a party meeting in February, Workers Party of Bangladesh, a component of the ruling alliance, alleged that the government's interference in the electoral system is now a public knowledge and people have lost confidence in the system.

Forty-two eminent citizens, in two separate letters on December 14, 2020 and January 17 this year, urged the president to constitute Supreme Judicial Council to probe allegations of corruption and misconduct by the EC.

Daily cases drop below 1,000

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of new cases yesterday have declined below 1,000-mark after more than four months as the health directorate reported 818 cases.

Earlier on May 17, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) reported 698 case.

In the past 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, a total of 25 Covid-19 patients died across the country.

Against a total of 17,818 samples tested in those 24 hours, the positivity rate was 4.59 percent—the below five percent for five days in a row.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), below five percent positivity rate for 14 days in a row indicates the transmission of the virus is under control.

Since early August, the positivity rate has been declining steadily.

With the latest count, the total number of case reached at 15,50,371. Of them, 15,10,167 or around 97 percent have already recovered from their illness, including 965 in those 24 hours.

The total number of casualties to 27,393 which is around 1.76 percent of all confirmed case.

On December last year, the Covid-19 breakout was first detected in China's Wuhan city which spread across the world within months.

In Bangladesh, the first three cases were detected on March 8.

Still no Covid

FROM PAGE 1

up to the United Arab Emirates bound passengers.

As part of the trial run, about 100 health officials gave their samples last night, Shahriar Sazzad, a health official at the airport, said.

The result from the trial tests would be provided to the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (CAAB), he said.

If everything goes well, then CAAB will inform the airlines concerned to start sending their passengers to the labs for undergoing RT-PCR tests there, he added.

Shahria further said Tk 1,600 per person has been fixed as a fee to have the Covid-19 test at the labs.

According to sources at the airport, the installation of the six labs was completed yesterday.

Initially, the labs have been set up inside Terminal-1. Later, those will be shifted to the designated space on the rooftop of the multi-storied car parking building of the airport, they said.

Several thousand UAE-based expatriates, including migrant workers and professionals, who came home on vacation, have been unable to fly to the Gulf country as there were no such test facilities at the country's international airports.

UAE last month made it mandatory for foreign passengers to have a rapid PCR test for Covid-19 maximum of six hours before the flight.

Following the Gulf country's announcement, the stranded expatriates at home had been demanding for speedy setup of the test facilities at international airports, saying such facilities were imperative for their economic survival.

Many of the expatriate workers feared that failure to reach their workplaces in UAE on time might cost them losing their jobs.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on September 6 instructed the ministries and the health directorate concerned to set up labs at the country's three international airports in Dhaka, Chattogram and Sylhet within two to three days.

Schools

FROM PAGE 1

to schools or even at educational institutions. We're alert so that we can take steps immediately. We'll take measures in consultation with local administrations, civil surgeon offices and health department if we receive any complaint or report," she added.

A class-VII student died of Covid while a class-X student of another school tested positive for the virus, the minister said, adding that all their classmates were tested but no one was found to be Covid positive.

Students of schools and colleges in Bangladesh returned to their classrooms September 11 after a prolonged closure due to the pandemic.

BANGABANDHU-BAPU EXHIBITION
The Bangabandhu-Bapu Digital Exhibition was opened for public viewing at Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy yesterday.

The exhibition celebrates in a uniquely thematic way the life and legacy of the Fathers of two nations India and Bangladesh -- Mahatma Gandhi and Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Education Minister Dipu Moni, State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khalid and Indian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Vikram Doraiswami, among others, joined the inauguration of the digital exhibition.

The exhibition, hosted by the High Commission of India in association with the Ministry of Cultural Affairs, Bangladesh and Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, will remain open from September 26 to October 11.

After October 11, the exhibition will also be displayed at Chattogram, Sylhet, Rajshahi, Khulna and Kolkata.

The event was specially curated by the two governments to commemorate "Mujib Borsho" and to mark 150 years of the birth of Mahatma Gandhi, as well as the golden jubilee of India-Bangladesh bilateral relations.

The exhibition was virtually inaugurated by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi on December 16 last year during the India-Bangladesh Virtual Summit.

'Developing' Dhupkhola field, but for whose benefit?

Athletes, experts, residents raise alarms over DSCC initiative to build market on playground

HELEMUL ALAM

In a city already devoid of adequate playgrounds, there is a field in Old Dhaka's Gendaria area that has not only stood the test of time but also remains a testament to the capital's sporting legacy.

This Dhupkhola field is not just another playground where people of all ages play sports, including football, cricket, basketball and volleyball. It's a place where people from nearby neighbourhoods also meet, hangout and spend time together with family or friends.

Over the years, the field has become a part of the area's heritage and pride.

However, the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) has started building a market inside the Dhupkhola field, which will not just shrink the space significantly, but also change its characteristics.

This is apparently part of an initiative to "develop" the premises, but according to experts, the plan is ignoring the field's main purpose -- providing adequate area for people to play.

The 7.47-acre field is divided in three parts -- Jagannath College (now Jagannath University) field, East End Club playground, and an open field for all. There's also a park at a corner of the East End Club playground next to a club tent.



Construction work for the project, which will occupy a significant part of the field, has already begun. In the name of "modernising" fields, such initiatives in turn make open spaces to play even scarcer, say experts.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

There is no scope to even take up a single inch of the field's land, as playing fields are already scarce in the megacity.

ADIL MOHAMMAD KHAN
GENERAL SECRETARY OF BIP

DHUPKHOLO FIELD

- Total area 7.47 acres
- It has 3 cricket, 2 football academies
- Over 1,000 children, youths play cricket, football on the fields
- Many national level players trained there
- After work, field area will be 4.01 acres

PROJECT AT A GLANCE

- Budget: around Tk 80cr
- Dev work started this month
- To be finished by next year

FACILITIES TO BE BUILT INSIDE THE FIELD

- Market, walkways, seating arrangements, parking spaces, children's play zone, cafeteria
- Market Size 0.62 acres
- Play Zone: 0.6 acres
- 394 shops surrounding field to be shifted to market

PLAYERS, EXPERTS TAKE

- Facilities will significantly reduce field space
- Academies may be deprived of adequate area to practise
- Main features of the field might be lost

Each of the three parts is bigger than a standard football field.

According to the DSCC plan, the authorities will construct a five-storey market to house the 394 shops set up around the fields.

This move will take up 0.62-acre of the total field. The city corporation is also going to construct walkways, seating arrangements, parking spaces and a cafeteria, which will

further reduce the field's space.

Besides, there will also be a children's zone, which will take up 0.6-acre of the field's space, according to the project document.

The document, however, did not mention how much green space the other arrangements will take up. When asked, the authorities did not disclose the information.

The document, however, did show that after the "development" work, the total football field area will come down to 4.01

acres from the initial 7.47 acres.

According to experts, although the proposed design may make it beautiful, the main features of the field will be lost.

Dhupkhola field is also historically significant to the country's sports scene, which is one of the reasons why many are so concerned by this move.

Md Yakub, coach of Dhupkhola cricket academy, said the field has been welcoming all for decades. Many national cricket players

-- like the first Test centurion of Bangladesh, Aminul Islam Bulbul, Marshal Ayub and Mohammad Zakir Hossain -- trained in the field.

He said they along with Bulbul protested DSCC's move, but the corporation did not pay heed.

Mohammad Rafique, the national cricketer who is often considered to be one of the best spinners to have played for the country, used to train and play friendly

matches at Dhupkhola field.

Besides, former national team footballers such as Ataur and Mamun Babu also trained there.

History aside, presently, every year national players are generated from Dhupkhola field. Over a thousand children and youths play cricket and football there from morning to evening daily, and there are three cricket and two football academies there.

"The city corporation did not say anything about the future of our academy, under which 150 to 200 cricketers, including national age-group players, practise every day," said Rezaul Islam, who was an under-19 national player in 2006, when Shakib Al Hasan and Mushfiqur Rahim were his teammates.

"There are three cricket academies here, and under them, around 500 cricketers practise on a regular basis," said Rezaul, also head of Gendaria Cricket Academy.

Another former cricketer, seeking anonymity, said the city corporation could have constructed the walkways in areas currently occupied by shops, but they are doing development work inside the field, reducing its total area by around two-thirds.

The premise has many old trees, which were planted in the beginning of the 80s. They will come under attack during development work, which is very unfortunate, said Yakub.

Every year, at least 50 players participate in the age-level national cricket competition and get a chance to be part of the 20-player age-level national squad, said Nakib Rezwana Shams, a player who had participated in the Under-19 Cricket World Cup.

"The question is, where will these students go now? As the field shrinks, it will be tough for players of the academies to practise together," he said.

Adil Mohammad Khan, general secretary of Bangladesh Institute of Planners, said there is no scope to even take up a single inch of the field's land, as playing fields are already scarce in the megacity.

Their research showed that the city's fields barely meet 10 percent of the public demand.

"Walkways are important, but using the field's land for this purpose will shrink the field and change its main characteristics," he said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

'Our rivers becoming victims of greed'

NRCC chair tells webinar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rivers across the country are becoming victims of influential and vested quarters' greed, said National River Conservation Commission chairperson ASM Ali Kabir at a webinar yesterday.

He said, "Each river has its own history. Our literature, culture, agro-economy, and every aspect of life depends on our rivers."

"If rivers die, Bangladesh will experience droughts in the northern part and salinity in south. We have to be aware so that our rivers don't have to embrace such fate," he warned.

The webinar was organised by World River Day Celebration Council, to inaugurate a campaign called "March for Rivers".

The programme marked the World River Day today -- observed every last Sunday of September. The day is celebrated across the world to highlight the values of rivers and increase public awareness regarding their conservation.

Kabir also spoke of the rampant encroachment that rivers of the country are subjected to.

"River shores have become victims of the greed of influential and vested quarters. As they maintain their illegal occupancy in the river, we must act to save the rivers from

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Freeing rivers from encroachment
- Mass awareness
- Strict monitoring
- Reviving river economy

their clutches," he added.

He also said the prime minister has instructed the commission to work intrepidly to reclaim the rivers and not spare anyone no matter how powerful they are.

The commission chair hoped to bring all organisations working for the conservation of rivers together under one platform by convening a conference in this year.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

DHAKA-ASHULIA ELEVATED EXPRESSWAY Will be open to public in 2026

Says Quader; construction kicks off

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka-Ashulia Elevated Expressway, the second such expressway centring Dhaka, will be open to public in June 2026, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader said yesterday.

The minister set the new deadline after inaugurating the 24-kilometre expressway's pilot pile-boring of "static load test" at a programme in Dhaour on the outskirts of the capital.

The project's physical work started yesterday, four years after approval of the plan. The project's original deadline was June 2022.

Once built, it will connect Hazrat Shahjal International Airport with Abdullahpur, Ashulia, Baipali, and Dhaka Export Processing Zone on Nabinagar-Chandra highway.

It will work as an extension of the under-construction Dhaka Elevated Expressway, which will stretch from Airport to Kutubkhali on Dhaka-Chattogram highway and will facilitate quick entry and exit of vehicles to and from Dhaka.

The government approved the Tk 16,901 crore project in October 2017, and it is being implemented under a government-to-government initiative with China, which will provide 65 percent of the cost as a loan.

But the project could not progress due to delay in loan approval by Chinese EXIM Bank.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

'A huge gap between budget and services'

Say speakers on national allocation for healthcare

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Although allocation for the health sector in the national budget has increased, there is a massive gap between allocation and the actual services being provided, said speakers at a discussion yesterday.

To measure the budget's effectiveness, assessing what goals are being attained using the allocations is needed, they said in the online discussion titled "Assessing progress towards realisation of health-related commitments of election 2018".

Speakers said political parties' commitments to develop the health sector during 2018 national elections have become even more relevant because of the pandemic.

Over the course of three national budgets, significant amounts of resources have been allocated to attain the goals.

Yet there remains a long way to go, and all stakeholders must work together to fulfil commitments, they said at the event jointly

WAYS TO IMPROVE HEALTHCARE SERVICES

- Assess allocation goals
- Work together to fulfil commitments
- Ensure adequate human resources
- Decentralise public health admin

organised by Bangladesh Health Watch, Brac James P Grant School of Public Health, and Unnayan Shamannay.

"Just analysing the budgetary allocations will not suffice to understand to what extent the commitments have been realised," said Dr Atiur Rahman, former governor of Bangladesh Bank, while presenting a keynote.

Dr Atiur, who is also president of Unnayan Shamannay, said, "Rather, stakeholders have to check what goals the administration intends to

attain with those allocations." Former health minister and lawmaker Dr Ruhul Haque said ensuring adequate human resources for healthcare should be considered the topmost priority.

Meanwhile, lawmaker Shamim Haider stressed the need for decentralisation of public health administration.

Ruling party whip of parliament

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Ashwin is known to bring intense heat to the country, and this year's has been no different. But after the last few days' swelter, yesterday's shower was a welcome respite, although it also made traffic movement difficult across many areas. But the joy it brought overwhelmed these children and made them get down to the streets at the capital's Moghbazar to jump around in ankle-deep water.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Sudden shower spells misery for commuters

UNB, Dhaka

A sudden bout rainfall triggered traffic chaos in different parts of the capital. With vehicles stranded on roads for a long time, it caused quite the sufferings to commuters.

On the flipside, the heavy rain that started around 2pm and lasted for half an hour gave residents some relief from the scorching heat of the last two days.

Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) recorded 52mm rain during the period.

Mounting on pedestrian's woes were the water-logged roads in Moghbazar, Malibagh, Banasree, Hatirjheel, Mirpur and other areas, along with ongoing road digging works of different utility service departments in several areas.

BMD said a low pressure area formed over East Central Bay and adjoining areas was intensified into a well-marked low over East Central Bay and adjoining northeast Bay, which then intensified into a deep depression over the same area.

It is likely to intensify further and move in a west-northwesterly direction, said the Met office in its forecast.

The office forecasts light to moderate rain/thunder showers accompanied by temporary gusty wind over Khulna, Barishal and Chattogram divisions and at one or two places over Rangpur, Rajshahi, Dhaka, Mymensingh, and Sylhet divisions, with moderately heavy to heavy falls at isolated places over southern part of the country.

DENGUE UPDATE

Death toll **59**

13 died in Sept so far

34 in Aug, **12** in July

221 more hospitalised yesterday

Total infected **17,115**

SOURCE: DGHS

Brand Name Wanted

Eminence Electric Wires and Cables Limited requires a brand name for marketing their world class cables in the local & export market. The name must be meaningful, euphonic, containing max 4 characters. The nominator of the selected name will be rewarded. Please send your proposed name by September 29, 2021 to the following email.

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RAPE AT MC COLLEGE

Trial of two cases yet to start

Legal hurdles, pandemic keep proceedings halted for a year

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

One year after the rape incident at Sylhet's Murari Chand College (MC College), trial of two cases filed over rape and mugging are yet to begin in court, due to several legal obligations and the ongoing pandemic.

Advocate Rashida Syeda Khanom, special public prosecutor of the Tribunal for Women and Children Repression Prevention, said, "As the High Court ordered both cases to be proceeded in one tribunal, new charges need to be formed."

"But procedures have been delayed due to the pandemic. Next month, fresh charges will be formed, and the trial will start."

The next scheduled date of the case is October 13. That day, fresh charges are scheduled to be framed in a tribunal.

Earlier in March, the ministry published a gazette notification to proceed both cases in the Speedy Trial Tribunal in Sylhet.

Complainant's lawyer Advocate Shahiduzzaman Chowdhury said, "We're waiting for the home ministry's instructions to be fulfilled. Both cases have the same witnesses and are connected. Proceeding them together in the tribunal will speed up the trial."

On September 25, a group of youth raped a woman at a hostel of MC College, after forcibly taking the victim and her husband there and tying them up.

The victim's husband had filed a case with Shahporan Police Station that night, accusing six named and three to four unnamed people. Police later arrested all six named accused along with two others.

All eight are Chhatra League (BCL) activists.

On January 17, Sylhet Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal Judge Md Mohitul Haque framed charges against the eight.

The trial was scheduled to start on January 24 by recording testimonies of witnesses.

Meanwhile, the investigation officer also filed a separate charge sheet to a Sylhet court centring the mugging. In that charge sheet, the accused and witnesses are the same.

However, the trial could not be started as the complainant's lawyer moved the case to the HC, demanding both trials be proceeded in the same court.

On February 7, the HC bench of Justice M Enayetur Rahim and Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman gave an order, accepting the lawyer's demand.

Alam Ara passes away

CITY DESK

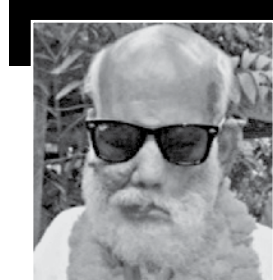
Alam Ara Kamal Dolly, wife of late Abul Kamal, DIG of police and director of NSI, breathed her last at 2:45am on September 23 at her Eskaton Garden Road residence. She was 88.

She was suffering from old age complications, said a press release.

She left behind a daughter and son-in-law, a son and daughter-in-law, grandchildren, grand son-in-law and a great grandson.

Hailing from Burdwan, West Bengal, she studied at Sakhawat Memorial School and later obtained a diploma in Rabindra Sangeet from Dakkhini Music School in Kolkata.

She was laid to rest at Banani Graveyard. All are requested to pray for her departed soul.



Musician Julhas Uddin dies from dengue

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Ekushey Padak winning musician Julhas Uddin Ahmed passed away in Munshiganj's Srinagar upazila on Friday.

He was 88. Julhas was suffering from dengue fever.

He breathed his last around 1:30pm at his home in Baraikhali village, said Nasreen Ahmed, a niece of the deceased.

Julhas received the Ekushey Padak in 2017 for his contribution to music.

He tested positive for dengue three days ago, his niece added.

Julhas was buried at his family graveyard in Dakkhin Baraikhali last evening after his namaz-e-janaza.

Julhas was born on November 10, 1933 at Baraikhali village. He was the youngest among four sisters and five brothers.

At the age of two and a half, he lost his sight due to smallpox. He started playing music on Bangladesh Betar in 1960.

He was accorded with many awards including Nazrul Gold Medal, Nasir Uddin Gold Medal and AB Bank-Channel I Lifetime Achievement Award.

বিশ্ব প্রত্যাচার সংক্রান্ত বিজ্ঞপ্তি
হাইম্যান ইটালী স্যারেরাঙ্গার লিট এন
হায়ে দিশাট ট্যাবলেট ব্যাচ নং-০১১ ও
মুকাবেলী ব্যাচ নং-০২ নামক সেরক কার্গো
মালিক পক্ষকে উক্ত ব্যাচের পণ্য বিক্রি বন্ধ ও
আগামী ৭ দিনের মধ্যে স্থানীয় প্রতিদ্বন্দ্বিতা
নিকট জমা দেওয়ার নির্দেশ দেওয়া হলো।
স্বঃ সাইফুল ইসলাম (অপ), ব্যবস্থাপনা পরিচালক

FASTER DHAKA-CTG RAIL TRIP

24km dual-gauge double-line opens

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujon yesterday opened a 24-kilometre dual-gauge double-line from Laksham to Cumilla for train operation.

The 24km line is part of a 72km long Akhaura-Laksham section on Dhaka-Chattogram route, which is now being developed under a Tk 6,504.54 crore project.

This 72km section remained a bottleneck while the rest of the 321km rail corridor between the capital and the port city has already been converted into a double line.

Under the project, the existing

meter-gauge single line is being converted into dual-gauge double line.

Journeys on this route used to take additional time because of the bottleneck. But after the opening of this 24km part, travelling time between Dhaka and Chattogram will be reduced by 10 to 15 minutes, project director Shahidul Islam told The Daily Star recently.

Taking part at a programme at Cumilla Rail Station, the rail minister said the entire Dhaka-Chattogram line would be converted into dual gauge in future.

A project approved in December 2014 for construction of a double rail

line on this section and conversion of the existing track into dual gauge was supposed to be completed between July 2014 and June 2020.

But the main construction work only commenced in November 2016, around two years after the approval, and then the project saw time extension till this June.

Later, following the revision proposal of the project authorities, the deadline of the project was extended up to June 2023.

The project -- which is being jointly funded by the government and the Asian Development Bank -- witnessed 76 percent progress till July this year.

3 killed in road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

Three persons were killed and another was injured as a fish-laden pickup hit a truck in Sadar upazila of Netrakona early yesterday.

The accident happened on Mymensingh-Netrakona road in Challisha Bagra area, said police.

The deceased were identified as fish traders Rony Mia (18), and his cousin Jony Mia (20) from Gachhtola village in Dharmapasha upazila, Sunamganj; and pickup driver Abu Chand (22).

Quoting locals, Netrakona Sadar Police Station Officer-in-Charge Khandaker Shaker Ahmed said the accident took place when the Dhaka-bound pickup from Dharmapasha hit the truck parked in the area after its driver lost control over the steering.

Rony and Jony died on the spot, said the OC, adding that driver Abu Chand succumbed to his injuries at Mymensingh Medical College Hospital.

Will be open

FROM PAGE 3

Quader yesterday said there are no fund-related problems now. Project officials said Chinese EXIM Bank approved the long-delayed loan of USD 1.2 billion, or Tk 10,226.53 crore, for the expressway in November last year, and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gave the go-ahead to the draft loan agreement early this month.

Asked whether the delay would raise the cost, the minister said: "We are yet to get any cost revision proposal."

Quader directed project authorities to take necessary measures, so project work does not lead to people suffering, pointing to the scenario centring Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project. The government is implementing BRT, a dedicated bus line between Dhaka airport and Gazipur, but project work has been causing severe traffic congestion.

The minister said he has cancelled the extension plan of BRT in the city, considering the possible suffering of Dhaka city dwellers.

Our rivers becoming

FROM PAGE 3

He also shed light on reviving the river economy and proposed unity among the conservation organisations to press home demands to save the rivers.

During his speech, eminent Halda researcher Dr Manzoorul Kibria emphasised on rivers' health, making suggestions to make sure their water is clean so that flora, fauna, and other favourable organisms can thrive.

Sheikh Rokon, member secretary of the council, read out the keynote, placing six points including establishing the rights of river-dependent people like fishermen, farmers.

Sharif Jamil, general secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, moderated the webinar while Dr Abdul Matin, convener of the council, chaired the programme.

Various river activists of the country also spoke at the webinar.

World River Day Celebration Council is a platform formed by 71 organisations engaged in river conservation movements in the country.

WANTED FINANCIAL PARTNER

A reputed and established Home Appliances Company (Sebec) operating for last 21 years is looking for Financial Partner for expansion of its business. Person or Organization interested to invest and do business are requested to contact for an appointment for having discussion on the subject.

Contact: 01740-669286

Developing

FROM PAGE 3

"As seen before, in the name of building multipurpose fields, its main features get lost in the process," he said, adding that revisiting this decision is very important.

Jagannath University Proctor Dr Mostafa Kamal said their students have been using the field since 1982. "We have met with the mayor, and he assured us that we will be able to use the field," he said.

Kamal said they also issued letters to the Prime Minister's Office, education ministry and DSCC, so that they can use the field until Jagannath University gets a new campus.

Contacted, Munshi Md Abul Hashem, director of Dhupkhola Math (field) Development Project, said it is not true that two-thirds of the field will be taken up, but some parts will be used for the market, walkways and other purposes.

Everyone will get the chance to play there; no one will be deprived, he said.

As for why all these facilities are being built inside the field instead of somewhere outside it, Hashem pointed to space constraints.

About the East End Club playground, executive engineer (zone 5) Saiful Islam Joy said they will construct a structure at the place of the tin-shed structure (which is used as the club's office). He, however, did not say whether that will be used as an office for the club.

Contacted, architect Atikur Rahaman Atik of Prokalpa Upodeshta Ltd, the consultancy firm working for the project, which has a budget of around Tk 80 crore, said the development work started from September and will take a year to finish.

Atik said they are going to shift the shops and bring them into the five-storey market. Once that is done, the city corporation will be able to use the empty area for other purposes. The plan is to set up a green space, with seating arrangements.

There will be a car-parking facility for 58 vehicles in the market's basement and for 31 at certain spots of the field. A total of 0.6-acre have been reserved on the field's south-west corner for children's play-zone, where they will install slides and see-saws.

They are merging all three parts of the field into one; no structure will divide it. This will make Dhupkhola field bigger than an international one, he claimed.

DW Akademie kicks off fellowship programme

CITY DESK

With 28 journalism students from nine public universities, DW Akademie kicked off its two-year-long "Local Media Hub Fellowship" with a virtual session on Friday.

At the daylong workshop, journalist Khaled Muhiuddin said, "Everyone wants to be a journalist today... But not everyone can. At the end of the day, journalists' role is that of a watchdog, and it is a difficult task."

Priya Esselborn, programme director (Bangladesh) at DW Akademie; its senior consultant Lutfa Ahmed; Radio Bhumi station chief Shams Suman; and DW Bangla Service journalist Arafatul Islam also spoke at the workshop, said a press release.

DW Akademie --the media development wing of Germany's public broadcaster Deutsche Welle -- has been working in Bangladesh since 2014 with an aim to improve journalism education and practice to strengthen the country's free media.

A huge gap between budget

FROM PAGE 3

Abu Sayeed Al Mahmood said the government is committed to fulfilling its healthcare-related election commitments, despite numerous challenges posed by the pandemic.

Several lawmakers including Dr Habibe

Millat from Sirajganj-2 constituency, Dr Samil Uddin Ahmed Shimul from Chapainawabganj-1, Gloria Jharna Sarker from reserved seats for women, and Bangladesh Medical Association President Dr Mustafa Jalal Mohiuddin were present, among others.

S. ALAM GROUP
Office of the Head of HRD
Corporate Office: S. Alam Bhaban, 2119, Asadgonj, Chattogram

Invitation to Pre-Qualification (PQ) by Qualified (not having any history of failure) and Professional Contractors

Office:	Office of Head of HRD
Prequalification Name & Specification No.	(A) Piling work (SAVOLA, Delta, Inherent, SATTL). (B) Civil foundation (pile cap, all foundation including substructure and superstructure) and utility building work (office building, Ansar camp, Guard room, Security Barrack etc.). (C) Oil Tank fabrication, Installation & painting of new plant & Existing S. Alam Tank Terminal Ltd. (D) Pre-Fabricated Steel Structure work of SAVOLA, DELTA, Inherent plant and plant utility building work (Savola, Delta, Inherent office building and ETP, WTP, Chemical Godown, Bleaching earth section etc.). (E) Mechanical Machineries & Electrical Equipment, Instrumentation installation. (F) S. ALAM/TEC/PQ/S.D.I, SATTL/2021-03
Issuing Authority:	Head of HRD, S. Alam Group
Address	S. Alam Bhaban, 2119, Asadgonj, Chattogram
Starting date of distribution of PQ documents	From the date of publication notice 10:00pm
Last date of distribution of PQ document	30-09-2021 Up to 5:00pm
Last date for submission of document for pre-qualification	02-10-2021 Up to 5:00pm
Notification to the party successfully qualified	09-10-2021 Up to 5:00pm
Document requirement for distribution	1) Trade License. 2) TIN 3) VAT
Contact	Phone No. 01917720555 E-mail ID: hrd@s.alamgroupbd.com
URL for Additional Information	www.s.alamgroupbd.com
Pre-qualification information in details	As mentioned in the PQ documents/Specification.

D-124

TENDER FOR "YEARLY CONTRACT FOR SUPPLY OF CAFETERIA, HOSPITAL and GUEST HOUSE FOOD MATERIALS FOR DHAKA AND MATLAB CENTRE

Tender Ref. No. icddr,b/SCM/OTM/2019/41 & 42 Date: September 26, 2021

Sealed Tenders are invited subject to the general terms & conditions of the RFP from reputed firms having at least 3 (three) years experience with large organizations similar as UN agencies, diplomatic missions, Hospitals and international organizations of providing high quality services and supply of food materials from the following groups.

Sl.#	Name of Group	Schedule of Pre-bid meeting	Selling Price (Tk.)
1.	Yearly Contract for Supply of Cafeteria & Hospital Food Materials for Dhaka Centre	5th October 2021 at 02:30PM	4000.00
2.	Yearly Contract for Supply of Cafeteria, Hospital & Guest House Food Materials at Matlab HRC, icddr,b		3000.00

Cashier's Teller located on the Level 4 of Hospital Building icddr,b will sell tender document from **September 26, 2021 to October 16, 2021** from 10:00 am to 3:00 pm on all working days. Interested Tenderers have to pay cash as mentioned above (non-refundable) for each tender document showing their business card.

Tender should be dropped in the box kept in **Supply Chain Management Office**, Ground Floor of Chiller Building, Mohakhali, Dhaka by **2:45 pm up to October 17, 2021**. Tender opening will be at 3:00 pm on same day (in presence of icddr,b tender evaluation committee members only). If it is not possible to receive & open the tender on the scheduled date for any unavoidable circumstances, the same will be received and opened on the following working day at same time and same place.

Pre-bid meeting will be held as per above schedule at **SCM Conference Room**, Level-2, Chiller Building, icddr,b, Dhaka. Interested tenderers are requested to participate in the meeting on time. The tenderer must bring **NID Card/Company Photo ID Card** with him/her to attend the Pre-bid Meeting and for collection of Tender Document.

Schedule for **Group-2** of above list will be available both from Dhaka Cashier's Teller and the Centre's Office at Matlab Health & Research Centre, Chandpur.

The icddr,b Management reserves the right to accept or reject part/whole of any or all tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever. This tender notice will also form a part of the contract and will be binding upon the tenderer.



Senior Manager, Procurement
icddr,b, Mohakhali, Dhaka-1212
Tel: 9827001-10, Ext. # 4401 & 3777

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

Request For Proposal (RFP)

Procurement of Oracle Database Appliance, Intel Based Server and Core SAN Storage Up-gradation for DC and NDC.

Social Islami Bank hereby invites proposals from the eligible, experienced and locally authorized or authorized Joint Venture firms or company for procurement of Oracle Database Appliance, Intel Based Server and Core SAN Storage Up-gradation for DC and NDC. Please visit tender link of our website: www.siblb.com/media#tender for details.

Vice President & Head
Logistic Support Division
Phone: 09612001122 Ext- 50292, 50299
E-mail: chspd@sibl-bd.com

16491

NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY
Center of Excellence in Higher Education

TENDER NOTICE

Tender No. NSU/21-22-02

North South University is inviting sealed offer from bona fide/ reputed organization/ distributors/ business partners/ agents for supplying of Goat Skin Parchment Paper for North South University as described in the tender schedule.

Interested bidders may collect a schedule of tender from Southeast Bank Ltd. Bashundhara Branch, Dhaka from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on all working days till **October 05, 2021** by paying non-refundable amount of Taka 1,000.00 (One Thousand) in cash for each schedule.

The bidders must submit **earnest money @ 2.5%** of the quoted price in the form of Pay Order issued from any scheduled bank drawn in favor of North South University along with their offer. The sealed offer must be submitted on **October 06, 2021** by 2.15 p.m. at the office of the undersigned. The offers will be opened at 2:30 p.m. on the same day. Representatives of the participating bidders may remain present at the time of opening the bids. NSU authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all the tenders without showing any reason

Director, Internal Affairs
NORTH SOUTH UNIVERSITY
Bashundhara, Dhaka-1229
Phone : +88-02-55668200, Ext. 1204, Fax: +88-02-55668202
E-mail to: procurement@northsouth.edu, www.northsouth.edu

ইসলামী ব্যাংক
বাংলাদেশ লিমিটেড
ইসলামী শরি'আহ মোতাবেক পরিচালিত

সাধারণ সেবা বিভাগ
আপারেশনস উইং
প্রধান কার্যালয়
সপ্তম তলা, ২০ দিলকুশা বা/এ, ঢাকা-১০০০

দেয়াল ক্যালেন্ডার, ক্যালেন্ডার এনভেলপ, ডেস্ক ক্যালেন্ডার, ডায়েরি ও নোট বুক ২০২২ মূল্যে কাজের জন্য দরপত্র আহবান

ইসলামী ব্যাংক বাংলাদেশ লিমিটেড-এর ২০২২ সালের দেয়াল ক্যালেন্ডার, ক্যালেন্ডার এনভেলপ, ডেস্ক ক্যালেন্ডার, ডায়েরি ও নোটবুক মূল্যে, বাধাই ও সরবরাহের জন্য আহ্বায়ী স্বত্বাধিকারী/সরবরাহকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের যাদের ঢাকাতে নিজস্ব ফেলার কালার আধুনিক প্রেস ও স্থাপনা রয়েছে। নিকট থেকে সিলমোহরকৃত বামে দরপত্র আহবান করা যাবে। আইটেমসমূহ মূল্যের জন্য কাজের বিস্তারিত বিবরণ সম্বলিত শিডিউল প্রতিটি ৫,০০০/- (পাঁচ হাজার) টাকা নগদ মূল্যে (অফেরতযোগ্য) আগামী ২৭/০৯/২০২১ থেকে ০৪/১০/২০২১ তারিখ পর্যন্ত অফিস চলাকালে ব্যাংকের সাধারণ সেবা বিভাগ, ২০, দিলকুশা বা/এ (৭ম তলা), ঢাকা থেকে ক্রয় করা যাবে।

যেকোন অফিসিয়াল ব্যাংকের শাখা থেকে এই ব্যাংকের অনুকূলে দরপত্রে উদ্ধৃত মূল্যের ২.৫০% জামানত পে-অর্ডার আকারে সংগ্রহ করে নিজস্ব প্যাডে ফরওয়ার্ডিং লেটারসহ সরবরাহকৃত শিডিউলে সরকারি ট্যাক্স, ভ্যাট ইত্যাদিসহ দর নির্ধারণ পূর্বক আগামী ০৫/১০/২০২১ তারিখে সকাল ১০টা থেকে বেলা ৩টার মধ্যে ব্যাংকের প্রধান কার্যালয়, ইসলামী ব্যাংক টাওয়ার, ৪০ দিলকুশা বা/এ, নিচ তলা ঢাকা-তে রক্ষিত বাস্তব ফেলতে হবে, যা একই দিন বেলা ৩:৩০টা পর্যন্ত ব্যাংকের প্রধান কার্যালয়, ইসলামী ব্যাংক টাওয়ার, মোহাম্মদ ইউনুছ অভিনেত্রী (৭ম তলা), ৪০, দিলকুশা বা/এ ঢাকাতে উপস্থিত দরপত্রাদাতাদের সামনে (যদি কেউ উপস্থিত থাকেন) খোলা হবে।

উল্লেখ্য, ব্যাংক কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে যেকোন বা সকল দরপত্র গ্রহণ অথবা বাতিল কিংবা প্রয়োজনে একাধিক প্রতিষ্ঠানের মাধ্যমে কাজ সম্পন্ন করার অধিকার রাখেন। ব্যাংক কর্তৃপক্ষ নিযুক্ত পরিদর্শন টিম প্রিন্টিং প্রেসসমূহ সরেজমিনে পরিদর্শনপূর্বক প্রতিবেদন দাখিলের পরে যেসকল প্রেসের পরিদর্শন রিপোর্ট ও বিগত পারফরম্যান্স রেকর্ড ব্যাংক কর্তৃপক্ষের নিকট সন্তোষজনক বলে প্রতীয়মান হবে, কার্যাদেশ প্রদানের ক্ষেত্রে সে সকল প্রতিষ্ঠানকে অগ্রাধিকার দেয়া হবে। দরপত্রের বিজ্ঞপ্তি ব্যাংকের ওয়েবসাইট www.islamibankbd.com-এ পাওয়া যাবে।

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BIR PROTİK TARAMON BIBI LIBRARY

Nothing but a sign left after 12 years

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Over the last 12 years, a sign reading 'Bir Protik Taramon Bibi Pathagar O Muktiujddher Chetona Bikash Kendro' had been on top of the tin-roofed building. But there is no book or any activity of a library in the building.

The library in the name of the Liberation War hero was established in 2009 on the compound of Char Rajibpur Upazila Parishad in Kurigram. But members of the Ansar force are now barracked in the building intended for the library.

Taramon Bibi fought with frontline combat unit of Mukti Bahini during the 1971 Liberation War in Sector 11 under the leadership of Sector Commander Abu Taher, Bir Uttam. Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's government honoured her with the 'Bir Protik' award in 1973 for her courageous role in 1971. She is only one of the two woman freedom fighters who received such award.



The building where Bir Protik Taramon Bibi library was established in 2009 -- on the premises of Char Rajibpur Upazila Parishad in Kurigram -- is now being used to provide accommodation to Ansar members.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

Taramon fought with frontline combat unit of Mukti Bahini during the 1971 Liberation War under the leadership of Sector Commander Abu Taher, Bir Uttam.

Taramon was born to Abdus Sobhan and Kulsum Bawa in Shankar Madhabpur village of

Kurigram's Kodalkati union in 1957, according to "Ekattorer Bijoyinee", edited by Mustafiz Shafi and Tawhidur Rahman in February 2011.

The war veteran passed away at her home in Rajibpur upazila on December 1, 2018 at the age of 61.

Bir Protik Taramon Bibi's son Abu Taher said though there were some books and furniture at the library during the first several months after his mother inaugurated it in 2009, those disappeared soon afterwards and all that is left now is the signboard. "It's my demand to the

administration that they keep Bir Protik Taramon Bibi's memory alive by running a fully operational library in her name," he added.

Local cultural activist Ruhul Sarkar said Bir Protik Taramon Bibi is the pride of Char Rajibpur and in order to uphold her memory, it is necessary that books and furniture are provided for the library.

Blaming the administration for the situation, former professor and freedom fighter Abdus Sabur Farooqi said it is regrettable that the library is now being used as a barrack of the Ansars.

Contacted, Char Rajibpur

Upazila Nirbahi Officer Nabirul Islam said he also noticed only the sign of the library above the building on the upazila parishad premises since he joined the office in June of 2020, but no one from the area ever sought his support in running the library.

The members of Ansar were using the library building for the time being as their housing facility was under construction, he said, adding that he would soon have discussion with locals on ways to revive the operation of the Bir Protik Taramon Bibi library.

Family living in classroom for 3 months!

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

In an example of misuse of public property and flagrant disregard for rules, the chairman of Madarbania Union Parishad (UP) allowed a family to live in a classroom of Nandipara Government Primary School in Patuakhali Sadar upazila.

Mosharraf Hossain, the occupant, said he and his wife had been living in a classroom of the school for the last three months as the school was closed due to coronavirus situation.

His three sons live in Chattogram and his only daughter was married off, he also said.

However, Mosharraf was found to be occupying the room during a visit to the school on September 16 -- four days after the school already reopened on September 12.

Several benches were seen put together to make two separate beds in the room. Some other benches were being used for putting different household items. A corner of the veranda adjacent to the room was being used as kitchen.

Rafiqul Islam, the school's headteacher, was not available for his comments. Reached over phone, he requested this correspondent not to publish any report on the matter.

He also said as the school was closed for Covid-19, he let Mosharraf stay in the

classroom after UP Chairman Milon Majhee approached him with the request.

Assistant Teacher GM Hillary said he heard that the headteacher allowed Mosharraf to stay in the classroom at the request of the UP chairman.

Habibullah, another teacher of the school, said partial classes are being held after the school reopened, but once all classes resume, the occupied classroom will need to be vacated.

Mosharraf Hossain, whose grandfather was a donor of land for the school, said he does not have any land of his own and the UP chairman arranged the classroom for him after he requested for an accommodation.

Rizia Begum, acting chairman of the school's managing committee, said the occupant of the classroom would be evicted within a few days.

UP chairman Milon Majhee could not be reached for his comments over the matter as repeated calls made on his cell phone went unanswered.

Contacted, Primary Education Officer in Sadar upazila Shahidul Islam said, allowing someone to live in a classroom is against rules.

The room would be vacated soon and necessary action would be taken against the headteacher concerned, he also said.



Benches are placed together to make a bed and store household items inside a classroom at Nandipara Government Primary School in Patuakhali Sadar upazila. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

Case against MJF

FROM PAGE 12

standing of these two individuals. We strongly criticise the case and call on the authorities to deal with it responsibly," said the Forum.

The statement was signed by Sara Hossain, executive director of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), Golam Monowar Kamal, executive director of Ain o Salish Kendra, Tamanna Hoq Riti, coordinator of HRFB, Zakir Hossain, executive director of Nagorik Udyog, Ranjan Karmakar, executive director of Steps Towards Development, Sanjeeb Dron, secretary general of Bangladesh Adibashi Forum, and Saleh Ahmed, executive director of Bandhu Social Welfare Trust.

"Certain vested quarters have been methodically running a smear campaign against Anam, Gomez and the Editor of The Daily Star, Mahfuz Anam," said the statement.

"A coalition called Nagorik Udyog had placed a draft Hindu inheritance law that proposes equal rights for all Hindu citizens. Not one organisation is involved with this draft. Rather, it was created by several national and district level human rights organisations and individuals," said the Forum. It added that during the creation of the draft, several consultation sessions with stakeholders were conducted.

"The aim of the draft law is not to create any rift within the Hindu community. Rather the objective is to ensure the constitutional rights of Hindu women," it said.

The Forum said that those participating in this initiative should not become victims of harassment.

"There can be opposing views to this draft law, but the opposition can be expressed with tolerance and by upholding the standards of the constitution -- and a case solely meant to harass cannot be an acceptable method," said the Forum.

They demanded that the case be withdrawn immediately.

ASI dies

FROM PAGE 12

the OC said. Police later arrested Polash again. A murder case was filed against him too.

Peyarul joined the police department in 2011 as a constable and performed his duties efficiently. Later, in 2018, he had been promoted to ASI rank of Bangladesh police.

The incident has triggered a wave of shock in the entire police department.

Chinese villages

FROM PAGE 12

-- which could add up to more than \$15,000 in total per baby.

The average annual income in Lianjiang was \$3,295 per person in 2019, according to official data.

The subsidies, worth several million yuan in total, were donated by a wealthy man in the village, local newspaper Zhanjiang Daily reported.

Carpal tunnel syndrome

FROM PAGE 12

There are no certain reasons for this condition. It can happen due to many. However, science has listed things that can aggravate your chances of getting the syndrome -- typing or writing; small, rapid and vigorous hand movements, and applying pressure on your hands for a prolonged period.

Most doctors, however, will want to know if you are an avid gamer. Video games require constant, vigorous, and precise movement of the hand muscles due to various keys that need to be pressed over a very small area. It rarely matters what type of device the game is being played on,

like a PC or a console, since a lot of the actions involved are similar. It is in no way a bad activity but caution and preparedness always wins. So, console players using a controller can try to open their hands and close it for 5-10 times while rolling their wrists. This helps to increase blood flow, and in preventing carpal tunnel syndrome.

For PC players, the objective is to keep your wrists level with the surface, and not in an angle. A good trick can be to use cushions or some other form of soft object to keep their hands and wrists properly leveled. The main goal is to keep blood flowing properly.

Taking 10 minute breaks in

between playing can also help reduce the chances of carpal.

What about those who do not play video games, you ask? Wearing a wrist splint can at times help. A splint helps keep your hands straight, wearing it while sleeping may at times help reduce the pain.

Carpal tunnel syndrome usually takes a long time to recover, a minimum of 2-3 months and a maximum of 6 months. There are home exercises, readily available on the internet, that can keep your hands active yet not too intense to strain your muscles further. However, it's always best to consult your doctor before choosing your recovery routine.

Mystery solved after 6 years

FROM PAGE 12

romantically involved with.

On Friday, the PBI arrested Rejaul Karim Swapan, a retired corporal of Bangladesh Navy, from Cumilla's EPZ area, who gave confessional statement before a Dhaka court yesterday, said Banaj Kumar Majumder, deputy inspector general (DIG) of police and chief of PBI, at a press conference in PBI's Dhanmondi headquarters yesterday.

The victim was identified as Shampa Begum, daughter of a retired army member Elias Sheikh. At the time of the incident, she was only 25.

Banaj Kumar said that on the day of the incident, someone had bought a ticket at the counter of Eagle Paribahan in Chattogram's AK Khan intersection and handed over a steel trunk to the bus helper to keep inside the luggage compartment and said a passenger would board the bus at the next stoppage at Bhatiari.

However, no one boarded the bus there.

When the bus reached Dhaka's Gabtoli around 5:45pm, the conductor noticed the heavy trunk and informed the Darus Salam police, who found the body.

CID had submitted the final report of its probe to a Dhaka court but the court refused to accept it and transferred the case to PBI, Banaj Kumar said.

Hilsa prices soar

FROM PAGE 12

Islam, inspector of quality control at the Department of Fisheries in Benapole.

Most of the hilsa exported to India is over a kg, said a source at the Fisheries department.

Asked about the lower export price, Nizamuddin, owner of Union Venture Limited, which has been approved to sell 40 tonnes to India, said his firm is buying hilsa from remote markets where the price is lower.

Azizur Rahman, commissioner of Benapole Customs, said, "We are following the commerce ministry's instruction over the price of the hilsa."

The commerce ministry on

The PBI chief said that after getting charge, Investigation Officer Inspector Ashrafuzzaman went to all the police stations of Chattogram metropolitan and district areas to search for the general diaries for missing persons in 2015.

The IO worked for a week to uncover the data of about 10-12 such GDs at that time. Among them was the GD about Shampa, filed by her brother-in-law Abdul Mannan, on June 10, 2015, with Pahartali Police Station. The PBI officer then contacted Shampa's father and brother-in-law.

Family members said Shampa worked as a medical assistant at a hospital. She met Swapan in 2013 while attending to her mother during treatment. Swapan was working at Titumir Naval Base in Khulna at the time.

They got into a relationship but Swapan then moved to Chattogram. In March 2015, Shampa came to Chattogram and stayed at her aunt's house for a few days and then later stayed at a hotel in Foy's lake area.

Shampa and Swapan then started living together at a tin-shed house in North Green View residential area, introducing themselves as a married couple.

According to investigators, the two had frequent feuds over various issues.

They added that on the night of

May 2, 2015, Swapan strangled her to death. The next morning, Swapan put her body in a steel trunk and sent it off on a bus. He also called her parents in Khulna and said he saw Shampa off on a Khulna-bound bus.

Victim's father later lodged a written complaint against Swapan on March 27, 2015 with the Navy's Chattogram office.

The Navy sent him into forced retirement in 2019 after finding his involvement with various other crimes.

After his retirement from the Navy, Swapan opened up a Youtube channel, where he made videos on health tips.

The PBI said Swapan has confessed to his involvement in the killing before a Dhaka court.

Meanwhile, the PBI chief yesterday said Bashundhara Group Managing Director Sayem Sobhan Anvir will be interrogated if investigators deem it necessary for the probe into a case filed against him over the rape and murder of a college student in Gulshan this April.

"The investigation team is working on it... If they deem it necessary, he [Anvir] will be interrogated," Banaj Kumar said this while replying to a journalist's question.

On September 6, the victim's elder sister filed a case with the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-8 of Dhaka against Anvir.

Taliban hang

FROM PAGE 12

crane hoisted one man up. A crowd of people looked on as armed Taliban fighters gathered around the vehicle.

Another video showed a man suspended from a crane at a major roundabout in Herat with a sign on his chest reading: "Abductors will be punished like this".

The display across several squares in the city is the most high-profile public punishment since the Taliban swept to power last month, and is a sign the Islamist hardliners will adopt fearsome measures similar to their previous rule from 1996 to 2001.

Muhajir said security forces were informed a businessman and his son had been abducted in the city yesterday morning.

Pak move to bar Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 12

inflicted 7 casualties on the enemy. On the night of September 26, Mukti Bahini ambushed Pakistani troops on Paksigang-Kamalpur road and killed two enemy soldiers. Two vehicles and two ferry boats were destroyed near Kathalpur on the same day.

In the Kushtia-Jashore-Khulna sector, Mukti Bahini engaged Pakistani troops with mortars and small arms near Ijksa area. Seven troops were killed in action, and Mukti Bahini captured two Chinese rifles.

BANGLADESH SOLUTION WITHIN PAK FRAMEWORK: LABOUR MP

The Labour Party of Britain favoured a political solution of the Bangladesh issue

within the framework of Pakistan. This was made clear to newsmen in Kolkata today by Douglas Houghton MP, the chairman of Labour Parliamentary Party.

About British government's view, Houghton said, "I think the government's line of thinking on the East Pakistan situation was to avoid as far as possible "making a judgement on the internal affairs of Pakistan or on the relationship between two member nations of the commonwealth unless the situation become so acute and dangerous that the whole commonwealth was involved."

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

Pakistan, India trade barbs

FROM PAGE 12

the US invasion after the September 11 attacks.

Khan, a longstanding critic of the 20-year US war ended by President Joe Biden, blamed imprecise US drone strikes for the flareup of extremism inside Pakistan and pointed to Islamabad's cooperation with US forces.

"There is a lot of worry in the US about taking care of the interpreters and everyone who helped the US. What about us?" Khan said in a speech, pre-recorded by video due to Covid-19 precautions.

"At least there should have been a word of

appreciation. But rather than appreciation, imagine how we feel when we are blamed for the turn of events in Afghanistan."

US officials have long accused Islamabad's powerful intelligence services of maintaining support for the Taliban, leading Biden's predecessor Donald Trump to slash military aid.

FIERY CLASH
Biden has yet to speak let alone invite Khan, although Secretary of State Antony Blinken met Thursday on the UN sidelines with his Pakistani counterpart and offered thanks for help repatriating US citizens from Afghanistan.

An-Noor

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Modi targets neighbours at UNGA, but not by name

AP, New York

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi didn't directly mention Pakistan or China in his speech to the United Nations General Assembly yesterday, but the targets of his address were clear.

He called upon the international community to help the women, children and minorities of Afghanistan and said that it was imperative the country not be used as a base from which to spread terror.

"We also need to be alert and ensure that no country tries to take advantage of the delicate situation there, and use it as a tool for its own selfish interests," he said in an apparent reference to Pakistan, wedged in between Afghanistan and India. Modi also highlighted what he called the need



to protect oceans from "the race for expansion and exclusion." India and China have long competed for influence in the Indian Ocean.

On the heels of waves of coronavirus surges that have ravaged India, Modi made no mention of his own country's death toll. But he reaffirmed last week's announcement that India would restart exporting vaccines next month.

"Deeply conscious of its responsibility towards mankind, India has resumed the process of providing vaccines to those who need it in the world," Modi said.

'We stand for rule of law, freedom'

Leaders of US, Japan, India, Australia call for stable, open and democratic Indo-Pacific, present united front in veiled China dig

AGENCIES

Leaders of the United States, Japan, India and Australia vowed on Friday to pursue a free and open Indo-Pacific region "undaunted by coercion" at their first in-person summit, which presented a united front amid shared concerns about China.

The two-hour meeting at the White House of the Quad, as the grouping of four major democracies is called, will be watched closely in Beijing, which criticised the group as "doomed to fail."

"We stand for the rule of law, freedom of navigation and overflight, peaceful resolution of disputes, democratic values, and territorial integrity of states," US President Joe Biden, Australian Prime Minister Scott

FIRST IN-PERSON QUAD SUMMIT

- ▶▶ Beijing criticised the group as "doomed to fail"
- ▶▶ Quad agreed to monitor Pakistan's role in Afghanistan
- ▶▶ Leaders agree to co-operate on vaccines, clean energy and space



Joe Biden walks with, from left, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga, in the White House on Friday evening.

PHOTO: AP

Morrison, Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a joint statement after the talks.

While China was not mentioned in the public remarks by the four leaders or in the lengthy joint statement and a factsheet issued afterwards, Beijing was

clearly top of mind.

In a briefing on Friday a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman appeared to criticize the Quad, or Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, as it is formally known, reports Reuters.

"A closed, exclusive clique targeting other countries runs counter to the

trend of the times and the aspirations of regional countries," said the spokesman, Zhao Lijian.

"It will find no support and is doomed to fail."

The Quad leaders urged North Korea to engage in diplomacy over its nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs.

The leaders took steps to expand vaccines worldwide, welcoming India's plan to resume exports of eight million one-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccines in October.

India also said that members of the Quad had agreed to monitor Pakistan's role in Afghanistan.

The Quad announced several new pacts, including one to bolster supply chain security for semiconductors and to combat illegal fishing and boost maritime domain awareness. It also rolled out a 5G partnership and plans to track climate change.

"Acknowledging the role of governments in fostering an enabling environment for 5G diversification, we will work together to facilitate public-private cooperation and demonstrate in 2022 the scalability of open, standards-based technology," the leaders said.

Israel has one year to quit Palestinian territory

Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas tells UNGA

AFP, United Nations

Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas gave Israel one year to withdraw from occupied territory Friday or he said he would no longer recognize the Jewish state based on pre-1967 borders.

In a virtual address to the United Nations General Assembly, Abbas called on Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to "convene an international peace conference."

But along with that request he also issued an ultimatum.

"We must state that Israel, the occupying power, has one year to withdraw from the Palestinian territory it occupied in 1967, including East Jerusalem," he said.

Abbas added that the Palestinians were ready "to work throughout the year" on solving the final status of the states of Israel and Palestine "in accordance with United Nations resolutions."



But "if this is not achieved, why maintain recognition of Israel based on the 1967 borders?" he said.

Abbas added that the Palestinians would also go to the International Court of Justice "on the issue of the legality of the occupation of the land of the Palestinian state."

The peace process to achieve a two-state solution between in the Middle East has been deadlocked for years.

Israel immediately brushed aside the Palestinian leader's demands.

Abbas "proved once again that he is no longer relevant," said the Israeli ambassador to the UN, Gilad Erdan.

"Those who truly support peace and negotiations do not threaten delusional ultimatums from the UN platform as he did in his speech," he added.

Meanwhile, a Palestinian was shot dead by Israeli troops Friday when clashes broke out on the sidelines of a demonstration in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry said.

'Are we related?'

Biden discusses Indian Bidens with Modi at White House

REUTERS, Washington

"Are we related?" US President Joe Biden asked India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi when they met at the White House on Friday. "Yes!" Modi joked in reply.

At the start of his first bilateral White House meeting with Modi as leaders, Biden explained that he had learned about an Indian branch of the Biden family when he was first elected to Congress in 1972 and received a letter from someone called Biden living in Mumbai.

"I found out that there was a Captain George Biden, who was a captain in the East India tea company," Biden said.

"That's hard for an Irishman to admit!" he quipped, referring to the East India Company, which laid the foundations of the British Empire but ceased to exist more than 150 years ago.

Biden said he learned that George Biden stayed in India and married an Indian woman, but added: "I've never been able to track it down, so the whole purpose of this meeting is for him to help me figure out who he was!"

Modi said Biden had mentioned the connection to him previously, so he had hunted for documents that could help fill in the gaps in the family tree.

"Today I have brought along some documents... Maybe those documents could be of use to you!" he told Biden.

MORE NEWS

US CDC backs Covid boosters for high-risk adults, workers

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on Friday backed a booster shot of the Pfizer/BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine for Americans aged 65 and older, adults with underlying medical conditions and adults in high-risk working and institutional settings. The decision by CDC Director Rochelle Walensky is aligned with the US Food and Drug Administration's authorization of the shot earlier this week and follows an August announcement of a broad booster rollout from her and other top US health officials. The CDC recommendation cleared the way for booster shots to start on Friday.

Merkel makes final push for successor in polls

Chancellor Angela Merkel yesterday urged Germans to give her would-be successor Armin Laschet the vote to shape Germany's future, in a last-ditch push to shore up his beleaguered campaign 24 hours before Germans vote. Laschet, 60, has been trailing his Social Democrat challenger Olaf Scholz in the race for the chancellor, although final polls put the gap between them within the margin of error, making the vote one of the most unpredictable in recent years. Merkel had planned to keep a low profile in the election battle as she prepares to bow out of politics after 16 years in power. But she has found herself dragged into the frantic campaign schedule of the unpopular chairman of her party, Laschet.



Hong Kong's Tiananmen vigil organiser disbands

The Hong Kong pro-democracy group that organised three decades of vigils commemorating the victims of Beijing's Tiananmen Square crackdown voted to disband yesterday in the face of China's sweeping clampdown on dissent. The Hong Kong Alliance was one of the most prominent symbols of the city's former political plurality and its dissolution is the latest illustration of how quickly China is remoulding the business hub in its own authoritarian image. After announcing the decision to disband, a representative of the alliance read out a letter from their chairman Lee Cheuk-yan, who is currently in jail. "A regime cannot take away the people's memory and conscience," the letter read.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

China frees two Canadians after Huawei boss released

AFP, Beijing

Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou was headed home from Vancouver yesterday as two Canadians were released from prison in China, ending a bitter diplomatic row that has poisoned ties for three years.

Meng and the two Canadians -- former diplomat Michael Kovrig and businessman Michael Spavor -- are all on their way back to their home countries after years of being detained in what critics have called "hostage diplomacy".

Meng, the 49-year-old daughter of Ren Zhengfei, the billionaire founder of Chinese telecoms giant Huawei, was granted release in a Vancouver court hearing after three years of house arrest in Canada while fighting extradition to the United States.

This came hours after US prosecutors announced an agreement under which fraud charges against her are to be suspended and eventually dropped.

She then quickly boarded a flight to the city of Shenzhen, returning to China for the first time since her arrest at Vancouver's international airport at the behest of US authorities on December 1, 2018.

Meanwhile, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau announced that the two

detained Canadians had left Chinese airspace, and were on their way home.

Their plane was expected to land Saturday in Canada, Trudeau told a news conference in Ottawa, adding they had gone through "an unbelievably difficult ordeal."

The "two Michaels" -- as they have been dubbed by international media -- were detained just days after Meng on what Ottawa has contended were "trumped up" espionage charges.

In turn, Beijing called Meng's case "a purely political incident."

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said "the US government stands with the international community in welcoming the decision" to release the men.

Speaking to reporters before heading to China, Meng said: "Over the past three years, my life has been turned upside down. It was a disruptive time for me as a mother, wife and a company executive."

She later posted a message on Chinese social media from her plane saying "thank you to the party and government."

A red banner hanging at Shenzhen airport arrivals hall read "Welcome home Meng Wanzhou."

Some chanted "Go Huawei!"

SABINA NESSA KILLING

Hundreds hold vigil in London

AFP, London

Hundreds of people gathered in southeast London on Friday night at a vigil for Sabina Nessa, a 28-year-old British-Bangladeshi teacher who was found dead in a park, the latest case to spark public concern about women's safety.

The primary school teacher disappeared a week ago after leaving her home to go to a bar just five minutes' walk away. Her body was found by a member of the public the following day hidden in a pile of leaves.

The young woman's death, like that of 33-year-old Sarah Everard, has galvanised public opinion over the safety of women in public spaces. Carroll, a 35-year-old teacher, told AFP that Nessa's death had caused her to fear for her own safety.



Civilians and Somali security officers gather at the scene of a suicide car bomb blast at a street junction near the president's residence, in Mogadishu, Somalia yesterday. At least eight people were killed in the blast, police said, as the Al-Shabaab jihadist group claimed responsibility for the attack.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Watchdog, new laws not needed

FROM PAGE 1

"But they have failed. These incidents have taken place right in front of the eyes of the Bangladesh Bank. Their negligence was obvious," said Mashroor, one of the pioneers of the country's e-commerce sector.

"It's a complete failure of the government agencies -- they have portrayed inefficiencies in almost every step," said Tanjib-ul Alam, head of chamber at Tanjib Alam & Associates.

Were the institutional capacity of the agencies robust enough and their integrity upheld, the current storm over the e-commerce sector would not have brewed.

The biggest capacity and leadership failure came from the Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit (BFIU), he said.

After a newspaper report in August last year unveiled that Evaly's business model was akin to a Ponzi scheme and multi-level marketing model company, the BFIU had suspended the company's transactions for a month citing the money laundering provision law.

Using that law, the BFIU could have extended the suspension and taken legal action against Evaly, Alam said.

But the BFIU did not do such thing, which led the common people to believe that Evaly's business practices were fine as the authority responsible for overseeing transactions found nothing wrong after scrutinising them.

"That time, I thought Mohammad Rassel, the CEO of Evaly, would face legal action. But to my surprise, he turned the crisis into opportunity. The BFIU efficiently handed him the opportunity and he continued his business with multiple times the agility."

Then, he started spending money collected from the general people recklessly, sponsoring the Bangladesh Cricket Board series, the movie of Rapid Action Battalion, appointing celebrities as brand ambassadors and providing advertisements to media.

Evaly made further inroads when it became a sponsor of the Bangabandhu Innovation Grant 2021, a competition of the IDEA Project of Bangladesh Computer Council under the ICT Division, and the e-Commerce Movers Award 2020.

This gave the company validation, buttressing the positive impression in the general public's mind, according to Alam.

There were several occasions when the Bangladesh Competition Commission should have taken prompt action under competition law.

"But, they haven't done it. There were thousands of complaints filed at the DNCRP, but the institution did not have the capacity to handle this avalanche of complaints. They failed to take an institutional step," Alam added.

The e-Commerce Association of Bangladesh (e-CAB), the sector's trade body, had tipped off the authorities on the risky models of many e-commerce companies but no action was taken due to lack of coordination between monitoring institutions, said Muhammad Abdul Wahed Tomal, its general secretary.

"In Bangladesh, wherever we face any crisis, we all try to indicate that the crisis took place due to lack of adequate laws to prevent it," Alam said.

In a similar vein, after the e-commerce scams unfolded, there are propositions for new laws to regulate the sector.

"But that would derail the growth of the good players in the sectors. There is no need for new laws as existing laws are enough to prevent the irregularities in the sector," he added.

There is no separate regulatory body to regulate e-commerce in a country like the US, said Waseem Alim, CEO of Chaldal.com, an online supermarket that saw dizzying growth amid the pandemic.

"This will make e-commerce more difficult."

It will be more effective to increase surveillance through the existing agencies of the government, he said.

"We have built the trust of customers over the years and the ongoing incidents have dealt a blow to us. We have been facing difficulty in adding new customers in the last few weeks," Alim added.

There are also questions about the role of banks as they allowed payment to e-commerce companies against whom there has been a deluge of customer complaints of unfulfilled orders for a while now, according to Mashroor.

The recent fraudulent e-commerce businesses seem to have turned into investment schemes for some people and this should have been intervened earlier, said Selim RF Hussain, CEO of BRAC Bank.

He also pointed out that there is a lack of coordination among relevant

stakeholders, giving a boost to the scammers to wreak havoc on the sector.

Unemployment is a big problem in the country, Mashroor said.

"Numerous young people are unemployed -- and frustrated. The bank interest rates are low and the stock market is not safe either. So where the youth will go for income?"

Naturally, they would gravitate towards the fast-growing e-commerce sector.

"It's wrong if you think that just forming a regulatory body would take care of all the problems," Mashroor added.

Meanwhile, for recovering the customers' money, Alam recommended the victims file a wind-up petition in High Court under section 241 of company law.

"Then, the court can appoint a provisional liquidator or administrator who will take the charge of the company and start the process of recovering money."

Later, the recovered money will be distributed among victims proportionately and the victims should abandon the hope of getting back all of their money as a big amount of it has

already been spent recklessly.

It would be unconstitutional to compensate those victims by the government for taxpayers' money, Alam said.

"It will also stimulate future scams by giving a notion whatever happened the government will take care of," he added.

Rehman Sobhan, chairman of CPD, said he is very impressed that the e-commerce industry has a host of young entrepreneurs and the current events should not derail the growth of entrepreneurship in the sector.

"This is essentially an outlier of the system. This is a scam -- it's not inherited in the system. And this is not the first scam that has taken place."

Scams mostly originate from regulatory failures.

"It's a governance problem. It's a question of how you enforce the laws."

In all the big scams, the parties tend to mingle with policymakers to wriggle into their good books and get protection, he added.

The e-commerce sector has a huge potential for job creation and economic growth, said Fahmida Khatun, executive director of the CPD.

Ways to keep your heart healthy



'Use heart to connect' — this year's theme that encapsulates the values of World Heart Day this year. The World Heart Federation

organises World Heart Day on September 29 every year to emphasise the importance of being active and staying informed about cardiovascular health and diseases.

Worldwide, World Heart Day educates people about avoiding and controlling cardiovascular disease (CVD), which kills 18.6 million people every year. Preventing heart disease and stroke mortality is the goal of the campaign, at least 80% of premature deaths from heart disease and stroke could be avoided.

COVID-19 poses a double-edged hazard to CVD patients. They are more prone to serious viral infections but may be reluctant to seek ongoing heart care.

Cardiovascular diseases include blood clots, cardiomyopathies, cardiac arrest, high blood pressure, stroke etc. The risk factors that lead to cardiovascular diseases include a sedentary lifestyle, obesity, smoking, alcohol intake, bad cholesterol, high blood pressure etc.

If you have an underlying health condition, such as heart disease, heart failure, diabetes, high blood pressure or obesity,



do not let COVID-19 stop you from attending your regular check-ups.

World Heart Day has decided to bring to mind how one can take care of the heart with one's own heart:

Know your heart

Here we like to emphasize how knowing one's heart is essential and requires understanding the risks you are prone to. This would involve getting back on track, visiting the doctor and knowing where you stand.

Fuel your heart

Eating healthy is one of the most important steps towards ensuring that the heart is fueled with clean energy. Omega-3 rich fish, nuts, berries, oats and legumes are some of the easily available foods that one can consume to ensure the heart's good health.

Move your heart

This is another key measure

required to ensure that the heart stays healthy and hale. Remaining active, breaking a sweat and staying fit through exercises and yoga is another way one can ensure good health.

Love your heart

While it is next to impossible to stay away from fast food, mostly because of the erratic work timings and schedules one follow, it is important to:

- Eat a healthy diet, which emphasises fruits, vegetables, whole grains, poultry, fish and low-fat dairy food. It is essential to take plenty of potassium, which can help prevent and control high blood pressure. In addition, eat less saturated fat to prevent the development of atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease.
- Decrease the salt in diet. A lower sodium level — 1,500 mg a day — is appropriate for people 51 years of age or older

and individuals of any age who are black or have hypertension, diabetes or chronic kidney disease. Otherwise, healthy people can aim for 2,300 mg a day or less.

• Maintain a healthy weight. Keeping a healthy weight or losing weight can help to control high blood pressure, lower your risk of related health problems, and keep the heart healthy.

• Increase physical activity. Regular physical activity can help lower blood pressure, manage stress, reduce the risk of several health problems and keep weight under control. For most healthy adults, it is recommended that you get at least 150 minutes a week of moderate aerobic activity or 75 minutes a week of vigorous aerobic activity, or a combination of moderate and vigorous activity.

- Stop alcohol intake.
- Do not smoke. Tobacco injures blood vessel walls

and speeds up the process of hardening of the arteries.

• Manage stress. Reduce stress as much as possible. Practice healthy coping techniques such as muscle relaxation, deep breathing or meditation. Getting regular physical activity and plenty of sleep can help, too.

Hence, the World Heart Day celebration plays a very important role in changing all of this. It is a crucial global platform that people can use to raise awareness and encourage individuals, families, communities and governments to take action.

Together everybody has the power to reduce the premature deaths from, and burden of, cardiovascular diseases, helping people everywhere to live longer.

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WEBINAR

Reminding the health-related commitments of Election 2019

STAR HEALTH REPORT

All should work together to realise the health-related commitments of Election 2019 - discussants pointed out at a dialogue organised by Bangladesh Health Watch and Unnayan Shamannay, says a press release.

The commitments related to development of health sector made by the political parties prior to the National Elections of 2018 have become even more relevant because of the pandemic. Over the course of three National Budgets, significant amount of resources have been allocated to attain these goals. Yet there remains a long way to go. All stakeholders must work together to fulfill these commitments.

Speakers at an online National Dialogue organised jointly by Bangladesh Health Watch, BRAC James P Grant School of Public Health and Unnayan Shamannay said these yesterday. The title of the event was "Assessing progress towards realization of health-related commitments of Election 2018."

While presenting the keynote, Dr Atiur Rahman pointed out that just analysing the budgetary allocations would not suffice to understand the extent of realisation of the election manifesto commitments related to healthcare. Rather, he added, stakeholders ought to the check for what goals the administration intends to attain with those allocations.

Ruhul Haque, MP said that ensuring adequate human resources for the healthcare sector should be considered as the topmost priority. The need for decentralisation of public health administration was emphasised by Shamim Haider, MP.

Dhaka University Professor and Working Group Member of Bangladesh Health Watch Dr Ruamana Haque delivered the vote of thanks on behalf of the organisers.

HEALTH bulletin

Why am I still awake?



TAHSIN BINTE MAKSUD

According to the experts, 7-9 hours of sleep at night is ideal for humans between 18-64 years of ages. It is the time when the body repairs and restores itself. Insufficient sleep may lead to obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease, and a weak immune system, of course.

The retina detects dimming light, and melatonin levels gradually rise until midnight. Melatonin shortens the time it takes to fall asleep and improves sleep quantity and quality. Electronic devices emit a light that the brain interprets as daylight, causing a melatonin delay. Insomnia is caused by a decrease in melatonin levels. Melatonin is derived from serotonin. Low serotonin leads to low melatonin. A normal serotonin level is critical for good sleep. Sunlight on the skin promotes vitamin D3 production, which promotes serotonin production.

GABA, another inhibitory neurotransmitter, influences sleep. Glutamate and vitamin B6 both help make GABA. Insomniacs have almost 30% less GABA than normal. Insomnia is caused by an excess of histamine, while somnolence is caused by a lack of it (excessive sleepiness). A high level of stress may also result in an increase in cortisol, the stress hormone produced by the adrenal gland. High cortisol levels at night can disrupt sleep. So reducing stress is essential for a good night's sleep.

The steps to maintain a normal level of sleep include getting up earlier and keeping a sleep schedule; turning off all electronics and create a melatonin-friendly environment in your bedroom; maintaining sufficient inhibitory neurotransmitter levels through a healthy diet, exercise, yoga, and meditation. You will win.

The writer is a medical student at Cumilla Medical College.

Arpita's journey ignite the fire in us that nothing is impossible

DR BIMALANGSHU DEY

It was a typical day in Bogra in Bangladesh. But not for Arpita, a three year old child. She was excited to meet her new baby brother. "My brother is the loveliest, and he is so adorable," Arpita declared to the world, ignoring her "little one's" looks. But tragically her mother died just two hours after the delivery of her son. Arpita sat silently next to her brother!

Their grandmother reared Arpita and her brother. Their father is an elementary school teacher. Now, Arpita is 11 years old and she has aspirations and desire like any other young girl. But something in her right eye has been bothering her for weeks. One day, she noticed a bulge in her eye while looking in the mirror that made her right vision hazy. She needed a good ophthalmologist to treat her, but they did not have the required considerable amount of money.

Her fathers' teacher, Ms Sunanda Sinha, who was living in New York, came to know about this and spread the news all over the world with the help of their colleagues. They collected 100,000 BDT in no time. The journey gained a little hope.

Arpita accompanied her father to Dhaka to meet Dr Moinal Hoque, a famous ophthalmologist at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University (BSMMU), the country's most prestigious post-graduate medical institute. He did a biopsy on her right eye.

The pathologist revealed lacrimal gland adenoid cystic cancer (LGACC), a tear-producing gland in the eye. LGACC is an uncommon kind of eye cancer with a terrible



Arpita, a young girl from Bangladesh, suffering from Lacrimal Gland Adenoid Cystic Cancer (LGACC) is now in the USA for her treatment.

prognosis due to the invasion of the surrounding bone and neurological system. It usually leaves patients with a 15-year survival rate of only 20%.

No doubt that Arpita has a difficult journey ahead of her. Experts and caretakers in Dhaka, Bangladesh, Hyderabad, India, and Boston, USA, have been working to save Arpita's sight.

Following the chemotherapy to treat and downstage the tumour before undergoing a surgery, radiotherapy specialists at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) and Massachusetts Eye & Ear Infirmary (MEEI) in Boston found second-stage eye cancer. The super specialists have indicated their serious desire to heal Arpita's

LGACC while saving her eye. We are pleased to learn that the bKash, GrameenPhone, and Ayat Education Leadership in Bangladesh are supporting Arpita.

Arpita arrived USA this week. I have seen the potential in this young Bangladeshi. I am confident that if we all stand together, Arpita will not only be treated and lead a productive life, but her narrative will touch millions of people and ignite the fire in us that nothing is impossible.

Arpita's journey, however lengthy and arduous, will be a success story, paving the way for many Arpitas to come with similar unmet needs.

The writer works at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH) in Boston, USA as a Bone Marrow Transplant Physician. E-mail: BDEY@mgh.harvard.edu

The cancer misery for the women

UMMAY FARIHIN SULTANA

Every morning, when the convoluted ray of sun mildly reaches my heart, I (52) reminiscence the fine days of my life. It has been nearly two months since my happiness started dying one after another, combating blood cancer. Until my diagnosis, my family history involved no cancer.

My elder son appointed a caregiver to look after me, and my gloomy time rests mainly under the shadow of her company. Whenever my children or other relatives visit me, they only talk about the high expense of my treatment and how it influences our household economy. Most of the money earned by my husband has already been spent after me.

I have worked for years as a nurse in a government hospital, and throughout my working period, I noticed that the healthcare situation for a female is disappointing. Gender biases create menaces inside the healthcare system, and Bangladesh has an extreme form of it. When gender parity is not ensured for quality treatment and care for a common health issue, patient outcomes are expected to worsen.

In recent years, gender bias approaches in healthcare have become more prevalent. Women are usually brought to a hospital after suffering the torments of middle or last stages of diseases than men in the same situation.

The overwhelming expenses, scarcity of professionals and unavailability of equipment have made cancer treatment inaccessible to hundreds of its sufferers in Bangladesh. Low- and middle-income people seek healthcare from 36 government medical college hospitals; only 14 have oncology departments that are understaffed and under-equipped.

Bangladesh is bearing a double burden of both communicable and non-communicable diseases; thus, improving the scenario of cancer treatment and control overnight would be a fancy thought. Yet, it has become obvious to recognise the misery that cancer would add to people and the poorly regulated healthcare system. Moreover, increasing cancer inside the mind of the society must be put under the sword.

The writer works at the Eminence Associates for Social Development. E-mail: farihin@eminence-bd.org



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WORLD HEART DAY 29 September 2021

* upto 20 September 2021

Covid vaccination: Third dose versus the first dose

The economics and ethics of the booster

Delays and cost overruns in Dhaka-Sylhet-Tamabil highway projects

We cannot continue to accept this as the norm when it comes to major infrastructure development

WE are disappointed, but not at all surprised, to find that the project to acquire land and relocate utility service lines for expanding the Dhaka-Sylhet-Tamabil highway is likely to be delayed by two and a half years and cost double, according to the latest revision proposal of the project. It is hugely concerning that such delays and cost inefficiencies in government projects are continuing to occur, despite repeated expressions of dissatisfaction at this state of affairs from the prime minister herself. In fact, in February this year, she directed the authorities to take legal action against those responsible for flawed project designs that ultimately push up costs.

Such delays are not only detrimental for the project at hand, but have knock-on effects on other development projects as well. In this case, delays in clearing the land will put on hold the two major projects taken up by the Roads and Highways Department (RHD) to turn the Dhaka-Sylhet and Sylhet-Tamabil highways into dual carriageways with separate lanes for slow-moving vehicles. The physical work for this was meant to begin by June next year, and the process of floating tenders to hire contractors has already begun—but what will the contractors work on, if the land itself is yet to be acquired?

What makes the situation even more complicated is that this is the first project in Bangladesh's transport sector that is being funded by the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which laid out the specific condition that the highway expansion cannot begin if the land is not cleared first. Yet, over the past three years, the project to clear the land has only progressed by about 25 percent. The delays have been attributed by RHD sources to the fact that the project proposal was based on a feasibility study and detailed design from 2015, which has undergone changes to make way for wider roads and better road safety. However, this does not in any way explain why these factors were not included in the original design in the first place.

The director of the highway expansion project told reporters that the land was supposed to be readied before starting the infrastructure building work, but "that does not happen in reality". It is disappointing to hear such acceptance of cost overruns and delays as the norm. We urge the government to investigate why we are continuing to see such lethargy, even in the case of implementing major infrastructure development projects, and take prompt actions to change this disheartening state of affairs.

Covid-19 cases in Thakurgaon school a cause for concern

Those exposed to the students must get tested, kept in isolation

IT is a cause for concern that five students of a government primary school in Thakurgaon town have tested positive for Covid-19 two weeks after schools reopened in the country. Since the students who have contracted the virus are of Grade IV and V, the school authorities have suspended the classes of those grades temporarily. Reportedly, all the five students live in an orphanage run by the government. According to the deputy administrator of the orphanage, on September 17, only one child of the orphanage had fever and cold and the five students of the primary school developed symptoms later. Until now, the orphanage authorities have sent the samples of 25 girls for Covid testing and 13 of them came out positive, including the five students of the primary school. It is, however, reassuring to learn that the 13 girls are being treated in the isolation ward of the local government hospital and are doing well now.

So far, we haven't learnt of any other instances of the spread of Covid-19 in our schools besides this one in Thakurgaon. We hope other schools will take note of this case and remain ever alert to avoid the spread of the virus in their institutions.

In this case, we hope the orphanage authorities will remain alert since there could be more cases in the coming days. Each and every child of the orphanage with the slightest of symptoms must be kept in isolation and get tested. The school authorities also have a lot of responsibilities here. They need to strictly maintain the health safety guidelines, such as making sure that all the students wear masks and wash their hands at regular intervals. However, we know that keeping a safe distance is really difficult in our primary schools where many students have to sit in close proximity to each other. Even then, the school authorities must try to find a way so that students can maintain at least some distance from each other. Moreover, they need to make the guardians aware of the health guidelines and Covid risks their children might be exposed to. Similarly, guardians should never hide the truth about their children's health conditions and should report to the school and keep their children isolated if they suffer from any Covid-19 symptoms. Only awareness can make a lot of difference in keeping our children safe at school during this pandemic.



AN OPEN DIALOGUE

ABDULLAH SHIBLI

companies, Pfizer, BioNTech, Moderna, and others who will benefit financially from the production, distribution and administering of booster shots in the USA and other first-world countries. Aligned on the other side are international organisations such as WHO and UNICEF, and advocates for vaccine equity.

The advocates for boosters point out that vaccination does not offer protection against the virus forever and a third dose enhances immunity. So far, so good! The jury is out on the issue of who needs the third dose and when. Also, with a global shortage of vaccines, a thorny ethical issue has resurfaced. Would the demand for a third shot increase the price and decrease the availability for those who are yet to receive their first dose?

If we take a global perspective, only a few of the people in low-income countries have been vaccinated. According to the Our World in Data project at Oxford University, just 31.7

According to Our World in Data project at Oxford University, just 31.7 percent of the world's population has received a single vaccine dose, while only 23.7 percent of people worldwide are fully vaccinated.

percent of the world's population has received a single vaccine dose, while only 23.7 percent of people worldwide are fully vaccinated. In developing countries, a scant 10 percent of individuals have received a single vaccine dose. It is worse in Africa, where 25 people are dying each minute from Covid-19.

Last month, Israel became the first country to offer the coronavirus booster amid fears that vaccine efficacy dwindles over time. The UK has already authorised the booster, and the USA and

other countries are likely to follow suit, raising fears that the disparity in global vaccine distribution would be further accentuated. The WHO has urged the US and other wealthy nations to wait until the end of this year and requested a four-month moratorium, to "give more people in other countries a chance to get a first dose of these lifesaving shots."

If we ignore the commercial side, the role and ferocity of the Delta variant in the "breakthrough cases" and the diminution of vaccine effectiveness

established Covid-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) to procure and fairly distribute vaccines. But much of the vaccine development, production, procurement and distribution are ad hoc, generating controversy and inconsistency. Pharmaceutical companies have been criticised for knowledge hoarding, secret pricing, unreasonable profits, unfair bilateral deals and extortionate demands for indemnification against liability. COVAX has been criticised for an absence of transparency and accountability

Ghebreyesus late last month called for a moratorium on boosters, questioning the necessity of a third jab and highlighting the risk of "more potent" variants emerging in countries with "low vaccination coverage."

"We don't understand who is going to need a booster, how long after their last dose, or which vaccine combination works best," says physician-epidemiologist Bruce Aylward, a senior adviser at the WHO. "You need to understand all that before you decide how boosters should be used."

If everyone in high-income countries received boosters, that would use up one billion doses, Aylward estimates. "You're dealing with a finite, zero-sum resource," he says. "You are reducing supply for those who need it more."

In my final observations, I will offer some thoughts that my readers might also wish to consider. According to a report published by the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), "some features of the Delta variant mean that vaccines alone may not be enough to control the virus. Delta is far more transmissible than the original strain of the coronavirus (someone infected with Delta contaminates another 5-9 people, compared with 2-3 from the original strain). Israel, which has one of the highest immunisation rates in the world, illustrates how Delta is a game changer; after hope that the disease was under control, the country is now grappling with a fourth wave of cases."

The nations of the world must address the disparity in immunisation to minimise the loss in GDP and growth in poverty in Asia-Pacific, Latin America and Africa. In a Health Policy paper published in *Lancet*, eminent scholars and international experts point out that there are many dimensions of an effective global immunisation strategy against Covid-19. The paper, titled, "Challenges in ensuring global access to Covid-19 vaccines: production, affordability, allocation, and deployment" opines that an ethical approach to Covid-19 vaccine production and distribution should satisfy four uncontroversial principles: optimising vaccine production, including development, testing, and manufacturing; fair distribution; sustainability; and accountability.

"Having licensed vaccines is not enough to achieve global control of Covid-19: they also need to be produced at scale, priced affordably, allocated globally so that they are available where needed, and widely deployed in local communities," the experts said.

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



A health worker prepares a dose of the Sinopharm vaccine against the Covid-19 coronavirus at a vaccination camp held in Colombo on August 14, 2021.

PHOTO: AFP

have been the main drivers behind the third shot movement. According to an article published in *Science*, the mouthpiece of the American Academy for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), "The greater infectiousness of the Delta variant of SARS-CoV-2 has scientists and governments debating whether booster shots of Covid-19 vaccines are needed in some countries given limited vaccine supplies elsewhere."

The *Science* paper entitled, "Unethical? Unnecessary? The Covid-19 vaccine booster debate intensifies" also observes that, "as United States reveals its plan to offer an extra dose of Covid-19 vaccine, equity and scientific questions abound."

Studies show that even after five to eight months, vaccines still remain highly protective against severe illness, hospitalisation and death. In comparison, billions of the world's population have not received a single shot due to a shortage of vaccines. Consequently, one is faced with a moral and ethical dilemma. Do the less fortunate amongst us deserve a chance to live and avoid the inevitable fate once they get infected?

The WHO, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, have

and for ignoring the need in Covid-19 vaccine distribution, according to a research paper in the science journal, *Lancet*.

Access to vaccines for all (and I mean all the people in the world) is fast becoming a global issue at all international gatherings, and has superseded climate change at the current General Assembly meeting in New York. This comes after 18 months since the pandemic first started because "it's clear the world is likely to be riddled with Covid-19—and its many variant successors—for years to come," according to a BBC report. "The next big question is whether two doses of each vaccine is enough" and when can we expect to have enough to vaccinate everyone, rich and poor.

"All indications are that [Covid-19] is going to become endemic, but the hope is that it can be managed through vaccines," said Flavio Torres, an economic epidemiologist at the University of Cambridge. "The practical policy at this point, given the low cost really should be to get as many people vaccinated as possible."

In light of these sentiments, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom

Uncontested victories are an ominous sign for democracy

MOSHITAQUE AHMED

WITH some improvements in the Covid-19 situation in Bangladesh, the country recently witnessed elections in 160 union parishads and nine upazila parishads. In these elections, according to election commission reports, 43 candidates in union parishads and four in upazila parishads won uncontested—and all of them were affiliated with the ruling party, i.e. Awami League (AL). With these

of the ominous signs that this kind of uncontested and voter-less elections might have on the future of the democratic process?

According to available information, elections were supposed to be held in a total of 379 union parishads in April this year in the first phase. But due to Covid-19, it was deferred to June when elections were held in 204 union parishads, with 167 being further postponed for various reasons. Of these, in 160 parishads, polls were held on

are not a sudden phenomenon in the country—a lack of confidence in the electoral system has been growing since 2014 in Bangladesh. We have been noticing the result of that in recent elections, which has manifested firstly in people's disinterest or indifference in going to the polling stations, and secondly in not being interested to run for elections. This is how the whole system has been approaching its demise. An objective analysis of all post-2018 elections can shed light on this situation.

parishad level—the lowest tier of local government—would lead to a kind of festive mood at every corner of the villages. Today, that tradition is all but gone. People, except government party supporters, do not feel like coming forward to even stand for such local elections. Needless to say, it is a kind of silent protest against the current electoral institutions that people are turning away from the polls.

One can view this degradation of the electoral system in Bangladesh from two angles. Firstly, starting from 2014, the Election Commission has, willingly or unwillingly, failed utterly to create a "level playing field" for all stakeholders and political forces to ensure their participation in the electoral process. Ruling party candidates took advantage of this situation and played their own game with the unholy support of local administration. From my own experience, I can tell that in the 2018 elections, many of the age-old electoral rules were ignored in certain locations, such as the system of casting votes in "closed and secret rooms", and many voters felt directly intimidated, especially where election officials and administration did not strictly enforce the rules. Such experiences led many opposition candidates to believe there was no use of participating in elections, and many voters at polling centres also felt disheartened and disengaged, which has been responsible for creating widespread voter apathy in the face of potential disenfranchisement.

It is a well-established fact that since 2014, the people of Bangladesh have been losing confidence in the electoral system and in electoral institutions. This is an ominous sign of a looming disaster for the nation. We must now put serious thought into how we can keep democracy alive in the country. By now, it should be clear that this cannot be achieved by killing the electoral system.

PHOTO: STAR



43, a total of 69 candidates have been elected uncontested in union parishad elections in its first phase. Apart from these, last week's parliamentary by-election in Cumilla-7 constituency also saw the unopposed election of an AL candidate. As time goes on, the number of unopposed winners in local elections have been on the rise. But has anybody thought of the dire consequences or

September 20, and the remaining seven are yet to be held. Polls have been held in nine upazila parishads as well. The results of these polls indicate that 27 percent of the winners in union parishads and 45 percent in upazila parishads have secured their victory unopposed, which raises serious questions regarding their democratic legitimacy.

However, such uncontested elections

As I remember, the first City Corporation election in Dhaka after 2018 could attract only 30 percent of voters. After that, the by-election of the Dhaka-5 constituency attracted only 10.43 percent of voters. This is how the fall started, but now, it has spread all over the country like a fast-spreading virus. One might remember a time when elections held at the union

Moshtaque Ahmed is a former UN official.

'Blended learning is what we will need in the coming days'

Professor Dr Kazi Shahidullah, chairman, University Grants Commission (UGC), former chairman, department of history, Dhaka University, and former vice chancellor, National University, talks to The Daily Star's Naznin Tithi about how universities can recover from learning loss as they are resuming in-person classes and why our universities should continue with online education alongside classroom education.

As universities (both public and private) prepare to resume in-person classes soon, how do you think the learning loss of the past year and a half can be recovered? Does the UGC have any specific directives to the universities, particularly public universities, to address this issue?

There is a lot of recovery work to be done. But I believe our public universities will find a way out of this crisis. After reopening, session jam would, no doubt, be an issue. Session jam is not a new thing here. Public universities have faced session jam issues in the past and have successfully overcome it. So, there is no reason why they can't do it now. Extra effort has to come from all quarters—teachers, students and administrators—to tackle the issue. Being a former teacher of DU, I know how the university went through many crisis periods and also recovered. Ways and means of recovery of learning loss have to be discussed and worked out by the respective universities. In public universities, the university syndicates, the academic councils, the dean's committees as well as the academic committees of the respective departments have to discuss the issue and find out



Dr Kazi Shahidullah

will need time for that.

The digital divide in higher education became a cause for serious concern during this time. What lessons have we learnt from this? How will the universities deal with the issue in future?

The digital divide is a reality for us. The rural-urban gap and the rich-poor gap are quite significant here. In March 2020, when the universities were closing down at the government's directive, we from the UGC suggested that we should keep the online classes open. The idea was to keep the students engaged in education. Back then, we had no idea that the pandemic would linger on for so long. Later, we realised that online classes were the only option left for us.

We noticed that the private universities were keen to open up but the public universities were not responding as much. We had to conduct surveys to understand the reasons behind this and came to know that many public university students did not have the necessary devices to participate in online classes. After giving much effort, we could collect some funds and for the first time in the history of this country, the UGC gave loans to public university students to buy devices. When the problem of devices was somewhat solved, we learned that many students did not have the money to buy the high-priced internet packages. We then sat with the internet service providers to discuss the issue and got good responses from them. Based on

our discussions, they offered exclusive internet packages only for students. But even that did not give us the desired result because students in rural areas were having connectivity problems. Disruption of electricity connection in villages was another obstacle the students had to face. So, there's no denying the fact that the digital divide has been a big issue during this time. The UGC tried to do everything in its power to make online education a success. But it cannot do anything about infrastructure development, the government has to do that. We hope the situation will improve in the future.

By now, only a few public universities have shown some progress in getting their students vaccinated or registered for vaccines, while the rest are still lagging behind. What is the current situation in this regard? Will it impact the reopening plan?

We have around 3.5 lakh students in our public universities. Among them, 2.5 lakh students have taken the first dose of the vaccine. There are roughly 1.3 lakh students in public universities who are hall residents. Among them, 1.18 lakh have taken at least one shot of the vaccine. I think the situation is quite satisfactory.

However, if we take into account the students of the national university, and the seven colleges under Dhaka University, then the total number of students would stand at around 43 lakh—of them, around 18 lakh have registered for vaccines. And, among these 18 lakh, 5.5 lakh have got the first dose of the vaccine. So, there is still a lot to cover. By the way, this is last Monday's statistics.

Of course, one of our targets is to take the vaccination to a satisfactory level before in-person classes start. But I don't think it will affect the reopening plan of the universities because each university will reopen after completing their preparations. If the authorities of a particular university feel that they are not ready, they can take time to reopen, but many of the universities will reopen pretty soon. While a university can start in-person classes in, say, five days, another university may need 15 days to start the process, but that should not be an issue. What is most important is, universities will have to reopen maintaining all health and safety guidelines. Vaccinating all the students is the most important part but it is not the only way to tackle the pandemic, according to all experts. Vaccinations will help but students will also have to maintain other health guidelines such as wearing masks, washing hands and keeping a safe distance from each other.

Since Covid-19 will continue to be a factor in the foreseeable future, experts have stressed the need for accommodating in-person and blended/hybrid learning to be able to respond to any emergency. What is the UGC's plan for any future disruptions in academic activities? What kind of reforms does the higher education sector need based on what we learned in the past 1.5 years?

Blended/hybrid learning is particularly important for a country like ours where we have to face many kinds of adversities in our higher education sector from time to time. What we have realised during this pandemic is that we should keep continuing with online classes alongside in-person classes. From now on, it will be part and parcel of our education system. Since we have to live with Covid-19, blended learning is what we will need in the coming days.

One of the basic problems is, our teachers do not have the expertise in online teaching. This is also a new concept for them. Teachers need to be trained so they can meet the expectations of students. What the UGC is trying to do is train university teachers in online teaching. We are now giving our time, energy and resources in capacity building. About a month ago, we conducted an online training programme for teachers in collaboration with the American Cultural Centre. We also collaborated with the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) in arranging a workshop where 1,000 of our teachers participated. As I am speaking with you now, a workshop is going on with CEMCA titled "Online and Blended learning in Higher Education", which will go on for 20 days. Through these workshops, our teachers will attain the necessary skills to provide the students with quality education online. The UGC is arranging such programmes to give our teachers first-hand knowledge on the technical processes involved with online learning.

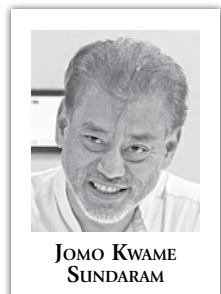
We have been observing many changes in the higher education sector in the 21st century. New technologies have started to emerge, which is impacting our work environment. So now the challenge before our university administrators is to transform our education curriculum from outdated to updated. At the same time, they have to focus on skill development and infrastructure development, so that they can deliver the talents needed for an innovative and digitised economy. Our country's growth and prosperity will depend critically on the ability of the universities to adjust with the changes in society and the economy. Our university administrators have to remain ever alert and do their best so that they can change and modernise the curriculum according to the needs of the fast-changing global economy. That is how our graduates will remain relevant to the demands of the market.

One of the basic problems is, our teachers do not have the expertise in online teaching. This is also a new concept for them. Teachers need to be trained so they can meet the expectations of students.

a solution.

As far as I remember, the UGC sent guidelines to the universities around two months ago suggesting our ideas of how to recover the learning loss in order to help the universities address the issue. We made proposals such as trimming the course outline focusing on more important parts of the syllabus. Another proposal we made was reducing the holidays after reopening. Teachers may have to sacrifice holidays and would work overtime, if need be, to overcome this crisis. They will have to hold exams on time and publish results on time, for which greater coordination and cooperation of all will be needed. Another suggestion would be to extend the lecture time to one hour from the current 50 minutes. These are just some basic ideas. I am sure our public universities will rise up to the occasion and work out ways and means to tackle the learning loss. It won't be solved in a day; we

Progressive taxation for our times



AS developing countries struggle to cope with the pandemic, they risk being set back further by restrictive fiscal policies. These were imposed by rich countries who no longer practice them, if they ever did. Instead, the global South urgently needs bold policies to ensure adequate relief, recovery and reform.

Bold fiscal responses needed

Governments must mobilise and deploy resources sustainably and fairly, consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With rich countries' refusal to help more, adequate government financing is crucial.

Taxation is typically a more sustainable, effective and accountable way of raising government fiscal resources. But the pandemic has imposed extraordinary demands requiring massive urgent spending.

National authorities can generate fiscal resources in two main ways, by collecting revenue or borrowing. Government borrowing is generally needed as revenue has been hit by the slowdown.

Massive fiscal resource mobilisation and appropriate spending are needed to contain the contagion and prevent temporary recessions—e.g., due to lockdowns—from becoming debilitating protracted depressions.

Fiscal policy involves both government resource generation and spending. But developing countries have been far more conservative in spending compared to the rich. The latter have introduced much bolder relief and recovery packages.

In the short, medium and long term, both government spending and taxation must be progressive. Much depends on how revenue is raised and spent. Hence, both taxation and expenditure need to be considered.

Taxes less progressive now

Governments must quickly develop progressive ways to finance massive spending needed to protect both lives and livelihoods. Over the last four decades, many governments reduced progressive direct taxation, instead embracing regressive indirect taxes.

Higher tax rates on the wealthy made direct taxation progressive. The regression was mainly due to lobbying by powerful elites, including foreign investors. The influential Washington-based Bretton Woods international financial institutions led such advocacy.

Incomes of the wealthy are mainly from assets, rather than wages, salaries or payments for goods or services. But tax rates on the highly paid, as well as property, inheritance and corporate incomes

have declined in most countries.

Wealth is often untaxed, or only lightly taxed at lower rates. New rules now allow assets to be moved and hidden abroad. Depending on how one estimates, between USD 8-35 trillion is held offshore, obscuring wealth concentration and inequality.

Taxation can reduce existing inequalities, but rarely does so despite the widespread presumption that taxes are progressive overall. Worse, most state spending is regressive, little mitigated by highly publicised social spending.

Difficult to measure, pandemic impacts



on various inequalities vary considerably. Nevertheless, the vicious cycle connecting economic disadvantage with vulnerability has worsened disparities.

Ensure progressive taxation

To be equitable, taxation must be progressive. More equitable tax systems should get more revenue from those most able to pay while reducing the burden on the needy. Wealth taxes are the most progressive way to raise revenue while also reducing inequalities.

Direct taxes on wealth and incomes are potentially progressive. Progressively higher rates and exemptions for the poor can ensure this. Low rates on investment income and assets—such as property, wealth and inheritance—can be increased. Besides reducing inequalities, these can finance progressive spending.

Taxing windfall and excess profits is not only publicly acceptable, but can also raise considerable funds. Some corporations and

individuals have benefitted greatly during the pandemic, e.g., US billionaires have reportedly become over a trillion dollars richer over the last year and a half.

In the longer term, progressive taxation means less reliance on indirect taxes—such as sales or consumption taxes, including value-added, or goods and services tax—which burden those with lower incomes much more.

Tax evasion by the wealthy must also be deterred. Companies using tax havens to pay less can be penalised, e.g., by disqualifying them from all government and state-owned enterprise

reform efforts.

When relief and recovery are treated as temporary "one-off" measures, they are unlikely to address pre-pandemic problems, including inequities. Governments should instead use the crisis to advance SDG solutions for both the medium and long-term.

Multilateral cooperation needed

International cooperation can help, but the rich countries' Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) has long focused on addressing offshore tax evasion to secure more revenue for themselves.

A decade ago, it broadened its attention, but continued to insist on its own leadership at the expense of developing countries. It has thus effectively blocked multilateral tax cooperation for decades, ignoring the UN's strong mandate from various Financing for Development and other summits.

Equitable international tax reforms remain urgent. But these have been undermined by earlier reforms encouraging cross-border flows of funds, enabling illicit financial flows from developing countries.

Although unlikely to yield much revenue for some time, US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen's global minimum corporate income tax proposal deserves strong qualified support.

Developing countries need to ensure that transnational companies are better taxed, instead of the current G7 proposal for a low rate. Revenue should be distributed according to where both production and consumption take place instead of just where sales occur.

Effectively checking tax abuses also requires access to financial information and common, equitable and transparent rules, not those imposed by the rich. But such outcomes can only

Taxation can reduce existing inequalities, but rarely does so despite the widespread presumption that taxes are progressive overall. Worse, most state spending is regressive, little mitigated by highly publicised social spending.

be achieved through UN-led multilateralism with developing country governments participating as equals.

Jomo Kwame Sundaram, a former economics professor and United Nations Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development, received the Wassily Leontief Prize for Advancing the Frontiers of Economic Thought in 2007. Copyright: Inter Press Service

BANGLADESH CONSUMER PROTECTION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

The Daily Star in association with Policy Research Institute organised an online discussion titled "Bangladesh Consumer Protection in The Digital Age" on August 28, 2021. Here we publish a summary of the discussion.



DR AHSAN H MANSUR,
Executive Director, Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh (PRI)

In our country, we have always been reactive instead of proactive. As we are seeing now, a large number of consumers have been exploited by some unscrupulous e-commerce enterprises. The government and the Bangladesh Bank are now trying to fix the issues by formulating new guidelines. However, there is an absence of an overarching framework for consumer protection.

While Bangladesh has made some headway in financial inclusion, it still has a long way to go. But the issue that we must address first, is the new risks associated with our progress. We don't need to reinvent the wheel, because we can look to developed countries to see how they established their own framework for consumer protection. This will allow us to replicate something similar in the context of Bangladesh.

Another issue that we must resolve is the ambiguity around our redress mechanisms. Redress mechanism and dispute resolution are essential to consumer rights protection. However, sometimes consumers are not aware of these mechanisms and as a result do not report their grievances. Other times, there are no mechanisms in place. We must ensure that consumers are at least aware of the existing dispute resolution and redress mechanisms.

Information asymmetry plays a role here. We cannot expect consumers to possess the same level of knowledge that a Mobile Financial Service (MFS) provider has. Lack of financial literacy and awareness also contributes to the information asymmetry further and weakens consumer protection.

The future of e-commerce is bright. The value of transactions in e-commerce was rising. But all of this progress was brought to a halt by Evaly and other fraudulent companies. We must address this issue. This will allow consumers to once again be confident in the services of e-commerce.



DR M A RAZZAQUE,
Research Director, Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh (PRI)

Financial services are evolving rapidly. And this evolution is extremely important to expand financial inclusion in our country. However, it simultaneously brings new and greater risks. Therefore, in any society where digital financial inclusion expands rapidly, consumer protection is one of the most critical aspects of the overall enabling environment.

PRI has been working on financial inclusion for a long time. We believe in the digital transformation of the economy because through this, there will be efficiency gains for the overall economy. This will drive financial inclusion even further. Furthermore, digital technology empowers consumers through better information and product reviews that are available online.

Such technologies, however, also pose challenges to consumer rights protection. The digital footprint left behind by consumers is used by companies to provide personalised advertisements.

Sometimes the personalised information can also be used for fraudulent activities. Misleading, unethical, and fraudulent commercial practices are also possible using personal data. These days, we hear a lot about data leaks, and how people's data can be used by criminals in an unethical manner. The pace of the development of digital technology is faster than that of the established legal provisions to protect consumers.

Network security for online payments is also a concern. Scams and frauds target consumers and their online accounts.

This is why we need a solid framework for consumer protection.

Amongst the widely known practices, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) has created a risk matrix and come up with certain principles for protection of customers. The matrix

has four elements, market-driven risks, regulations and supervision-driven risks, consumer-driven risks, and technology-driven risks.

The OECD also established 10 principles for financial consumer protection. Some of the important principles include legal, regulatory and supervisory framework, the role of oversight bodies, financial education and awareness, and the role of competitive financial markets. PRI applied these 10 principles to the context of Bangladesh. The broad result indicated that, Bangladesh has some rules and regulations in all 10 areas. However, there are significant gaps and enforcement of these rules and regulations is also a major challenge.

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) in a 2020 ranking exercise gave Bangladesh an overall financial inclusion score of 42. This put Bangladesh at the 44th place out of a total of 55 middle- and low-income countries. Even when compared to countries with similar per capita GDP and purchasing power parity, we are far behind. Some countries, with lower per capita GDP, such as Tanzania and Rwanda, received a higher score. Amongst many unfavourable characteristics of Bangladesh's digital financial market, it is found that about 28 percent of Bangladesh's financial customers can be considered financially literate and 34 percent of our banks are vulnerable to cyber security risks.

Bangladesh is also at the bottom of the scale in terms of protection for digital financial service users and the promotion of financial inclusion and digital literacy. Some of the other countries in the EIU ranking have digital service and e-money providers who are subject to all the consumer protection requirements that banking and non-banking financial institutions must adhere to. Overall, Bangladesh is severely lagging behind and needs to address the issues of financial inclusion and digital consumer protection.

I would like to make the following recommendations. Firstly, we need a comprehensive and robust consumer protection framework. We have some regulations for MFS and e-money services, but these are not comprehensive. I would suggest creating a dedicated and robust regulatory system for digital financial users.

We must also formulate and implement a comprehensive data protection and privacy act. And even when the regulations are created, we must monitor and uphold these regulations strictly.

There is also a need for the capacity building of consumer rights groups so that they can act as watchdogs for digital consumers' rights and protection. Simultaneously, we must also increase our digital financial literacy to increase financial inclusion. This can be done by introducing effective financial literacy programmes, providing user education during the sign-up procedures, and introducing financial education lessons in school textbooks.



FARHANA RAHMAN,
Senior Vice President, Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (BASIS)

The digital path along which we are walking does not only involve e-commerce. There are a variety of services that are being digitised and subsequently being adopted by citizens. There are both positives and negatives to digital services such as e-commerce. Even with legal protection in place, it can be a challenge to ensure all companies are operating properly. That is why awareness is the key to ensuring consumer protection rights. We must inform consumers what kinds of activities to avoid and how to protect themselves on the internet. A common issue is sharing NID and other private details online. We need to ensure that consumers are aware that this data should not be shared with anyone.

Due to lack of access to smartphones and technology, women are often left behind. As a result, online awareness activities do not reach these women. As such, we need to ensure that awareness is raised among women. We need a course at the school level to raise awareness. It must also be ensured that, we are providing this awareness in such a way so that they are able to understand it.

E-commerce is a global phenomenon, so Bangladesh's e-commerce policies should be aligned with policies that are followed worldwide. Otherwise, consumers will not enjoy protection of international standards. A legal regulatory and supervisory framework should also be developed.



SYED YUSUF SAADAT,
Senior Research Associate, CPD

E-commerce companies in Bangladesh are of two types: those who purely operate online using their websites and those who do brick-and-mortar business alongside selling online. There are also f-commerce companies that use Facebook to run their businesses. All complaints and controversies are surrounding companies that only sell online. There are some complaints about f-commerce companies as well but on a smaller scale.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an e-commerce boom. Many irregularities were discovered during this

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Create a dedicated financial consumer protection regulation system
- Increase digital financial literacy by introducing effective programmes
- Introduce digital financial literacy in the secondary and higher secondary education curriculum
- Formulate and implement a comprehensive data protection and privacy act
- Strengthen consumer rights' groups so that they can act as watchdogs for consumer rights' protection
- A robust redress mechanism and dispute resolution system should be developed
- A separate taskforce for e-commerce and digital payments needs to be established to ensure consumer rights

boom as well. We must remember that e-commerce is not an investor's platform but a consumer's platform. However, due to the e-commerce boom, it has become an alternative investment platform. Under normal circumstances, apart from the Bangladesh Bank Order 1972, even non-banking financial institutions cannot keep cash from consumers. Hence, it is not acceptable that e-commerce companies take and keep consumers' cash without delivering their products for months.

Consumers themselves need to be aware of their rights. Many consumers are unaware that many clauses under the Consumer Rights Protection Act 2009 give consumers sufficient protection despite e-commerce being relatively new to the country. For example, Clause 38 says that if the producer doesn't share their price list, they will face punishment. Clause 44 talks about the consequences of false advertising. Clause 45 says that a producer that takes money and doesn't deliver the product will be punished. So, consumers can issue legal complaints under these clauses for their e-commerce related problems. Due to the massive volume of complaints, the authorities of the Consumer Rights Protection Act are overburdened. Therefore, the government needs to hire more people, and they also need to create a separate e-commerce taskforce or cell which will ensure consumer rights in e-commerce.

E-commerce is a growing industry that will bring the government a lot of tax revenue, so it must be guaranteed that justice for e-commerce consumers is not delayed. However, there shouldn't be overregulation in the e-commerce industry. Many e-commerce companies have worked hard for a long time to gain consumers' trust, so that should be maintained. Those who are doing genuine work in the industry should not be discouraged. However, companies using Ponzi schemes and with ulterior motives should be punished for their actions.



S M NAZER HOSSAIN,
Vice President, Consumers Association of Bangladesh

Regulatory authorities have seen how e-commerce companies like Evaly made unrealistic offers and caused irregularities. Yet, these authorities played no role in stopping the companies until Bangladesh Bank intervened. Unfortunately, consumers are one of the most vulnerable groups in Bangladesh. They have no voice or participation. The recent policy for e-commerce was developed without the

involvement of any consumer representatives. Regulatory policies are created while keeping in mind the interest of businessmen, not the consumers. Ultimately, the consumers are the ones who suffer. Therefore, the role of regulatory authorities is vital.

The big gap between consumers and entrepreneurs stands as a barrier to fair trade. This is why we are seeing a high prevalence of fraudulent activities. E-commerce is a promising industry. But thousands of people have faced fraud and lost crores of taka. The government should have regulated this from the beginning. E-commerce companies have an obligation here as well and should consider self-regulation to try to protect their community.

There is a need to increase consumer literacy in Bangladesh. However, organisations working on this are usually voluntary organisations. Hence, it is a challenge to continue promoting financial literacy in a landscape where digital services are growing quite fast. International donors are also not very interested in voluntary organisations like Consumers Association of Bangladesh that are working with consumer education and the overall consumer movement. They should come forward to support and strengthen these organisations.



MAHABUBUL ISLAM,
Head of Mobile Banking Division, Dutch-Bangla Bank Limited

Our services should be designed by taking into consideration the consumer segment's education and income level.

Consumers also have some responsibilities. One can't buy motorcycles in bulk just because they are on sale at a 50 percent discount. There's a chance that the consumer intends to use the products for their own business.

Regulators need to pre-assess new businesses to ensure they aren't providing aggressive offers just to grab customers. These offers are unsustainable and are usually used to build brand value. Later on, the businesses are sold. So, the offers are not meant to actually benefit customers.

One issue with MFS is that people make transactions using photocopies of NIDs that don't even belong to them. Low-income segments also use MFS and they are not aware about account security, such as the importance of the confidentiality of PIN. Sometimes they share their PIN with family members. Later on, women complain about losing money from their accounts without realising that their family member is the one who withdrew it. We must educate consumers on the importance of not sharing their PIN or account information with anyone.

The issue with e-commerce or f-commerce platforms is that they can sell the databases they create using customer information. These marketers should be held accountable for such consumer data breaches. Such issues do not exist with MFS operators. The data protection mechanisms of MFS providers are adequate, and I have yet to hear of any privacy breaches. However, we will surely follow any law that is passed for data protection.



TANVIR A MISHUK,
Managing Director, Nagad
In the fourth industrial revolution, data

is like currency. In May 2017, a report in The Economist had stated that the most precious resource in the world right now isn't fuel but data. Protecting the data of consumers is, therefore, the responsibility of every operator. Since all activities are shifting towards online platforms, operators are amassing a lot of data every second. So, this is the time to focus on data protection.

Operators cannot sell consumer data. Yet, many operators in different markets still do so. So, there should be policies or laws created for data protection. At Nagad, we have been ensuring consumer data protection from the beginning without waiting for any policy. All our consumer data is fully encrypted in such a way that even our employees cannot access them. We have 21 policies protecting the data. Anyone needing to access the data has to go through four layers of protection. So, downloading and then selling the data is not possible. We are also using next-generation firewalls to prevent any data breaches. However, there is no point in only one company ensuring data protection. All mobile operators, banks, and MFS have a responsibility to protect their consumers' data.

Many people think that data protection is not that important. However, if we consider a NID leak, for example, the data can be easily used to change credit card, debit card or MFS PINs.

Operators can play a role in educating consumers on financial literacy. However, 37 percent of people in Bangladesh are outside formal communication channels. So, it is up to the government to reach them with financial literacy and awareness campaigns.

DR M A RAZZAQUE,
Research Director, Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh (PRI)

Digital financial system is mostly technical in nature. Most users are not habituated in using digital system. That's why we have to build the capacity of consumers to use these digital services.

We need to identify the gaps in our legal and regulatory framework. The crimes that have been happening in our country are not anything new. It's already happening in other countries. We must observe how other countries have handled these situations and then apply the lessons to situation.

DR AHSAN H MANSUR,
Executive Director, Policy Research Institute of Bangladesh (PRI)

Consumers are the main element of the industry. They have driven the industry, and they will continue to do so in the future. No industry will thrive if we cannot ensure and increase consumers' participation. The industry must remain devoted to achieving consumers' trust.

It is high time we introduced financial and digital literacy in the secondary and higher secondary education curriculum. It will enlighten a new generation of students about digital financial services. This will also allow them to teach their parents about digital services and how scams can be avoided.

We need a separate taskforce for e-commerce and digital payment issues to get speedy solutions. The participation of both e-commerce and consumer associations is needed to make it effective. NGOs can also play a part in the process. CAB is doing great, but it's a voluntary organisation. That is why the government should try and help CAB with some financial support so they can continue to work for consumer rights' protection.



SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN,
Editor, Commercial Supplements, The Daily Star and moderator of the session

Today we have discussed a topic that is extremely important and relevant at the present time. The purpose of fintech and the digital revolution is to take financial services to the maximum number of people possible. Alongside digital financial services, we have also seen a rise in e-commerce platforms. While these services have increased the ease of use for customers, they have also given rise to a new set of unique risks. These risks did not exist within traditional banking services. Therefore, we need to protect the rights of the consumers who are using these digital services.

TSPORTS

La Liga
Mallorca vs Osasuna
Live from 6:00 pm
Barcelona vs Levante
Live from 8:15 pm

Real Sociedad Vs Elche

Live from 10:30 pm
Real Betis Vs Getafe
Live from 1:00 am
(Monday)
STAR SPORTS SELECT 1

IPL

CSK vs KKR
Live from 4:00 pm
RCB vs MI
Live from 8:00 pm
STAR SPORTS SELECT 2

EPL

Southampton vs Wolves
Live from 7:00 pm
Arsenal vs Tottenham
Live from 9:30 pm

Suman's confidence on the rise

ANISUR RAHMAN

Interim coach Oscar Bruzon has already announced his intention to implement an attacking style of football in the upcoming SAFF Championship, but an inability to find the net has been a long-standing problem for Bangladesh, evidenced by their failure to go past the group stages in their past four attempts in the biennial competition.

The Spanish coach's attacking plans will undoubtedly require forwards to play a key role, but Bangladesh may face similar problems as they go into the competition without any prolific forwards and their top striker, Nabib Newaj Jibon, sidelined by a knee injury.

Hope may rest with Suman Reza, the promising striker who struck a brilliant brace against Kyrgyzstan U-23 earlier this month.

Suman netted both goals with dipping shots from outside the box, stunning the Kyrgyzstan goalkeeper. It was obviously not a fluke from Suman, who scored 10 goals to finish as the joint-top



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

scorer among local footballers in the just-concluded Bangladesh Premier League.

"I got five to ten minutes in international matches instead of the full 90. I played from

the start of the match against Kyrgyzstan U-23 side and availed both opportunities during the match," said the Uttar Baridhara Club striker, who made his international debut against Nepal

in Dhaka earlier this year.

Since his debut, Suman started only two matches before getting the full 90 against Kyrgyzstan U-23.

"If you play the full match, you get some goal-scoring opportunities. I got full starts against the Kyrgyzstan U-23 team and capitalised on both chances," he said.

The 26-year-old added that he grew in confidence after striking the brace.

"I lacked confidence before but that grew after the brace in the last match. I think I will now get more game time and more opportunities to score. I will try my best to strike goals in the SAFF Championship if I get enough match time," said Suman, who believes the forwards can score against any team if they get proper service.

"We usually played defensive before and train on how to defend against big teams. But Bruzon is training us to play attacking football and creating a defensive line in midfield instead of defending deep. He also wants a united team, which will attack collectively and press opponents as soon as the ball is lost. I think the players are responsible for implementing the game plan."



Fahim surprise enlivens elections

SPORTS REPORTER



There is not much excitement about the Bangladesh Cricket Board's (BCB's) upcoming elections, set to be held on October 6, but veteran coach Nazmul Abedeem Fahim created a buzz at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday after collecting nomination papers and announcing that he would contest the lone director's post in category three against former national captain Khaled Mahmud.

"I was a BCB councillor twice in the past when I was in BKSP. I had the opportunity to contest the elections but sacrificed for others. I think I have gained enough knowledge after serving the game in different capacities, whether it is on expanding the game or human resources, and I firmly believe I will be able to contribute to the improvement of the game and float new ideas," Fahim told reporters on the last day of collection for nomination papers.

However, he conceded that Mahmud was the favourite candidate, adding that it was good that capable individuals were coming

forward to work for cricket.

"I had previously contested against Lipu bhai (Gazi Ashraf Hossain Lipu) in my first election. Fahim bhai is my coach and he has worked under me in the game development committee. I wish him all the best and I hope the voters will assess the work I have done and consider that," Mahmud said.

BCB president Nazmul Hassan collected his nomination form from category 2 yesterday as councillor of Abahani Limited.

The last date to submit nomination papers is September 30.

A total of 12 directors will be elected from category 1 from among Dhaka League Clubs. In category two, 10 directors will be elected by the district sports associations. The two other directors will be nominated by the National Sports Council.

In category three -- which Fahim and Mahmud will contest -- there will be one post for a director to be elected with votes from 43 councillors from university, education board, government agencies and former captains and cricketers.

The 25 new directors will run Bangladesh cricket for the next four years.

TT team off to global stage

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Table Tennis team leave for Qatar today to take part in the Asian Table Tennis Championships with the qualification for the World Table Tennis Championships in sight.

Comprising four men and three women, Bangladesh's players will be featuring in all events at the Asian Championships -- to serve as a qualifier for the World Table Tennis Championships -- scheduled for September 28-October 5, in Doha.

Of the participating 31 nations, top 12 countries from the team events will qualify for the world event.

"We're hoping that the players will perform better than before and try to qualify in the team events for the World Table Tennis Championships, likely to take place in South Korea," said Bangladesh Table Tennis Federation (BTF)



Vice President Munir Hassan during the revelation of the national jersey sponsored by Stag International, BTF's new sponsor.

"The preparation has been remarkable this time under the Indian coach," said national player Mutahsin Ahmed Ridoy.

"But you know, with opponents like China, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Chinese Taipei, we have nothing to say about our target. Rather, we'll try to give our best."

Apart from Ridoy, Bangladesh will be represented by Ramhim Lian Bawm, Rifat Mahmud Sabbir, Mufradul Karim Hamza, Nowrin Sultana Mahi, Sadia Rahman Mou and Sonam Sultana Soma.

Soma also expressed her optimism, like Ridoy.

"Usually we went to play previous tournaments with self-preparation but this time, we've prepared for two-and-a-half months under the Indian coach so that we can put up better performances than before," said the national table tennis player.



Gabriel Jesus celebrates, pointing to the heavens, after his decisive strike in the second half edged Manchester City past Chelsea 1-0 at the Stamford Bridge yesterday. Aston Villa's Kortney Hause breaks away to celebrate after scoring the all-important goal from a glancing header in front of a dejected looking Bruno Fernandes, who later missed an injury-time penalty as Manchester United lost 0-1 at the Old Trafford.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Villa stun Man United, Jesus sinks Chelsea

AGENCIES



Bruno Fernandes blazed a stoppage-time penalty over the crossbar as Aston Villa earned a shock 1-0 victory at a below-par Manchester United in the Premier League on Saturday.

Kortney Hause's 88th-minute header put Villa on course for their first league win over United since 2009, but the defender's handball gifted United an opportunity to steal a point, only for Fernandes to miss the target.

Since Cristiano Ronaldo re-signed for United, there has been much debate over who will take penalties and free kicks this season -- last term's spot-kick taker Fernandes or his fellow Portuguese.

It was Fernandes who took the first direct free kick on Saturday, firing into the wall, with Ronaldo getting the next one, and Fernandes, following Hause's handball, never looked back as he placed

the ball on the spot in the 92nd minute.

But last season's top scorer missed only his second spot-kick for the club to the dismay of an expectant crowd.

"First of all the way they (Villa players) get round the penalty spot, get round Bruno and that, that's not to my liking," United manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer said.

"Bruno is usually very good in those positions and unfortunately he missed this one."

In truth, United got what they deserved. Villa had two great opportunities to break the deadlock in the first half with full back Matt Targett blazing over from two metres out, before Ollie Watkins was denied by a fine save from United goalkeeper David de Gea.

The home side, encouraged by a frustrated Old Trafford crowd, stepped it up late in the match, but Hause climbed highest to stun the hosts before Fernandes' miss and United tasted league defeat for

the first time this season.

Meanwhile, a second-half goal from Gabriel Jesus earned Premier League champions Manchester City a deserved 1-0 win over Chelsea and inflicted a first defeat of the season on Thomas Tuchel's side.

Jesus pushed the ball home with a deflection off Jorginho after a goalmouth melee in the 53rd minute following City's 10th corner of the game. It was the game's first shot on target.

It was Jesus's 52nd goal for City and they have never lost a Premier League game in which he has scored.

The victory also broke a three-match losing streak for the Manchester side against Chelsea, the most recent in the Champions League final in Porto in May.

Thomas Tuchel admitted his Chelsea side were not good enough. "We lost the game and City deserved to win. Until the goal we were very strong in the last 20 metres of the field, but only there unfortunately," Tuchel told reporters.

"Everywhere else we were not good enough to relieve pressure and to hurt them. The performance was not complex enough.

"Overall, simply, we were not at our best level."

Chelsea did try and raise the tempo in a bid to salvage the game but it was too little too late.

"After the goal it felt a little bit like the belief in winning was bigger than the fear of losing. I don't know why. We tried to push and get the crowd behind us. It was a very emotional game but never on our highest level," Tuchel said.

City produced their best display of the season, pressing the ball relentlessly and smothering the home side who failed to register a shot on target.

Manager Pep Guardiola, a keen golfer fan, said his side's teamwork reminded him of the Ryder Cup.

"Today we played for each other," the Spaniard said.



PHOTO: BCB

Despite starting the day at a decent position, on 170 for four with a 51-run lead, Bangladesh Under-19 could only set a 110-run target for their Afghan counterparts on the final day of their lone four-dayer in Sylhet yesterday. Afghanistan stuttered along their chase of a modest total, but managed to end their tour with a three-wicket victory.

Mustafizur Rahman caught smiling after scalping the wicket of Shimron Hetmyer, who was looking dangerous at the crease for Rajasthan Royals. Fizz's impressive display, of two wickets for 22 runs, however, went in vain as Delhi Capitals won by 33 runs during yesterday's Indian Premier League encounter at Abu Dhabi.

PHOTO: IPL



Bangabandhu Tunnel
is being built with BSRM

COUNTRY'S NO. 1 STEEL EXPERT **BSRM**
building a safer nation

PROUD CONSTRUCTION PARTNER OF PADMA BRIDGE

SHAH CEMENT

TERRORISM, TALIBAN SUPPORT Pakistan, India trade barbs at UNGA

AGENCIES

India and Pakistan clashed Friday at the United Nations as Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan accused the rival of a "reign of terror" on Muslims and appealed to the world to work with Afghanistan's triumphant Taliban, drawing a stern rebuke.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi raised concerns about Pakistan during talks with US President Joe Biden as well as a broader four-way summit with the leaders of Australia and Japan, according to Indian officials, who said the others concurred.

"There was a clear sense that a more careful look and a more careful examination and monitoring of Pakistan's role in Afghanistan -- Pakistan's role on the issue of terrorism -- had to be kept," Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla told reporters after the White House talks.

Khan, addressing the UN General Assembly, said that the Taliban have promised to respect human rights and build an inclusive government since taking over last month, despite global disappointment in a caretaker cabinet.

"If the world community incentivizes them, and encourages them to walk this talk, it will be a win-win situation for everyone," Khan said.

"We must strengthen and stabilize the current government, for the sake of the people of Afghanistan."

Khan spent much of his speech defending the record of Pakistan, which was the main supporter of the Taliban's 1996-2001 regime that imposed an ultra-austere interpretation of Islam and welcomed Al-Qaeda, triggering

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5



People, expecting to get coronavirus jabs, trying to protect themselves from sun with umbrellas and papers in front of the gate of Chattogram General Hospital. The healthcare facility allows people on its premises for Covid-19 shots between 2:00pm and 6:30pm. Some of them had been waiting since early morning.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Case against MJF, Banche Shekha EDs fabricated

Says Human Rights Forum Bangladesh

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Human Rights Forum Bangladesh has expressed deep concern over a case against Shaheen Anam, executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation, and Angela Gomez, executive director of Banche Shekha.

HRFB issued a statement calling the case false and fabricated.

On Tuesday, one Akash Ghosh filed the case with Narayanganj Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court against Shaheen Anam and Angela Gomez.

Taking the case into cognisance, the court directed the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) to probe the matter and submit a report by December 21.

"The Forum believes that this false case was filed with the ill-intention of impacting the social

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

Hilsa prices soar while export cheap

MOKAMMEL SHUIVO and SUSHANTA GHOSH, Barishal

Hilsa has become pricier since export of the national fish to India commenced last week.

Sellers said the prices rose because of a drop in supply to the local market.

Each kg of the fish is being sold to India at \$10 or roughly Tk 854, which is a lot less than the price even in the wholesale markets of Bangladesh.

At Mohipur Fish Market in Kalapara, Patuakhali, hilsa weighing over one kg is being sold at around Tk 1,200 and less than one kg at Tk 650, said traders of the market.

Mohipur is a major source of hilsa in the country.

Fish seller Fazlu said the prices have been raised by Tk 4,000-5,000 per maund (roughly 40 kg) since the export started on Wednesday.

On Thursday, a hilsa weighing 900 gram was sold for Tk 950 at a wholesale fish market in Barishal, and the ones weighing 1.2 kg for Tk 1200, said Nirab Hossain Tutul, secretary of the Barishal Wholesale Fish Market.

As of yesterday evening, 488 tonnes of hilsa was exported to India through Benapole Land Port, said Ashadul

SEE PAGE 5 COL 2

ROAD TO FREEDOM
THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

Pak move to bar Bangladesh in UN

SEPTEMBER 26, 1971

SHAMSUDDOZA SAJEN

U THANT ASKED TO BAN BANGLADESH DELEGATION Pakistan asked the UN Secretary General U Thant to ban the entry of Bangladesh delegation in the UN. The new Pakistani move was contained in a letter addressed to U Thant by Pakistan's UN Representative Aga Shahi. The letter alleged that there were criminal charges against AR Siddiqui, one of the representatives of Bangladesh.

The 14-member Bangladesh delegation was in New York under the leadership of Abu Sayeed Chowdhury, head of the Bangladesh Mission in London, to mobilise opinion against Pakistan's repression in Bangladesh, to seek Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's release, and to secure settlement in Bangladesh in conformity with the wishes of the people there.

ON THE WAR FRONT

In the Dhaka-Cumilla-Chattogram sector, Mukti Bahini today ambushed Pakistani troops near Debpur, and five enemy soldiers were killed in action. On the same day, Mukti Bahini demolished a railway bridge between Feni and Belonia.

In the Mymensingh-Sylhet sector, Mukti Bahini ambushed Pakistani troops in several places. Near Mohanganj they killed 6 soldiers and four razakars. In another ambush on a mixed patrol of Pakistani troops and razakars, Mukti Bahini killed 10 of the enemies near Dasgram area. In Nalkura and Rangtia four enemy troops were killed in similar actions. In another operation, Mukti Bahini encountered Pakistani troops near Mohabbatpur and

SEE PAGE 5 COL 5



ASI dies after drug suspect stabbed him

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

An Assistant Sub-inspector (ASI) of Rangpur's Haragach Police Station died yesterday after being stabbed by a drug dealer during a raid.

The dead is Peyarul Islam, 30, of Kurigram. He was stabbed on Friday and undergoing treatment at Rangpur Medical College Hospital (RMCH) until he breathed his last.

Shawkat Ali Sarkar, officer-in-charge of Haragach Police Station, said ASI Peyarul, along with a police team, conducted a raid at Shahebganj village to arrest a drug dealer named Polash.

At one point of the raid, Polash managed to break free and stabbed Peyarul in his chest and abdomen, leaving him critically injured, he added.

The ASI underwent surgery but could not survive. He breathed his last at 11:15am yesterday,

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

Chinese villages paying couples to have more kids



CNN ONLINE

With China facing a looming demographic crisis, the government last month passed into law a three-child policy raising the permitted limit on family sizes.

But with many couples still hesitant to expand their families, some places are now offering cash incentives to encourage more births.

Huangzhugen village, in Lianjiang city in southern Guangdong province, will pay permanent residents up to \$510 a month for babies born after September 1, state-run tabloid Global Times reported on Wednesday.

Families will receive the monthly subsidies until their babies turn 2 and a half years old

SEE PAGE 5 COL 1

Body in Trunk Mystery solved after 6 years

PBI arrests victim's boyfriend

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On May 3, 2015, a Dhaka-bound Eagle Paribahan bus carried a steel trunk



inside its luggage box from Chattogram. As the trunk was not claimed by anyone, police seized it and found the body of a woman.

Local police investigated for three months and later the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) of police investigated for four years, but found no clue.

Finally, around six years later, the Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) identified the victim and found out that the person who strangled her to death, kept her body inside a trunk and sent it to Dhaka by bus was a man she was

SEE PAGE 5 COL 2

Taliban hang bodies of 4 men in Herat city

AFP, Kabul

The Taliban hung the bodies of four kidnapers from cranes after killing them during a shootout in Afghanistan's western city of Herat yesterday, a senior official said.

Herat province's deputy governor Mawlawi Shir Ahmad Muhajir said the men's corpses were displayed in various public areas on the same day as the killings to teach a "lesson" that kidnapping will not be tolerated.

Graphic images posted to social media showed bloody bodies on the back of a pick-up truck while a

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4



A group of environment activists holding banner on the Khoai river in Moulvibazar to create awareness for river protection. The river is almost dead due to encroachment and pollution.

PHOTO: STAR

Star HEALTHLINE

Carpal tunnel syndrome NOT THAT UNCOMMON

STAR HEALTH DESK

We injure our hands from time to time and just move on. Come to think of it: even when we hit our elbows, the arm feels stuffy but we just take it all in and walk forward.

But what's so different about carpal tunnel syndrome?

For starters, your arms will itch and quite possibly during the night. If you feel any kind of resistance when trying to grip objects, or if your hands go numb, or you feel pain that keeps you up at night, then it's bad



Hyginex
Instant hand sanitizer

BEACON Pharmaceuticals Limited

SEE PAGE 5 COL 2

PRAYER TIMING SEPTEMBER 26

Fajr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4:35 12:45 4:15 6:00 7:30
JAMAAT 5:10 1:15 4:30 6:05 8:00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION