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Your Right to Know

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"Five crore people have been vaccinated ... 50 percent of the population will be jabbed by December and 70-80 percent by March next year."
HEALTH MINISTER ZAHID MALEQUE



"Lots of forces are working in the [Rohingya] refugee camps, so how are the arms and drugs going there?"
QUESTIONS SECURITY ANALYST M SAKAWAT HOSSAIN



"We'll create a greater united platform on one-point demand to restore democracy by ousting the current government through a strong mass movement."
BNP LEADER KHANDAKER MOSHARRAF

Bhasan Char impasse UNTANGLED

Finally, the govt, UN sign MoU on humanitarian services to Rohingyas relocated to the island

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The stalemate over the United Nations' involvement in humanitarian support to Rohingyas in Bhasan Char is finally over with the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the UN and the government yesterday.

The agreement would facilitate a close operation between the global body and the government on providing the Rohingyas with different services on the remote island, officials said.

Rohingyas have hailed the development. "We are extremely happy," Abdul Hamid, a Rohingya man living in Bhasan Char, told The Daily Star over the phone.

The UN engagement will boost the assistance handed to Rohingyas, he said.

"We will get more food and better facilities. We will get more opportunities to earn as well," he added.

After the government began relocating Rohingyas to Bhasan Char from the camps in Cox's Bazar, the UN was keeping itself aloof from the move, citing various reasons,



including the absence of an independent assessment of the housing facility built for Rohingyas on the island.

The impasse has been untangled after over a year of stalemate. **THE MOU**

The agreement has established a common protection and policy framework for the Rohingya humanitarian response in Bhasan Char, officials said.

UNHCR Bangladesh representative Johannes van der Klaauw and Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief Secretary Md Mohsin signed the MoU on behalf of the two sides at the Secretariat.

"It [the agreement] is a recognition from the UN. It also highlights that the Bangladesh government took the right decision [on the relocation of Rohingyas to the island]," Md Mohsin told The Daily Star last night.

UN activities on Bhasan Char have begun with the deal signing, he mentioned.

The UNHCR -- the UN refugee agency -- signed the MoU on behalf of UN agencies working on the Rohingya response in Bangladesh.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



Construction work of a reactor in unit-1 of the Rooppur nuclear power plant is in progress. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will remotely inaugurate today the installation of the reactor pressure vessel at the power plant in Pabna. The pressure vessel is where electricity is generated from nuclear fuel, officials said.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Don't let it hurt bid for repatriation

Speakers ask stakeholders over Mohib Ullah murder

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The assassination of Rohingya leader Muhib Ullah is an isolated incident, and it should not be an issue in the efforts to repatriate the Rohingya refugees, former diplomats and civil society members told a webinar yesterday.

The discussion titled "The Challenges of Rohingya Repatriation" was organised by Study Group on Regional Affairs.

Former foreign secretary Touhid Hossain said, "We have made almost no progress in the repatriation process. No one can say the killing of Muhib Ullah would affect the procedure."

He then said criminals may take over the refugee camps if proper leadership is not there. "And in many cases, the control is in their [criminals'] hands already."

Director of the Centre for Genocide Studies at Dhaka University Prof Dr Imtiaz

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

Taiwan 'reunification' will be realised: Xi

Holds off threatening force; Taiwan president's office slams 'coercion'

AGENCIES

Chinese President Xi Jinping yesterday vowed to realise peaceful "reunification" with Taiwan, though did not directly mention the use of force after a week of tensions with the Chinese-claimed island that sparked international concern.

Taiwan responded shortly after by calling on Beijing to abandon its coercion, reiterating that only Taiwan's people could decide their future.

Self-governed Taiwan, which has never formally declared independence, lives under the constant threat of invasion by China, which views the island as its territory and has vowed to one day seize it, by force if necessary.

"Realising national reunification by peaceful means best serves the interests of the nation as a whole including our brethren in Taiwan," Xi said in a speech marking the 110th anniversary of a revolution that ended millennia of imperial rule and led to the founding of the Republic of China.

A large portrait of Sun Yat-sen, the western-educated doctor who founded the Republic of China, which remains the formal name of Taiwan, towered over the stage as Xi spoke.

Sun led the 1911 toppling of the Qing empire, seen as the forerunner to the eventual Communist revolution, making him one of the few figures revered on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1



Serum resumes vaccine supply

Sends 10 lakh doses

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Serum Institute of India yesterday resumed its vaccine export to Bangladesh after a pause of about eight months, sending 10 lakh doses of its Covishield jabs.

In November last year, the Pune-based biotechnology and biopharmaceuticals firm was contracted by Beximco Pharmaceuticals to supply three crore doses of the Covishield vaccine, which it developed with Oxford University and AstraZeneca, between January and June.

Serum was supposed to provide 50 lakh doses each month to Bangladesh, but it managed to provide that quantity in January only.

In February, it provided 20 lakh doses, as the world's largest vaccine manufacturer struggled to keep up supplies following

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

DEPRESSION IN PANDEMIC Cutting deeper thru the youth

Md SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

Imrul Kayes, a student of mass communication and journalism at Rajshahi University, was suffering from severe depression.

When his friends noticed this, they took him to a psychiatrist in Rajshahi. His mental health started improving.

But the student had to return home in Jashore after the university was closed for an indefinite period in March last year due to the pandemic.

"His condition deteriorated then," said one of his friends requesting anonymity.

According to his mother, Imrul had planned to purchase a DSLR camera and a motorbike. He became very disappointed that he could not arrange the money. "He used to press us to buy him those, but also realised that it was very difficult for us to fulfil his wish."

His parents eventually bought him a motorbike but it made him even more frustrated when he learned that they had to borrow money.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

ROOPPUR PLANT PM opens installation of reactor vessel today

Bss, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the reactor pressure vessel installation work in the first reactor building of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant today.

She will launch the work virtually from the Gono Bhaban at 10:00am.

The main unit of the nuclear power plant in Pabna's Rooppur will be installed in the first unit of the reactor pressure vessel or nuclear reactor.

Science and Technology Minister Yafesh Osman said it is the most important chapter in the construction of the nuclear power plant and with this, the project is moving forward on time.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



Award for all journos

Says Nobel Prize winner Ressa

AFP, Manila

Veteran Philippine journalist Maria Ressa yesterday said her Nobel Peace Prize was for "all journalists around the world", as she vowed to continue her battle for press freedom.

Ressa, co-founder of news website Rappler, and Russian journalist Dmitry Muratov were awarded the prize on Friday for their efforts to "safeguard freedom of expression".

"This is really for all journalists around the world," Ressa, a vocal critic of Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte, told AFP in an interview.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Construction worker Hussain breaks down in tears seeing the body of his four-year-old daughter wrapped in a shroud at Amin Bazar River Police Station in Savar. Five bodies were found in the Turag river after a dinghy collided with a larger vessel and capsized yesterday. Story on page 2

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

MIDDLE CLASS Growing in number, but clout waning

Say speakers at a webinar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of middle-class people is growing, but they are not in the leadership of politics and their intellectual contribution to society is inadequate, eminent citizens said at a webinar.

Middle class people were five percent of the population in the 60s. Now they account for 30 percent of the population as the poverty rate continues to decline, they told the discussion organised by Power and Participation Research Centre (PPRC).

Renowned economist Wahiduddin Ahmed said, "People becoming political leaders are from the moneyed class. Many of those who join politics become rich soon."

In the context of the discussion, middle-class refers to people who seek knowledge, are thoughtful, play a role in formation of opinion in the society, and lead towards the creation of a highly moral society, he said.

"A developed society will not be built if economic progress takes place without intellectualism, thoughtfulness, and cultural activities."

Middle-class people's inadequate intellectual contribution to society can be attributed to a gradual decline in the quality of education, he said, adding that the educated and meritorious individuals are leaving the country.

He added that merit is unappreciated in all spheres of life.

Binayak Sen, director general of the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, said in the 60s, 5 percent of the population was middle class. But the middle-class of that era helped create the mass upsurge in 1969.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

BANGLADESH UPDATE



415

New cases in 24hrs



15,61,878

Total cases



27,674

Deaths



15,23,134

Recoveries



GLOBAL UPDATE



4,860,490

Deaths



238,190,997

Total cases

In jail, listed 'criminal' wins councillor polls

FM MIZANUR RAHAMAN

The surprise win of an alleged gangster as the councillor of Ward-16 in Chattogram has shocked many residents of the city.

Nur Mostafa Tutu alias Tinu became the ward councillor following Thursday's by-election in the Chawkbazar area of the city.

Police and Rab officers say he is among the top listed criminal suspects in the area.

Tinu has been in jail since May 23 in an arms case filed by Rab-7. He was arrested multiple times before with firearms.

Members of his gang are suspected of extorting, mugging and engaging in violent fights with local Chhatra League men, locals and law enforcers said.

Following the death of former ward councillor Sayed Golam Haider Mintu, 21 individuals took part in the by-election to be the councillor.

Tinu got 789 votes while his closest contestant Abdur Rauf, who is also known as a racketeer, bagged 776 votes. Out of the 3,2081 constituents, only 6,855 cast their vote.

Officials at the election commission in Chattogram said all the candidates lost their money deposited with the

commission because none of them, including Tinu, got one-eighth of the votes of the total constituents.

Officials said Tinu was arrested on October 22, 2019, in possession of firearms and bullets. After arresting him, Rab said Tinu led several gangs in Chawkbazar, Bakalia and Kapasgola areas in the city.

Officers said the gangs were mostly involved in mugging and extorting.

On April 29, 2003, Detective Branch (DB) of police arrested Tinu along with another man in possession of an AK-47 rifle in the city's Golpaha area.

Police officials said there were four cases and multiple general diaries against Tinu with Chawkbazar and Panchlaish police stations.

A local business owner in Chawkbazar said Tinu's gang members extort roadside shopkeepers, vendors and other establishments every week, even though he was in jail.

"Most of the voters got frustrated and did not go to vote after seeing him run for the position," he said.

Contacted, Bijoy Basak, deputy commissioner (south) of Chattogram Metropolitan Police, said police have been extra-careful since the election result to avert any untoward incident.



This partially collapsed and completely unusable bridge was the only way to a Tripura neighbourhood on a hill in Habiganj's Satchhari National Park. At least 20 Tripura families have not been able to leave their village since Wednesday, when the bridge fell amid heavy showers.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

70-80pc people to get shots by March 2022

Says health minister

UNB, Dhaka

Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday said the government geared up its nationwide vaccination programmes to inoculate 70-80 percent population by March 2022.

Five crore people have already been vaccinated during the nationwide vaccination campaign, he said.

The minister was speaking at a programme arranged by Manikganj Sadar district Puja Celebration Council marking Durga Puja.

Meanwhile, Covid-19 killed 20

more people in Bangladesh and infected 415 others in 24 hours till yesterday morning.

On Friday, the single-day death toll fell to seven, the lowest in eight months, as the country reported 645 cases on the day.

With the fresh numbers, the Covid-19 fatalities reached 27,674 while the caseload mounted to 1,561,878, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The fresh cases were detected after testing 16,925 samples.

Don't let it hurt

FROM PAGE 1

Ahmed said the international community should convince China, Japan and India to restrict their businesses in Myanmar.

About the "double-standard" maintained by several countries, he said, "They are saying they will not ban businesses in Myanmar for the sake of the general people. How could they then enforce such bans on Iran or North Korea? Are there no general people there?"

He added that Bangladesh failed to keep the issue of Rohingya genocide on top of the agenda in international forums.

Security analyst and retired Brig Gen M Sakhawat Hussain said

Myanmar intelligence groups could have a role in the killing of Muhib Ullah who posed a challenge to the Myanmar government.

"Muhib Ullah was from the youth group that wanted repatriation," Sakhawat said, urging the government to look into why firearms and drugs were available in the refugee camps despite the presence of multiple law enforcement agencies.

Abu Murshed Chowdhury, co-chairman of the NGO Forum, said young Rohingyas should be given technical training, because "an idle brain is a devil's workshop".

Amir Khasru, coordinator of Study Group on Regional Affairs conducted the webinar.

Award for all journos

FROM PAGE 1

"We do need help on so many fronts -- it is so much more difficult and dangerous to be a journalist today."

Philippine press groups and rights activists hailed Ressa's award as a "triumph" in a country ranked as one of the world's most dangerous for journalists.

Since Duterte was swept to power in 2016, Ressa and Rappler have endured what media advocates say is a grinding series of criminal charges, investigations and online attacks.

Duterte has called Rappler a "fake news outlet", and Ressa has been the target of abusive messages online.

Ressa, 58, said she hoped the prize would provide a protective shield for her and other journalists in the Philippines against physical attacks and online threats.

"This 'us against them' was never the creation of the journalists, it was the creation of the people in power who wanted to use a type of leadership that divides society," Ressa said, describing the award "like a shot of adrenalin".

"I hope... this allows journalists to do our jobs well without fear."

Ressa has been a staunch critic of Duterte and his government's policies, including a drug war that rights groups estimate has killed tens of thousands of mostly poor men.

Rappler was among the domestic and foreign media outlets that published shocking images of the killings and questioned its legal basis.

International Criminal Court judges have authorised a full-blown investigation into a possible crime against humanity during the bloody campaign.

Other media outlets have fallen foul of Duterte, including the Philippine Daily Inquirer and broadcasting giant ABS-CBN, which lost its free-to-air licence last year.

But Ressa said Rappler's independence meant it could fight back. "We have no other businesses

to protect... so it's very easy for us to push back," she said.

Ressa said she had been issued 10 arrest warrants in less than two years and still faced seven court cases, including for tax evasion, which she described as "ludicrous" and would win.

She is on bail pending an appeal against a conviction last year in a cyber libel case, for which she faces up to six years in prison.

Two other cyber libel cases were dismissed earlier this year.

"That abuse of power would have worked if I allowed the fear in my emotions and in my head to dominate our reaction -- the biggest challenge was always to conquer your fear," she said.

"Being fearless doesn't mean not being afraid, it just means knowing how to handle your fear."

The author of "How to Stand Up to a Dictator" hopes to get permission to travel to Norway to pick up her Nobel Prize.

The Philippine election season, which got under way this month with candidates registering for more than 18,000 posts from president to town councillor, would be "critical" for the country, said Ressa, calling it an "existential moment".

Voters will choose in May the successor to Duterte, who is constitutionally barred from seeking a second six-year term.

Surveys show Duterte's daughter, Sara, and the son and namesake of former dictator Ferdinand Marcos among the front runners for the top job. Sara has denied plans to run.

"This is going to be a battle for facts," Ressa said, warning the spread of disinformation on social media platforms could threaten the "integrity" of the election.

Filipinos are among the world's heaviest users of social media, and the country has become a key battleground for fake news.

Bhasan Char impasse

FROM PAGE 1

"The MoU covers key areas including protection, education, skills-training, livelihoods and health [of the Rohingyas], which will help support the refugees to lead a decent life and prepare better for their sustainable return to Myanmar in future," said a UNHCR statement after the deal was signed.

The UN response will build upon and complement the humanitarian assistance so far provided by Bangladeshi NGOs on the island, it added.

The UN organisations would provide their humanitarian assistance in Bhasan Char as they do in camps in Cox's Bazar, Mohsin said.

The humanitarian assistance will be given under the supervision of the civil administration, he added.

Since December last year, the government has relocated about 18,000 Rohingyas to Bhasan Char from Cox's Bazar in phases.

The government plans to shift about 81,000 more Rohingyas to the island in three months, according to Mohsin.

The facility in Bhasan Char can accommodate about one lakh Rohingyas, he said.

Bangladesh Navy implemented the Tk 3,100 crore housing project with 120 brick-built cluster villages and 120 cyclone shelters, flood protection

embankments, facilities for education, farming and fishing, hospitals and playgrounds.

The UN, however, had raised concerns over risks of tidal surges and cyclones at the remote island despite the government's repeated assurance that the char is a much better living place than the Cox's Bazar camps.

In the absence of the UN in Bhasan Char, Bangladeshi non-governmental organisations (NGOs) began providing humanitarian assistance to the Rohingyas in December last year from their fund. Since then, the government had repeatedly been urging the UN to begin its operations there.

The MoU is a further expression of the government of Bangladesh's generosity and support towards the Rohingya population until they can return safely and sustainably to Myanmar, the UNHCR said in the statement.

The Bangladesh government will look after the security of the Rohingya people living in the Bhasan Char and the security of the local and international aid workers, Mohsin said.

Asked about the measures taken to keep the island's new inhabitants safe, Mohsin said: "Security measures are very good in Bhasan Char."

Besides, an additional 200 Ansar

members will be recruited soon for the island, he said.

The UNHCR said prior to the signing of the MoU, the UN held discussions with the Rohingya refugee community in Cox's Bazar, as well as with those already on the island during a UN visit to Bhasan Char in March 2021, to better understand their needs and views.

"These discussions, as well as those with government counterparts and Bangladeshi NGOs working on the island are expected to continue on a regular basis."

The UN encourages the international community to increase its generous support to the humanitarian response in Bangladesh, recognising that the Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya Humanitarian Response in Cox's Bazar is currently less than half funded for this year, the UNHCR statement said.

State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief M Enamur Rahman was present at the signing ceremony.

Bangladesh has been hosting more than 1.1 million displaced Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar. Most of them arrived after a military crackdown by Myanmar in 2017, which the UN called a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing" and other rights groups called "genocide".

Cutting deeper thru the youth

FROM PAGE 1

On September 24, the RU student died by suicide failing to cope with severe depression.

Imrul is among four university students who died by suicide from September 23 to 30 this year, according to media reports.

A recent survey by Aachol Foundation, a non-profit organisation which creates awareness of mental health among students, found that 14,436 people committed suicide from March 8, 2020 to March 8, 2021. Forty-nine percent of them were aged between 18 and 35.

However, Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics data show that about 10,000 people die by suicide in Bangladesh every year on average.

In another study conducted in September on 2,552 tertiary level students from all types of educational institutions across the country, Aachol Foundation found that 84.6 percent of the students suffered from mental health problems during the pandemic.

About 75 percent of the respondents said they lost interest in continuing study and 29 percent of them committed different types of self-harming activities due to depression related to education and their future careers.

Some 21 percent of the youths thought of committing suicide at least once in the last one year.

Uncertainty over their future career, deteriorating financial condition of their families amid the pandemic, death of family members from Covid, loneliness, and breaking up of relationship due to long-term separation during the pandemic are some of the key reasons mentioned by the students for their depression.

Prof Dr Mahjabeen Haque of Department of Educational and Counselling Psychology at Dhaka University said Aachol Foundation's findings were not unexpected at all.

"For our youths, Covid-19 pandemic has suddenly created an uncertain situation. Educational institutions were closed, job market is shrinking and many families were destroyed financial during the pandemic," she told The Daily Star.

"Again, in this age, youths usually develop romantic relationship many of which have also been ruined by the long period of separation during the pandemic. Youths also love to spend a lot of time with their peers which they used to do at their institutions."

As the institutions were closed,

youths could not share their emotions and experiences with their friends, the DU teacher said. "They lost their financial independence and had to remain confined to their home for a long time. For those who live in families which are not very supportive, things became even tougher. In this way, the pandemic has made a devastating impact on the mental health of our youth," Mahjabeen said.

Experts have also pointed out the fact that most cases of mental health problems remain untreated in Bangladesh as the treatment is taboo and there is a severe shortage of trained manpower.

According to the national mental health survey of Bangladesh 2018-19, jointly conducted by the Bangladesh government and World Health Organisation (WHO), 92 percent adults with mental health problems do not get any treatment and 94 percent youths aged between 18 and 23 with mental health problems do not receive any treatment.

The survey found that 18.7 percent of Bangladesh's population aged 18 and above have mental disorders.

Dr Mohammad Muntasir Maruf, assistant registrar at National Institute of Mental Health, said seeking treatment for mental health problems is still taboo in Bangladesh.

"People do not want to share their personal issues of anxiety or frustration fearing harassment and being stigmatised by the society. Patients are taken to hospitals only when they become severely ill."

"Despite this, we are having an increasing number of young patients with anxiety disorders, depression and obsessive compulsive disorders induced by the pandemic."

He said the country's treatment capacity is also highly insufficient as there are only 270 psychiatrists and about 500 psychologists to treat a huge number of patients with mental disorders.

"There is no course or training facility for psychiatric and mental health nurses in Bangladesh. Study of mental health is also very neglected in Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (MBBS) curricula which exacerbated the scarcity of trained professionals," the physician said.

Experts suggested a unified approach from the family, society and the government to save youths from the imminent mental health disaster.

Prof Mahjabeen said, "It has been found in various studies, including

one conducted by Aachol Foundation, that youths who spend more time on devices and do not maintain regular sleep cycle are more vulnerable to anxiety disorder. It is important to maintain a healthy environment at home so that young members can lead a disciplined life."

Tansen Rose, founder of Aachol Foundation, said: "Our society also has some responsibilities to keep our next generation mentally healthy. Our youths face tough competitions in every step of their life -- from primary school to getting a job. The society puts a lot of expectations and pressure on them. When they fail to meet these expectations, they often face criticism, insult and neglect. Such practices should be stopped. We should keep in mind that when a person suffers from mental health issues, such an act can put pressure on him/her to commit suicide."

Stressing the need for enhancing the country's mental healthcare capacity, Dr Maruf said at least 10 years is needed to produce enough psychiatrists and psychologists to treat a huge number of mental health patients.

"In the meantime, we should train our existing doctors and nurses to treat patients. In this way, we can extend mental healthcare services to general hospitals and upazila health complexes."

He suggested integrating social workers and counsellors into the healthcare system and mobilising them to raise awareness among the youths about mental health issues.

PM opens

The power plant consisting two units with a capacity of 1,200MW each is the country's maiden power project of its kind, he said.

Project Director Shaukat Akbar said work is going on in Rooppur maintaining Covid-19 hygiene rules strictly.

He said installation of almost all types of nuclear equipment will be completed with setting up of the reactor pressure vessel inside the physical structure of unit-1. As a result, the work inside the reactor building of this unit will be almost completed.

The Rooppur power plant project is being implemented by Bangladesh Atomic Energy Commission. It is being constructed with technical and financial support from Russia.

Facebook hit with another global outage

Services back after hours

AFP, San Francisco

Facebook on Friday said users around the world again had problems accessing its services for hours due to a tweak of its system, just days after a massive outage caused in a similar fashion.

"Sincere apologies to anyone who wasn't able to access our products in the last couple of hours," a Facebook spokesperson told AFP about 21:30 GMT. "We fixed the issue, and everything should be back to normal now."

Website trouble tracker DownDetector showed spikes in reports of problems accessing or using Facebook and its photo-centric Instagram network as well as Messenger and WhatsApp starting about three hours earlier.

Facebook attributed the trouble to a configuration change at its computing platform and said that it affected users of the social network and Instagram, Messenger and Workplace globally.

People flocked to Twitter to voice frustration.

"What's up with Instagram?" read a tweet that included a picture of cartoon character Bart Simpson sitting in a corner in apparent punishment.

"It's not even 4 days and it's already down again."

"Problems with Instagram, Facebook, Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp AGAIN!" read a lament in a DownDetector chat forum.

Hundreds of millions of people were unable to access Facebook, Instagram or WhatsApp for more than six hours on Monday, underscoring the world's reliance on platforms owned by the Silicon Valley giant.

At least five die in Turag boat capsizes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Savar

Firefighters rescued five bodies till yesterday afternoon, hours after a trawler capsized in the Turag at Aminbazar point, on the outskirts of the capital.

The death includes a woman and four children -- three boys and a girl.

Divers of fire service rescued the bodies of a woman and children from the river, Nazma Akter, duty officer of Fire Service and Civil Defence control room, confirmed to The Daily Star.

After being hit by a sand-laden cargo vessel, the trawler that was carrying 18 people capsized in the river around 5:30am yesterday in Koilar Ghat area.

On information around 8:45am, firefighters rushed to the spot and started the rescue operations, fire service sources said.

Rescuers recovered the bodies of two children and a woman after the trawler capsized and later divers recovered the two bodies around 3:45 pm and 4:45 pm from the river, Khaleda Yasmin, duty officer of Fire Service and Civil Defence Headquarters told The Daily Star.

Dino Moni Sharma, deputy director of fire service, told reporters on the spot that the rescue operation was suspended at 6:00pm yesterday due to a lack of light and strong current in the river.

"At night, our teams will patrol the river as two people are still missing. We will resume our operation in the morning," the fire service official said.

Police are trying to identify the vessel that hit the trawler, Dino Moni added.

Serum resumes

FROM PAGE 1

a large unexpected order from the Indian government.

Then in April, in the face of a ferocious second coronavirus wave, the Indian government placed a bar on vaccine exports, dealing a major blow to 190 countries including Bangladesh, which counted on the affordable, 90 percent-effective Covishield jab to vaccinate its population.

This sent the government, which by then was battling a spike in cases in Bangladesh, searching high and low for vaccines. It managed the Sinopharm vaccine, which is said to be 79 percent effective in preventing coronavirus infections, from a Chinese state-owned pharmaceutical company.

This, along with donations of Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca jabs from the Covax scheme, the US and a few other countries kept Bangladesh's Covid-19 inoculation drive, which began on February 7 with the Covishield vaccine, ticking along.

Now, with the easing of India's vaccine exports, Bangladesh's vaccine campaign got further momentum.

So far, Bangladesh has inoculated about 15 percent of its population with full doses of the Covid-19 vaccine.

Bangladesh plans to vaccinate 70-80 percent of the population by March next year, said Health Minister Zahid Maleque.

Growing

FROM PAGE 1

Adnan Zillur Morshed, executive director of Brac University's Centre for Inclusive Architecture and Urbanism, said there should be extensive research on the middle-class.

Journalist and writer Faruk Wasif said the new middle-class is more like a consumer group than a class of leaders.

PPRC Chairman Hossain Zillur Rahman moderated the discussion.

Fake 'secretary' embezzles millions

DB arrests man who misrepresented himself as additional secy to fraud people

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

He used to pose as an additional secretary of an important ministry, rode a luxurious car with the ministry's sticker and frequented the secretariat with fake ID to lobby for works in government projects, bank loans and jobs.

According to law enforcers' claims, having two offices at the capital's Gulshan and Karwan Bazar, the fraudulent activities of Abdul Kader, a tenth-grade dropout, have been ongoing for 14 years, until he was arrested by the detective branch (DB) of police on Thursday.

At a press briefing at Dhaka Metropolitan Police's Media Centre yesterday, DB chief AKM Hafeez Akhter said, "Kader used to say that he has a consortium and business relations with 33 secretaries and top officials."

He also introduced himself as a legal adviser of business magnate Moosa Bin Shamsheer and former Jubo League leader GK Shamim. He has fooled many established people, he said.

He added that Kader has embezzled crores of taka through getting large bank loans and works in government projects under the false identity.

Gulshan DB police, in collaboration

with an intelligence agency, carried out a drive and arrested four people, including Kader, from Karwan Bazar, Mirpur and Gulshan areas, according to DB sources.

The other arrestees are Kader's wife Sharmin Chowdhury and his office staffers Shahidul Alam and Anisur Rahman.

A foreign pistol and different types of genuine and fake documents were seized from Kader's office.

DB said Kader carried out fraudulent activities using names of different companies like Dhaka Trade Corporation, Jamider Trading, Sameen Enterprise, Chowdhury Group, Human Improvement Foundation, Satota Properties, Dana Logistics and Dana Motors.

He started doing all this sometime between 2004 and 2006 through the government project "Ekti Bari, Ekti Khamar". During this period, his organisation Human Improvement Foundation embezzled crores of taka from general people.

"Kader used to tell sub-contractors that he had received works for different government projects and showed fake documents to convince them. He would then sell fake work orders to the contractors. Besides, he also took money for job recruitment," said the DB official.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



Friends, comrades and well-wishers in Bangladesh observed a minute of silence and bid an emotional farewell to South Asian feminist activist Kamla Bhasin, who passed away on September 25, through music, poetry and dance at Rabintra Sarobar in Dhaka yesterday. They shared their memories of love, laughter and activism with Kamla, who worked alongside and inspired multiple generations of feminists in the country. *Inset*, Khushi Kabir and Fawzia Khondker, two of her close friends, and core committee members of Sangat Bangladesh -- which organised the event -- pay their homage.

PABNA MENTAL HOSPITAL

Resources fall short for rehabilitation

Authorities trying to expand occupational therapy, which only 25-30 patients can currently avail

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPLI, Pabna

Russel Hossain has been afflicted with mental health issues for a long time. The Dhulauri village native -- under Chatmohar upazila -- was admitted to Pabna Mental Hospital several times, to be released upon temporary recovery and admitted back again.

He is currently staying at the occupational therapy centre of the hospital. His days pass by playing cricket, table tennis, and weaving clothes.

"Nobody in my family supports me. Society has made me into an outcast," Russell told this correspondent recently. "But here, I get to work as a handicraft artist, and there are opportunities to make some money too."

Alok Kumar Das, who is in charge of the occupational therapy centre, said, "After recovering through medical and psychiatric treatment, the patients are brought here for occupational therapy, to help with their rehabilitation."

"We train them on handicraft, tailoring and other vocations, so that they can earn a living once they return home. A few of them are also given computer training," he added.

But due to a lack of resources, the hospital cannot afford to provide these essential facilities to all its patients.

Of the total admitted to the 500-bed health facility, only some 25 to 30 patients get the opportunity to access the facilities of the occupational therapy centre. "We are unable to accommodate more patients in the cane work and weaving centre, due to shortage of space and human resources," Alok confessed.

RESOURCE ISSUES

Occupational therapy centre lacks space to accommodate patients

18 out of 31 posts for physicians vacant

445 staffers working, but there are 643 designated posts

Playground, park barely usable for lack of maintenance

It's a must to remove social stigma surrounding mental health. If a patient gets support from the family and society after returning home, they tend to recover faster.

DR MASUD RANA SARKAR
RESIDENTIAL PSYCHIATRIST AT PABNA
MENTAL HOSPITAL

"But we understand how important this could be for some of the patients."

Talking to this correspondent, hospital director Abul Bashar Md Asaduzzaman said, "Out of 31 allotted posts for doctors, 18 remain vacant, meaning we're operating our 500-bed hospital with only 13 physicians. Besides, there are a lot of outdoor patients, who rely on these few doctors too."

Beyond just doctors, the hospital is not well-staffed in general. Out of its 643 posts, 198 are vacant, the official informed.

However, he claimed that they're

trying their best to overcome the crises.

"We have a plan to expand the computer training centre and introduce more facilities so that we can train more patients and prepare them for the world outside," said Dr Bashar.

Amidst all this, a total of 4.35 lakh patients have taken treatment from the outdoor department in the last 10 years.

A total of 16,171 patients were admitted to the oldest specialised mental health hospital in the country during this time, although this includes many cases of re-admission, hospital sources said.

Besides rehabilitation training, patients are also supposed to get the opportunity to play indoor and outdoor games and spend time at the hospital's park. But due to lack of maintenance, the playground and park are barely usable.

"I used to feel better when we could come out to play," said Md Salahuddin, a patient at the facility. "Even though the playground is not in any condition to play anymore, we still come here to spend time together. That's how much we like the place."

Asked, occupational therapy centre in-charge Alok said, "Maintenance workers often clean the ground, but it's done in such long intervals that it soon becomes unusable again."

Besides medical treatment, patients need psychiatric treatment and social support as well, according to Dr Masud Rana Sarkar, residential psychiatrist of the Pabna mental hospital.

"Engaging in multiple activities can help patients with their recovery," Dr Masud said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



Through the hospital's occupational therapy centre, selected patients get to learn handicraft, tailoring and other vocations. But the centre, playground and park need to be expanded and maintained, so all patients can take part in recreational activities.

PHOTO: STAR

SC to get new judges soon

Says law minister over reduction of case backlog

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The government is planning to appoint some new judges to the Appellate and High Court Divisions of the Supreme Court soon in order to reduce the backlogs of pending cases.

"Some new judges will be appointed to the High Court Division and few judges from the High Court Division will be elevated to the Appellate Division soon for increasing the rate of case disposal," Law Minister Anisul Huq told The Daily Star on Friday.

"I have said earlier that appointment of judges is a continuous process. When the posts of judges fall vacant, new judges are appointed," he said.

The law minister said he will not disclose at this moment when and how many judges will be appointed to the Appellate and High Court Divisions which are now experiencing around five lakh pending cases.

According to sources at the SC, discussions are going on in the policy making authorities for appointing 12 judges to the HC

	DIVISIONS	JUDGES	PENDING CASES
Appellate	5	15,225	
High Court	91	4,52,963	

SOURCE: LAW LAB, AS OF DEC 31, 2020

Division.

Of the 12, four may be picked from the SC bar association, four from the lower courts and another four from the attorney general's office.

Besides, three judges from the HC division may be promoted to the Appellate Division. The numbers may be increased at the final stage.

The crisis of judges increased the case backlogs at the courts of the country in the last few years and the pandemic restrictions have turned the situation graver, causing immense sufferings to the justice seekers.

There are five judges including the chief justice in the Appellate Division (AD) and 91 in the HC division now.

The chief justice will retire on December 31 this year.

But the number of cases

pending with the AD is 15,225 while it was 4,52,963 with the HC till December 31 last year, according to a study report of Law Lab, a law-chamber that conducts research on legal and constitutional issues.

The president gave the last appointment on September 2, 2020 when two HC judges -- Justice Tariq ul Hakim and Justice Obaidul Hassan -- were promoted to the Appellate Division.

However, Justice Tariq retired 12 days after his promotion.

In 1974, the AD had five judges and the number of the HC judges was 12. The pending cases in the AD and HC at that time were 4,094 and 28,186 respectively.

On July 9, 2009, the then president raised the number of judges at the Appellate Division from seven to 11 prior to disposing of some important cases.

Larger platform for movement in offing

Says Khandaker Mosharraf

UNB, Dhaka

BNP senior leader Khandaker Mosharraf yesterday hinted that their party has been trying to float a larger platform of opposition parties to wage a strong movement for ousting the current government.

"We'll create a greater united platform on one-point demand to restore democracy by ousting the current government through a strong movement," he said.

Speaking at a discussion, the BNP leader said their one-point demand is the restoration of democracy and people's voting rights and the release of Khaleda Zia. "Our only goal is to protect the rights and interests of the people of this country."

Jatiya Party (Kazi Zafar), one of the components of the BNP-led 20-party alliance, arranged the programme at Jatiya Press Club in memory of its late joint secretary general Mohsin Sarker.



PHOTO: UNB

BNP joining UP polls in guise

Says Quader

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said BNP is taking part in the union parishad (UP) elections using the identity of independent candidates.

"If you [BNP] have the courage, take part in the polls with your party symbol," he said while speaking at a regular press briefing at his official residence in the capital.

Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, said people are happy with the development and achievements of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government and that is why they won't respond to BNP's call for movement.

BNP's daydreaming of waging movement on a single-point demand for neutral polls-time government will also turn into a nightmare very soon, he said.

Pointing to BNP, he said there is no scope to go beyond the constitution for the next general elections.



PHOTO: BSS

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

DENGUE UPDATE



Death toll 73

4 died in Oct so far

23 in Sept, 34 in Aug, 12 in July

224 more hospitalised yesterday

Total infected 19,918

SOURCE: DGHS

DU 'Cha' unit admission test held

DU CORRESPONDENT

Admission test of Dhaka University's "Cha" unit under the Fine Arts Faculty for the 2020-21 academic session was held yesterday morning in eight divisional cities across the country.

The test began at 11am and continued for half an hour.

Around 15,496 admission seekers took the exam while as many as 115 candidates are fighting for a single seat. There are 135 seats under the unit.

The venues outside Dhaka were Chittagong University, Rajshahi University, Khulna University, Bangladesh Agricultural University in Mymensingh, Shahjalal University of Science and Technology in Sylhet, Barisal University, and Begum Rokeya University in Rangpur.

The exam for "Ga" unit will be held on

ADMISSION FOR 2020-21

15,496 vied for 135 "Cha" unit seats

"Ga" unit exam on Oct 22

"Gha" unit exam on Oct 23

October 22, while the "Gha" unit test is slated to be held on October 23.

From first October, DU began its admission tests. A total of 3,24,340 students have applied for the test against the total 7,148 seats under five units.

For the first time in its 100-year history, Dhaka University decided to hold its admission test across all eight divisions, including the capital. DU authorities said it was done to reduce the stress and cost of travelling for examinees, as well as minimise health safety concerns of the pandemic.

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- 📍 Chattogram: 27-31st Oct

MORE NEWS

Cutting hair of 6 students: Lakshmi-pur madrasa teacher sent to jail

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A madrasa teacher was sent to jail yesterday for cutting hair of six students in Raipur upazila of Lakshmi-pur.

"The teacher, Manjurul Kabir Manzur, was detained on Friday night over the incident," said Raipur Police Officer-in-Charge Abdul Jalil yesterday. "He was shown arrested in a case filed by the mother of one of the students and was sent to jail," he added.

Manjur is an assistant teacher of Kazirdighirpar Alim Madrasa and Jamaat Amir of Bamni union. The six students said while attending a class on Wednesday, Manzur made them stand in a row outside the classroom. Later, he cut their hair randomly.

Neighbour arrested for raping teen

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

Police yesterday arrested a youth on charge of raping a 13-year-old in Narayanganj Sadar upazila on Friday.

The accused rapist Khalilur Rahman (21) was a neighbour of the victim.

Police arrested him from Muslimnagar area yesterday afternoon after the victim's grandmother filed a case with Narayanganj Sadar Police Station, said OC Rakibuzzaman of the police station.

The girl used to live in a rented flat with her grandparents and Khalilur was their next-door neighbour. As her grandparents went outside on Friday afternoon, Khalilur forcibly took the girl to his room. Threatening to stab her to death, he raped the girl there, the OC said.

The victim was sent to Narayanganj General Hospital for treatment and test.

BNP should participate in local govt polls: Tazul

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

If BNP is committed to the country's people, it should participate in local government elections, said LGRD Minister Md Tazul Islam yesterday.

The minister was talking to reporters after inaugurating the 54th annual planning conference of Bangladesh Academy for Rural Development (BARD) at Kotbari, Cumilla.

Earlier, Tazul participated in a discussion where he talked about different dimensions of development. He said BARD has worked hard to rebuild Bangladesh and develop its rural areas. The conference was presided over by Secretary Md Moshir Rahman.

Stone-laden ship capsizes in Bay

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

A stone-laden ship capsized in the Bay of Bengal near Bagerhat's Dublar char area early yesterday.

On information, BGB members rescued all crew members of the vessel, MV Beauty Lohagarah-2, said a press release signed by Lieutenant Khandakar Monif Taki.

The vessel sank after cracks developed on its floor when it was going to Khulna with 1,100 metric tonnes of stone unloaded from Singapore's flag-carrying "MV Sagar Ratan".

On Friday, lighter vessel MV Desh Bandhu sank in the Pashur river with 850 tonnes of Diammonium phosphate.

Probe report on Rabindra University teacher Farhana delayed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

The submission of probe report is being delayed as the investigation committee is yet to get Farhana Yeasmin Baten's statement over forcibly cutting hair of 14 students at Rabindra University, Sirajganj on September 26.

Laila Fardous Himel, head of the committee of the university, said, "We notified Farhana of giving her statement on October 3. However, the accused teacher replied that she was sick but she didn't submit any medical report." Later, Farhana was given three more days, but to no avail.

Afterwards, Farhana sent a medical report of a doctor showing she is suffering from "hepatitis B", she added.

Fifty-two people -- including the university teachers, officers and students -- gave their statements, said Laila. "We are preparing to submit the probe report within this week."

For the welfare of strays

Youngsters step up to look after port city's animals

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Chattogram

For more than five years, a bunch of young volunteers in the port city have been hard at work, all for the welfare of strays. Wherever there's an animal in need -- on the streets, at residential areas, or even in jungles -- the team gets ready for a rescue mission.

With founder Sumi Biswas, they work under the organisation "Animal Care of Chattogram", which doesn't just stop at providing food, but offers treatment and shelter at a centre until the animals are fully healed.

When Sumi was still a schoolkid, she used to save tiffin-money and feed strays as well as take care of sick and injured animals. Seemingly forever, she harboured a dream of establishing a platform that could take better care of the animals.

In 2015, she founded the organisation and was on her way to help more animals, but funds soon became a cause for concern.

Fortunately, her father stepped up and provided a piece of land at Halishahar's Anandabazar area, so that Sumi and her group of young volunteers could set up their shelter centre.

The shelter was crucial. "We used to rescue strays and take them to the veterinary surgeon or veterinary hospital," Sumi said. "Some of the injured animals needed post-operative care. We couldn't just leave them on the road."



PHOTO: COLLECTED

"We built a tin-roofed centre there in 2016. Since then, we have rescued and treated a total of 151 animals," she said. "Last year, we relocated to a new facility in Bandartila area, after a volunteer provided a piece of land."

"The injured animals -- mostly victims of motor vehicle accidents -- are provided with shelter, food, and treatment at the centre. Currently, we have 11 dogs here," she said.

Today, the organisation has 32 volunteers dedicated to its mission.

One of them, Saadman Ittehad, serves as the chief operating officer. Talking to this correspondent, he recounted how they fed several hundred animals during the countrywide lockdown, when their

food sources ran dry with the closing of hotels and restaurants.

Chief technical officer Jobaid Azim said, "There was an initial struggle with the centre, as neighbours annoyed by the barks of dogs used to lodge complaints regularly."

"But we reached out and informed them about the animals' predicament, and soon they were on-board too," he said.

But for all their good intentions, the organisation is still facing a shortage of funds. "So far, we have been running mostly on volunteers' contributions. It would be so much easier if affluent people of the city, the government, and organisations like the city corporation stood by us," Sumi said.



Former JU pro-VC Afsar Ahmed passes away

JU CORRESPONDENT

Prof Afsar Ahmed, playwright and former pro-vice chancellor of Jahangirnagar University, passed away yesterday.

Mahibur Rauf Shaibal, assistant professor of the department of drama and dramatics, also the assistant proctor of the university, confirmed the information.

"Professor Afsar was returning from Khulna by air today [Saturday] when he suffered a heart attack. He was taken to the National Institute of Cardiovascular Diseases where he was declared dead," said the assistant proctor.

In a condolence message, JU VC Prof Farzana Islam said the death of Afsar Ahmed is an irreparable loss to Bangla drama, culture and the university.

BNP joining

FROM PAGE 3

So, there will be no benefit in creating unnecessary chaos over the matter, he said. About BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir's remarks over Buet student Abrar murder, the AL general secretary said, "Can Mirza Fakhrul give a single instance of bringing their own party men to justice for their wrongdoings during their government's tenure?"

He said most of those accused in Abrar killing have identity of Chhatra League but none was spared. Offenders, whoever they are, must be brought to justice, he said.

He said party identity cannot be a shield of anyone's protection, and Sheikh Hasina's government has proven it time and again.



For the last few days, the combination of rainfall and poor drainage has made this road at the capital's Shyampur overflowing with knee-deep water. Amid this situation, many residents, like this man here, have to cross the road by wading through the murky mess and simultaneously find a way around the barricades, which were put in place due to development work. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Larger platform for movement

FROM PAGE 3

Mosharraf, a BNP standing committee member, said people are ready to wage a tougher movement to ensure the fall of Awami League government.

He said it is now the responsibility of the political parties to protect the

country and restore people's rights through a united movement. The BNP leader said the fall of the current government through a movement will pave the way for holding a credible national election in the country under a neutral administration.

"Some of you have said our 20-party alliance has become inactive. It happened due to the coronavirus. Our party also kept all organisational activities suspended due to the same reason. But this situation won't remain the same in the days to come," he said.

EMBEZZLING Tk 34 LAKH IN RANGPUR Railway ticket official sued, stationmaster suspended

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinajpur

The authorities of Western Railway Zone of Lalmonirhat division have filed a case against the ticket booking manager of Rangpur's Kaunia Railway Station over embezzling around Tk 34 lakh from ticket sales.

The authorities also suspended its stationmaster for negligence in account maintenance.

Junior traffic inspector of the division Sagir Uddin filed the case with the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in Rangpur on Monday, accusing Mishuk Al Mamun, chief ticket booking manager of Kaunia Railway Station.

According to the case documents, the money was embezzled from ticket sales of the last six months.

During this period, the station sold tickets worth around Tk 34 lakh. But instead of depositing the money to the national exchequer, Mishuk embezzled it, divisional manager Shah Sufi Nur Mohammad claimed.

The issue came to light after railway officials noticed the mismanagement on September 24.

They soon carried out an internal audit and found evidence against the allegations.

They later interrogated Mishuk on October 4, filed the case on the same day and handed him over to police, officials said.

Police produced him before a local court and sent him to Rangpur jail on the same day.

Meanwhile, the railway authorities have also suspended stationmaster Babu Al Rashid for his alleged negligence, divisional manager Nur Mohammad confirmed to journalists yesterday.

The official also said according to the rules, a stationmaster is responsible for taking ticket sales money from the booking manager and depositing the amount in the bank.

But it was found that the stationmaster of Kaunia did not do this for the last six months, the official told The Daily Star.

This correspondent tried to reach the stationmaster for comments, but he did not receive calls.

Dorms reopen at Islamic univ

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Residential students of Islamic University (IU) in Kushtia returned to their dormitories after the authorities reopened those yesterday following an 18-month closure due to Covid-19 pandemic.

Vice Chancellor Prof Sheikh Abdus Salam welcomed the students with flowers, chocolates, and masks. Pro-VC Prof Mahubur Rahman, Treasurer Prof Alamgir Hossain Bhuiyan, and provosts of different halls were also present.

Proctor Prof Jahangir Hossain said residential students who have received at least one dose of vaccine are being allowed to return to dormitories. Students were seen joyous as they reunited with their friends after such a long time.

Meanwhile, the "gono" (mass) rooms of the halls remained closed. Only students with residential cards were allowed in the dorms. According to campus sources, out of 15,000 students, only 23 percent get accommodation in dormitories. The others find private accommodations or stay in crowded "gono" rooms.

The VC said their responsibility didn't end with reopening halls. It is also important to keep the students healthy and well.

Freedom fighters yet to get Muktijoddha Complex in Savar

ARLAKUR RAHMAN AKASH, Savar

In 2012, the government took up the initiative for a Tk 1,223 crore project to build multi-storied Upazila Muktijoddha Complexes across 470 upazilas.

The government has a four-pronged aim with the project: to inspire everyone by highlighting the spirit of the Liberation War; to help with the operations of Upazila Muktijoddha Sangsads; to meet the daily expenses of the sangsads with the income earned from the complex; and to ensure socio-economic welfare of freedom fighters and their children by creating long-term employment opportunities.

According to the website of the Ministry of Liberation War Affairs, the project's implementation period runs from July 1, 2012 to June 30, 2023. The total cost was fixed at around Tk 1,223.54 crore.

But nine years on, the project is yet to see any progress in Savar upazila, which is creating deep frustration among the area's freedom fighters.

Ain Uddin Ahmed, commander of Savar Upazila Muktijoddha Sangsad, told The Daily Star recently that the project has been delayed due to complexities in finding land for the complex. "We wanted to make sure the complex is constructed on a good piece of land, which will be beneficial for the freedom fighters as well as the area's people."

Contacted, UNO Mazaharul Islam said a site has been selected for its construction -- at a spot close to Savar Bazar bus stand, next to the Savar Model Mosque and Islamic Cultural Center. A proposal has been sent to the ministry to get approval for the land, he said.

Project director Md Abdul Hakim told The Daily Star that 400 complexes have already been completed, while 31 are under construction. Besides, three more are undergoing the tender process while 10 are in the soil testing phase.

He said Savar's muktijoddha complex is among the 10 going through soil testing right now. However, the project is being delayed as water has accumulated around the chosen spot for the complex. "Once the water dries, we will finish up the soil testing," added Abdul Hakim.

Fake secretary

FROM PAGE 3

Posing as an additional secretary, Kader took a hefty amount of money as "visiting fees" and commissions to lobby for jobs. Some of the victims were present at the media centre yesterday.

Joynal Abedin, a supplier who needed a loan for a government project, said he contacted Kader, after getting a visiting card from a marketing executive of Kader's office. "I filled up a form and paid Tk 15,000 to meet him. Then I gave him Tk 5 lakh for 'profile-making charge'. For taking the loan, I paid an additional Tk 2 lakh. He then asked for an advance of one percent of the total loan amount to get a loan of Tk 20 crore. I paid half of what he demanded -- Tk 10 lakh." He did not get the loan.

DB said two cases have been filed against the arrestees.

Resources fall

FROM PAGE 3

"But it's also a must to remove social stigma surrounding mental health. If a patient gets support from the family and society after returning home, they tend to recover faster," he said, echoing the slogan for this year's world mental health day "Mental health care for all, let's make it a reality."

Brac on mission to promote masks, hand-washing

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

On a busy weekday morning, Md Imran, a vegetable supplier at Sadek Khan Krishi (agricultural) Market in Dhaka's Rayer Bazar area, was unloading vegetables from his truck. Suddenly, he noticed a volunteer from Brac distributing masks among people in the market, free of cost.

He quickly approached the volunteer and took seven masks for himself and his workers.

"Wearing a mask is crucial to prevent Covid-19. However, traders at this market are so busy that we often forget to wear them. So, I took a mask for myself and six more for my workers," said Imran.

Md Sami, manager of Sadek Khan Market, said, "Brac is also maintaining a hand-washing booth here. In the beginning of 2020, the bazaar committee installed a hand-washing booth but we could not maintain it. However, Brac is keeping this new booth functional."

Brac has been working to build community resilience against Covid-19 in 68 wards of Dhaka city under a project called "Community Support Team Dhaka" -- in collaboration with UNFPA and FAO, and with support from UK Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office.

The organisation has identified 1,360 places of public gathering as Covid-19 transmission hotspots, where its volunteers and community health workers distribute masks for free, run hand-washing booths, support vaccine registration, arrange telemedicine, and conduct community health monitoring.

From June to September 2021, the organisation has distributed 1.61 million masks, established 408 hand-washing stations, supported 799 persons with vaccine registration, and arranged telemedicine for 3,417 people.

"Besides, our volunteers are running the same initiatives in 600 schools and 3,400 mosques," said Monzur Morshed Patwary, senior manager of Health, Nutrition and Population Programme (HNPP) at Brac.

HNPP director Morseda Chowdhury said, "We are trying to bring behavioural changes among people in maintaining hygiene and physical distancing. It will take time to bring complete change, but we have already made people understand the significance of these health guidelines."

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An artisan at work on a Durga idol at Chhoto Gurgola Sarbojonee Durga Puja mandap in Dinajpur. The photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: KONGKON KARMAKER

DURGA PUJA

Dinajpur sees hike in number of mandaps

KONGKON KARMAKER

The Hindu community in Dinajpur starts celebrating Durga Puja, the largest religious festival of the Hindus in the country, with Shoshthi rituals at 1,281 mandaps in the district tomorrow.

Artisans are now busy putting the finishing touches to the Goddess Durga and other deities at the mandaps in all 13 upazilas of Dinajpur.

This year the festival is being organised at an additional 35 mandaps in the district where

1,246 mandaps were made last year, according to the Dinajpur chapter leaders of the 'Bangladesh Hindu Bouddha Christian Oikya Parishad'.

Swarup Bakshi Bachchu, president of the Parishad's Dinajpur chapter, said Dinajpur has always been among one of the districts where highest number of mandaps was made in the country each year.

Artisans with multiple jobs at different mandaps have been running against time to finish their work at hand and start on the next

ones before the Shoshthi rituals, a number of artisans told this correspondent.

Swapan Paul, an artisan who was making idols at Chanderhat temple in Dinajpur town, said he has been in the trade for the last 40 years.

This year he and his group of artisans are in contract to make idols for 15 mandaps -- at Tk 50,000 for each set of idols -- in Dinajpur and other districts.

"We stay extremely busy ahead of the festival every year," but this year the workload is much higher

as the number of mandaps have increased, he said.

Another artisan, Bharat Chandra Paul, who has contracts for making idols at 12 different mandaps in Dinajpur, said the artisans were overloaded with jobs this time around as many of them have been leaving the ancestral profession.

Meanwhile, as a measure to beef up security in and around mandaps and temples in Dinajpur ahead of the Durga Puja, police said they deployed 7,744 ansar personnel and teams of police strike force.

Jhenidah Malakar community busy crafting decorative flowers

The ornamental item is essential for Laxmi puja

AZIBOR RAHMAN

The malakar (garlanders) community is spending busy days making decorative flowers crafted with shola (Indian jointvetch) ahead of Laxmi and Durga Puja.

They are expecting a good yield on the occasion of the festivities, especially Laxmi puja in which the decorative flowers play an integral part.

While visiting Bhatpara village under Kaliganj upazila in Jhenidah, this correspondent found that the artisans were busy making shola-crafted flowers for the upcoming puja festivals.

Hundreds of decorative flowers are sold ahead of the religious festivals, the community people said.

This work starts in August and ends at the last week of October. In this time, they earn a good amount and buy new dress by doing a brisk business. It costs a little to make shola-made flowers and they make a hefty profit.

They collect the plant from nearby marsh lands and waterbodies. They dry it in the sun and cut it in different shapes. Later, they craft decorative items and sell them in the market. Its demand



PHOTO: STAR

Malakar community people in Malipara area under Kaliganj upazila of Jhenidah spends busy time making shola crafts and decorative plants, an ingredient of Hindu festival Laxmi puja. Right, a bunch of decorative flowers.

is very high in the market because each Hindu family must buy it for Laxmi puja.

Santosh Kumar malakar, 65, said he has been in this profession for the last 40 years.

"We make cap, hand fan, birds, peacock and crocodile with shola and sell those in the fair. Its main ingredient is shola and it needs gum, paper, colour and thread. It costs Tk three only to make and we sell it at Tk 20 to Tk 25," he added.

He is expecting to sell earn Tk 15,000 this year.

A female student Bristi Malakar of Kaliganj Womens' College said that she earns a good amount per month by making flowers in the gap of her studies and on holidays. She can buy study materials and her dress with the income.

Sundarpur-Durgapur union Chairman Ilias Rahman Mitu said that malakar community people under this union make different items of shola and maintain their families. He assured of providing the community people all sorts of assistance.

Criminals uproot 3,000 tomato plants

OUR CORRESPONDENT, MOULVIBAZAR

Unidentified criminals uprooted 3,000 tomato plants, belonging to two farmers, on 45 acres of land in Kamalganj upazila of the district.

The affected farmers--Karim Mia, 62, and Khokon Mia, 25), of Homerjan village under Adampur union--filed a complaint with Kamalganj Police Station in this regard on Friday night.

"We went to the field on Friday morning and found all the 3,000 fruit bearing plants completely uprooted," Karim said.

"Those who have committed such a heinous crime should be brought to book," said another victim Khokon.

Local union parishad (UP) member Helal Uddin said the two sharecroppers earn their livelihood by cultivating other's land.

They have been cultivating tomatoes, taking lease of other people's land for years, he said.

Adampur UP Chairman Abdal Hossain assured that the affected farmers will get necessary assistance from the local administration.

Malta winning hearts of tobacco growers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Nilphamari

Tobacco used to be the crop of choice among farmers in Gobindapur village of Sadar upazila.

But lately, the cultivation of tobacco, which is harmful for both human consumption and the soil, is showing signs of decline in the village -- thanks to pioneering efforts by Mohammad Shafiqul and a changed scenario in the age of Covid-19 pandemic.

Shafiqul said he wanted to do something to end tobacco cultivation in his village, where he returned in 2018 after serving at a ship building company in Singapore for 15 years.

"I took notice that agents from big tobacco companies allure farmers into cultivating the harmful crop by providing special incentives, interest free loan facilities, free fertilisers and tobacco seeds."

In order to sway the farmers off the vicious enticement, Shafiqul had been looking for ways to provide them with a substitute and a profitable crop that he would cultivate on his own land to set an example with.

Following subsequent discussions with the then sub-assistant agriculture officer of Department of Agricultural Extension in the village in 2018, the same year he came home, Shafiqul was convinced and collected 241 saplings of BARI Malta-1 (blood orange) variety from an orchard in Pirojpur.

He planted the saplings on his 0.62 acre of land and got the first batch of Malta from some of the plants the next year. The

production of the fruit reached its peak the following year.

Harvested in the months of October and November, Malta from his orchard is selling for Tk 120 per kilogram at present, Shafiqul said.

Amid a heightened awareness on the need to consume Vitamin-C enriched produce to fight Covid-19, people not just from the village, but also from neighbouring areas have been contacting him on his Facebook page while many are visiting and buying freshly-plucked Malta from his orchard.

Aside from the handsome profit he is making, the most satisfaction out of his Malta venture is that the farm now motivates other farmers to give up tobacco farming for Malta, Shafiqul said, adding that he has also been selling Malta saplings to at affordable prices.

Some of them, including young entrepreneurs Anisur, Saiful and Mohsinul, said they also made Malta orchards as the plants yield fruit for 15 years with nominal investment and care.

Khokshabari Union Parishad Chairman Bodiuzzaman Sarker said Gobindapur is now recognised as a village of Malta and locals appreciate Shafiqul for helping them give up tobacco cultivation.

Abu Bakkar Siddiquee, deputy director of DAE in Nilphamari, said the success of Malta farming in Gobindapur has been motivating others to convert into Malta cultivation from tobacco. The DAE has been providing support to interested farmers in Nilphamari where Malta is being grown on 150 bighas of land, he added.



Mohammad Shafiqul at his Malta orchard in Gobindapur village of Nilphamari Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

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Broken bridges woe for villagers

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

Six bridges over Badura canal in Shankorpara union under Pirojpur Sadar upazila have been lying broken for over seven years, causing immense sufferings to people.

Of them, the most important bridge at Badura Fish Landing Station collapsed in 2017 disconnecting the fish landing station and Parerhat bazar.

As a result, the sea fish business is being hampered alarmingly as wholesale fish buyers have to use boat to reach the fish landing station amid risk of accident. This mood of transportation is costly too.

Other bridge at Mallik Bari Bus Stop also has remained damaged for over seven years. Several thousand people and students use the bridges every day but no step has been taken yet to repair it.

Finding no other alternative, the villagers have built bamboo bridge to cross the canal.



People built a bamboo bridge to cross Badura canal amid risk as the iron bridge over the waterbody in Pirojpur Sadar upazila has been lying broken for over seven years.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Another bridge at Shankorpara village has been lying damaged for years, causing untold sufferings to locals. A bamboo bridge is the only means to cross the canal there.

Two bridges in Jhawtala area have remained damaged for eight years. Thousands of people as well as students use the bridges to reach Pirojpur town and different

schools daily.

"As the bridge on the seven-kilometre-long canal has been lying broken for long, we cannot drive our vehicles to home," said Mohammad Bellal from Badura village in the upazila.

"Although half of the union has remained disconnected for years, the authorities concerned don't pay any heed to our sufferings," said local resident Mohammad Mostofa.

Locals added that women, elderly people and children are the worst sufferers of the damaged bridges. They are facing difficulties to go to Pirojpur town and their other destinations.

Harashit Sarkar, Pirojpur Sadar upazila engineer, said the condition of mostly iron bridges in the upazila is the worst as they are over 20 years old.

He also said that 51 damaged iron bridges have been included in a development project proposal. Of them, the tender process of 19 bridges has been completed.



Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the District Primary Education
District: Natore
www.dpe.natore.gov.bd



Memo No. 38.01.6900.000.99.224.19-431

Date: 03.10.2021

e-Tender Notice

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following works.

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Name of works	Closing date & time
01	ID-606087, ID-606088	Furniture supply for selected government primary school at different location of Natore district from Need Based Infrastructure Development of Govt. Primary School Project (Phase 1).	26 October 2021 15:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenderers will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Ershad Uddin Ahmed
District Primary Education Officer
Natore
0771-66818
Email: dpeonator@gmail.com

GD-1807

MORE NEWS

US, Mexico agree to revamp fight against drug cartels

The United States and Mexico agreed Friday to overhaul their fight against drug trafficking to address the root causes and step up efforts to curb cross-border arms smuggling. Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador wants Washington to invest in regional economic development instead of sending helicopter gunships and other weapons to take on powerful drug cartels. Both countries said it was time for a rethink after more than a decade during which the United States provided military firepower, technical support and security training under a program called the Merida Initiative. Secretary of State Antony Blinken, on his first visit to Mexico as the top US diplomat, said more needed to be done in areas including tackling arms trafficking, money laundering and drug addiction.

US will accept WHO-approved COVID vaccines for int'l visitors

The United States will accept the use by international visitors of Covid-19 vaccines authorized by US regulators or the World Health Organization, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said late on Friday. On Sept. 20, the White House announced the United States in November would lift travel restrictions on air travelers from 33 countries including China, India, Brazil and most of Europe who are fully vaccinated against Covid-19. It did not specify then which vaccines would be accepted. A CDC spokeswoman told Reuters Friday, "Six vaccines that are FDA authorized/approved or listed for emergency use by WHO will meet the criteria for travel to the US." The United States will admit fully vaccinated air travelers from the 26 so-called Schengen countries in Europe as well as Britain, Ireland, China, India, South Africa, Iran and Brazil. The new Covid-19 vaccine requirements will now apply to nearly all foreign nationals flying to the United States - including those not subject to the prior restrictions.

Iran's first president Abolhasan Banisadr dies

Iran's first president after the 1979 Islamic revolution, Abolhasan Banisadr, died in a Paris hospital yesterday aged 88, the official news agency IRNA said. "After a long illness, Abolhasan Banisadr died on Saturday at the (Pitie)-Salpetriere hospital" in southeast Paris, IRNA reported, citing a source close to the former president. Banisadr was elected president in January 1980 hot on the heels of the previous year's Islamic revolution. But he was dismissed by the Iranian parliament in 1981 after he opposed late supreme leader Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. Since then, he had been living in exile in France. From the start of his mandate, Banisadr faced immense difficulties: the US hostage affair, the Iran-Iraq war, an economic crisis and, above all, the opposition of fundamentalist clerics. As Iran's armed forces commander from February 1980 to June 1981, he reorganised the country's military and spent much of his time on the front lines of the war with Iraq.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



Lava burns buildings following the eruption of the Cumbre Vieja volcano in Tacande, Spain, yesterday. Buildings near the volcano on the Spanish island of La Palma were engulfed by rivers of lava early yesterday, with the drama of the red-hot eruption intensified by the spectacle of flashes of lightning. PHOTO: REUTERS

Healthy environment a fundamental human right

Declares UN Human Rights Council in a 'historic breakthrough'

REUTERS, Geneva

The UN Human Rights Council has recognised access to a clean and healthy environment as a fundamental right, formally adding its weight to the global fight against climate change and its devastating consequences.

The vote passed with overwhelming support, despite criticism in the lead-up from some countries, notably the United States and Britain.

The resolution, first discussed in the 1990s, is not legally binding but has the potential to shape global standards. Lawyers involved in climate litigation say it could help them build arguments in cases involving the environment and human rights.

"This has life-changing potential in a world where the global environmental crisis causes more than nine million

premature deaths every year," said David Boyd, UN special rapporteur on human rights and the environment, who called the decision a "historic breakthrough".

The text, proposed by Costa Rica, the Maldives, Morocco, Slovenia and Switzerland, was passed with 43 votes in favour and 4 abstentions from Russia, India, China and Japan, prompting a rare burst of applause in the Geneva forum.

Britain, which was among the critics of the proposal in recent intense negotiations, voted in favour in a surprise, last-minute move. Its ambassador to the UN in Geneva, Rita French, said the UK was voting 'yes' because it shared supporters' ambition to tackle climate change but added that states would not be bound to the resolution's terms.

The United States did not vote since it is not currently a member of the 47-member Council.

Costa Rica's ambassador, Catalina Devandas Aguilar, said the decision will "send a powerful message to communities around the world struggling with climate hardship that they are not alone".

Critics had raised various objections, saying the Council was not the appropriate forum and citing legal concerns.

Environmental defenders had said Britain's earlier critical stance was undermining its pledges ahead of the global climate conference it is hosting in Glasgow next month.

The WHOP estimates that some 13.7 million deaths a year, or around 24.3% of the global total, are due to environmental risks such as air pollution and chemical exposure.

Another proposal led by the Marshall Islands to create a new special rapporteur on climate change was also approved by the Council on Friday.

UN BIODIVERSITY SUMMIT

Protecting nature a 'priority': China

REUTERS, Shanghai

China will make the protection of nature a priority and crack down on damage to habitats, the government said in a policy paper days before it hosts talks aimed at drawing up a new global biodiversity treaty.

China has acknowledged that decades of industrial development and rapid urbanisation have devastated ecosystems, put dozens of species on the brink of extinction and raised the risk of spreading diseases like Covid-19.

A new biodiversity "white paper" published on Friday acknowledged China "has a long way to go" but said it had identified 2.763 million square kilometres of "priority conservation" areas - 28.8 percent of its total territory.

A UN biodiversity conference known as COP15 gets underway in Kunming, southwest China, tomorrow, with discussions taking place online as a result of Covid-19 restrictions. The second round will be in April.

Environmental groups hope the conference can introduce more ambitious biodiversity targets, even though goals set in Aichi, Japan, in 2010 were not achieved.

A major issue is persuading nations to commit to the protection of 30% of their territory by 2030.

Quotes of the day



"Realising national reunification by peaceful means best serves the interests of the nation as a whole including our brethren in Taiwan. The complete reunification of our country will be and can be realized."

CHINA'S PRESIDENT XI JINPING

Probe launched against Chile president over Pandora Papers

AFP, Santiago

The Chilean public prosecutor's office on Friday opened an investigation into President Sebastian Pinera over the sale of a mining company through a firm owned by his children, which appeared in the Pandora Papers leaks.

Attorney General Jorge Abbott opened the probe after the Pandora Papers revealed the sale of the Dominga mining company by a firm "linked to the family of President Pinera," said Marta Herrera, head of the anti-corruption unit in the public prosecutor's office.

Pinera hit out at the move, claiming he had already been absolved of any guilt in a 2017 investigation.

The sale of the mine to one of Pinera's closest friends dates to 2010, during his previous term as president.

Herrera said the public prosecutor's office took the decision to investigate because of the possibility that the deal involved "bribery, eventual tax crimes, matters that will all ultimately be the subject of an investigation."

Herrera said bribery convictions carried a prison sentence of five years.

According to an investigation by two local

media, CIPER and LaBot that are part of the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) that produced the so-called Pandora Papers, Dominga was sold to businessman Carlos Alberto Delano, a friend of Pinera's, for \$152 million in a deal carried out in the British Virgin Islands, a well-known tax haven.

The investigation found that the payment was due to be staggered over three instalments with a clause that stated the final instalment was dependent on "not establishing an area of environmental protection in the area of the mining company's operations, as environmentalists are demanding."

According to the investigation, the Pinera government did not create a protected area around the site of the mine in question.

On Monday, Pinera denied that there was any conflict of interest in the mine's sale.

He insisted that he knew nothing of the deal, because during his first presidency from 2010-14 he said he put the administration of his assets in blind trusts.

He said the information contained in the Pandora Papers was "not new" and has been public knowledge since 2017.



PHOTO: REUTERS

A Taliban fighter looks on as he visits Kabul for the first time as hundreds of Taliban fighters take a day off to visit the amusement park at Kabul's Qargha reservoir, at the outskirts of Kabul, Afghanistan. Picture taken on Friday.

TRAGEDY IN DR CONGO

100 dead or missing after vessels capsize

AFP, Kinshasa

Over 100 people are dead or missing after nine interlocked canoes sank this week in the Democratic Republic of Congo, officials said yesterday.

It was the latest in a series of maritime accidents in the sprawling country where people often travel on overloaded and unsafe vessels on the Congo, one of Africa's biggest rivers.

Sixty-one bodies had been recovered from the sinking during the night of Monday to Tuesday, and another 60 are believed to be missing, Nestor Magbado, a spokesman for the governor of the northwestern province of Mongala, told AFP.

He said there were 39 survivors.

With no manifest of the passengers on board, the number missing is an estimate based on the capacity of the boat, he said.

The vessel was actually nine traditional wooden canoes, known as pirogues, all tied together, Magbado said.

He added that the accident may have been caused by "overcrowding aggravated by bad weather" during the night.

Who represents Afghanistan?

ICC judges ask for UN help to settle the issue

REUTERS, The Hague

The International Criminal Court on Friday said it cannot rule on a prosecutor's request to resume a war crimes investigation of Afghanistan until it can decide who represents the country in international bodies.

The judges asked UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres and the ICC's governing body for help identifying which group officially rules Afghanistan from an international law standpoint. It asked for a response by Nov. 8.

Prosecutor Karim Khan had asked the ICC to proceed and said there was no need to decide who runs Afghanistan.

In response, the court wrote on Friday: "The request cannot be legally adjudicated without addressing the question of which entity actually constitutes the state authorities of Afghanistan since 15 August 2021."

The question of who represents



Afghanistan at the United Nations has yet to be settled amid competing claims.

The UN ambassador representing Afghanistan's ousted government, Ghulam Isacqai, last month asked to remain in his UN seat, setting up a showdown with the Taliban, who seized control of Afghanistan in August.

UN accreditation issues are dealt with by a nine-member committee that includes the United States, China and Russia. The committee is due to meet later this month or in November and Isacqai remains in the seat until they decide.



OCTOBER 10

1911 - Chinese Nationalist leader Sun Yat-sen proclaimed a republic at Wuchang and began the revolution that overthrew the Manchu dynasty.

1954 - North Vietnamese Communist leader Ho Chi Minh entered Hanoi after French troops pulled out of the city following armistice terms.

2000 - Former Sri Lankan prime minister Sirimavo Bandaranaike, the world's first woman premier, died aged 84.

SOURCE: REUTERS

NO TIME TO DIE

QUIZ CONTEST

The Daily Star **STAR** QUIZ CONTEST

10 WINNERS EVERYDAY! 2 PREMIUM TICKETS FOR EACH WINNER

Email your answer to starquiz@outlook.com by 4.00 pm today with your name, DOB, mobile number and address. The winners of the quiz will be announced tomorrow in this newspaper and through email. Winners are requested to follow the instructions given in email.

QUIZ - 02 How many 007's are there in the movie "No Time To Die"?

WINNERS LIST OF QUIZ - 01

1. Jafaar Sadiq, Aga Masi Lane, Dhaka.
2. Md. Ziaul Islam, Motijheel.
3. Nafisa Bari, Mohammadpur.
4. Samir Arshad, Taj Mahal Road.
5. Md Ahsanul Kabir, Vatara.
6. Rajib Nandi, Gulshan Circle-2.
7. S. M. Shamim Ahsan, Mirpur 12.
8. Rizwan Ahmmed, Lake Circus.
9. Surja Kanta Paul, Gopibagh.
10. Asmaul Hasan, Basabo.

Is mental health illness the next pandemic?

ANDREW SMITH, DR SHARMIN ZAHAN, & DR KHALED HASAN

One in five people in Bangladesh is affected by anxiety and depression. There is only one mental health professional for 100,000 people.

Like many other countries in the world, the Coronavirus pandemic has had a major impact on population health in Bangladesh where millions are infected, and the largest epidemic death toll for decades. It has also disrupted tens of millions of lives including seasonal workers who could not travel or earn, children unable to attend schools or see classmates and friends, family, businesses with no customers in lockdown, and people left without the support networks they normally rely on to cope with lost jobs or broken relationships.

Before the COVID pandemic, 21% of the adult Bangladeshi population were already estimated to have a mental health issue, with 11% suffering from depression and anxiety. More recent studies during the pandemic have shown a big increase, with up to 70% of adults affected by sleep loss, loneliness or anxiety. Isolation, unemployment, broken relationships, personal loss and grieving due to the death of close friends and family members, and uncertainty regarding the future are all shaping increased anxiety and depression during the pandemic.

During the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, 14,436 suicides took place in Bangladesh between March 2020 and



February 2021. And this is the sad tip of a big mental health iceberg, with millions of the population suffering from anxiety, depression, and trauma disorders (PTSD). Unfortunately, many without even realising that what they are going through is a disease, and like any physical health issue it can be managed through medical support and intervention.

Many sufferers are reluctant to reach out for help because mental illness or emotional distress is seen as a sign of weakness even though it is not, as there is a stigma attached to it.

While everyone is facing the hit, children and young adults are the most affected. At least 151 students have committed suicide since the school closure

in March 2020 till June 2021.

Sufferers also do not reach out because there are only a few solutions readily available. There are less than 2,000 mental health professionals in a country of more than 164 million people or around 1 per 1,00,000 people. Another major drawback is that these mental health providers are concentrated in urban areas, leaving 100 million in rural Bangladesh with limited support. However, the government is acting and making steady progress.

But to close the access gap, new solutions and innovative thinking are required. Recently, several NGOs have been established exclusively for mental healthcare, for example, Moshal Mental Health whose founder was acknowledged

with the Diana Award, and Lifespring have helped many corporate organisations provide mental health support to employees. Many healthcare companies have also extended their support to further strengthen the government's efforts.

In such a backdrop, we first need to create a culture where people can open up and express their pent-up frustrations so that no one feels on edge and resorts to something detrimental. As people feel shy to talk about mental health problems, healthcare providers need to come up with solutions that will keep the privacy and identity of the people suffering from mental health problems secure. Just like Digital Hospital's initiative to facilitate the vulnerable people with private and secure online doctor chat on mental health and wellbeing, there could many be other similar initiatives that will inspire people to share their problems related to mental well-being.

Moreover, our society, as a whole, needs to be more sympathetic towards everyone so that people do not feel afraid to talk about the problems they are going through. It is better to be late than never. And the time is now. With several digital solutions for mental health and wellbeing popping up, we need to remember that good mental health support can be made available to all.

Andrew Smith is a Co-Founder, Digital Healthcare Solutions, Digital Hospital; whereas Dr Sharmin Zahan is the Head of Health Ecosystem Development and Dr Khaled Hasan is the Head of Clinical Operations of the same organisation.

NUGGETS



Is it safe to eat poultry chicken?

The chicken dominates plates around the world. We eat more of it than any other protein. The average person has more than 98 pounds of chicken every year. But some poultry producers provide chemicals to feed the chickens in poultry that may have harsh repercussions on human health when consumed.

Here are few risks listed below:

Arsenic levels

For decades, poultry producers added the arsenic-based drug roxarsone to chicken feed. It made the chickens grow faster and gave their raw meat an attractive pink colour. This drug has not been on the market since 2011, but many other arsenic-based drugs are still part of chicken feed. Even at low levels, arsenic can cause cancer, heart disease, and diabetes. If you are concerned, stick to certified organic chicken, which does not allow arsenic in the feed.

Antibiotic risks

Some chicken producers put antibiotics in the feed or drinking water they give their flocks to control the disease. The medicines are not harmful to you or the chicken, but they can make you resistant to antibiotics you might need to fight your infections. If this concerns you, look for labels that say the chicken is antibiotic-free.

HEALTH bulletin



Every extra 1 cm in waist circumference increases odds of advanced fibrosis by 5%

New research being presented at the Annual Meeting of the European Association for the Study of Diabetes (EASD), held online this year, found a link between larger waistlines and the progression of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) in people with type 2 diabetes (T2D).

Each 1 cm increase in waist circumference was associated with a 5% higher likelihood of developing advanced fibrosis, a late stage of NAFLD - in which fat builds up in the liver, can progress to severe liver damage, including advanced fibrosis - potentially life-threatening scarring of the liver. It is already known that up to 15-20% of those with T2D have advanced fibrosis. But little is known about what effect, if any, it has on the complications of diabetes.

According to a study in Paris among 685 T2D patients, nephropathy is significantly more common in those with advanced fibrosis than the other T2D patients.

The study also found that every 1 cm increase in waistline was associated with a 5% increase in the likelihood of the participants developing advanced fibrosis. Higher levels of AST, a marker of liver damage, were also associated with higher odds of advanced fibrosis.

A large waist circumference is linked to metabolic syndrome and fat accumulation in the abdomen, which can lead to NAFLD.

Common causes that give rise to headaches

STAR HEALTH DESK

Headaches are a frequent and uncomfortable condition that reduces the quality of life. Every day, many people suffer from headaches. A headache is characterised by discomfort in the head or face. It may be throbbing, persistent, intense, or dull. Here are some causes that can result in headaches.

Your vision is blurry

Focusing on something near your face may cause a headache. Also, things get hazy as you get closer if you're farsighted. It could be due to a short eyeball or a flat cornea.

You tense your neck and shoulders

Do you spend hours hunched over a computer or a phone? Such "tension headaches" can occur. Use a hot shower, use a heating pad, and take over-the-counter painkillers.

You are hungry

Maybe you have not had a meal in a while. It could give you low blood sugar, which triggers a headache. It might help to have several small meals instead of three big ones.

You skipped your morning coffee

Your body gets used to the caffeine and reminds you with a throbbing head if you forget to drink your regular cup. When coffee is not at hand, green or black tea or even dark chocolate will do.

You had sex

Dull aching in your neck or head may worsen with sexual excitement. Call your doctor immediately away if you experience a headache during or after sex, especially if it's new or abrupt.



Your sinuses are swollen

A simple cold can inflame hollow areas behind your cheekbones and forehead. The swelling could cause pain there that worsens when you bend over-over-the-counter drugs can often help you manage it.

You drank too much last night

Taking more than three or five drinks may cause a pounding head and a hangover because alcohol disrupts sleep and dehydrates the body. As a result, you might be weary and nauseous. Instead, rehydrate with water or broth.

You just ate ice cream

Sometimes called an "ice cream headache" or "brain freeze," it happens when you eat something icy, especially if you do it fast. It could be that the freezing temperature makes the blood vessels in your mouth shrink, which triggers pain signals to your brain. It usually goes in a minute or so. Prevention is simple: Eat frosty foods more slowly. Check what is causing your headache.

Source: WebMD

Unique health insurance protects against 52 essential illnesses up to age 80

MetLife Bangladesh has recently launched a first-of-its-kind *Critical Illness Insurance Protection Plan* that offers customers financial protection for 52 common critical illnesses, including the leading causes of death in Bangladesh: heart attack, stroke, respiratory diseases, cancer and kidney diseases, says a press release.

This is the only health insurance plan in the country that provides financial protection of up to BDT 1 Crore till the age of 80 years against the highest number of critical illnesses. By paying premiums for a relatively shorter period (maximum 20 years from the date of purchase), customers and their families can receive insurance coverage for medical treatment or unfortunate death of the policyholder from critical illnesses or any other causes until the age of 80 years. If a policyholder reaches at the age of 80 years without making any claim, they will receive up to 100% policy coverage.

The product has been designed to reflect the health needs and financial priorities of the people of Bangladesh.

MetLife Bangladesh's Critical Illness Insurance Protection Plan will help customers manage medical treatment and recover from the physical, emotional and financial stress of these illnesses.

Considering the current prevalence of dengue fever, the health insurance plan provides additional financial protection against unfortunate death from the disease.

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WORLD ARTHRITIS DAY
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Timely access to
evidence based
treatment is the key
to prevent further
damage from
Rheumatic Disorder

Resurgence of violence may destabilise an already conflict-ridden Afghanistan

Taliban government must demonstrate their ability to govern by rooting out terrorism

WE are deeply saddened to hear of the suicide bomb attack at a Shia mosque in the Afghan city of Kunduz that killed at least 55 people on Friday. Many more were also wounded in what is being called the bloodiest assault within Afghanistan since the exit of US forces, and for which the Islamic State (IS) group has already claimed responsibility.

Ever since the takeover by the Taliban, there have been widespread concerns over the rights of women and minority communities within the country. This is especially because of the Taliban's terrible track record with Hazara Shias, who were one of the most persecuted groups when the Taliban last ruled Afghanistan and faced mass killings, torture and executions. On top of that, there have been predictions of an impending conflict between the Taliban and IS that will further destabilise the already conflict-ridden nation. This latest attack from IS only confirms these fears.

And it seems, regardless of whether it is the Taliban or IS, the victims are always ordinary Afghans, especially Shia Muslims, who have suffered some of the most violent assaults in Afghanistan. Even in May this year, a series of bombings outside a school in the capital killed at least 85 people from the Hazara community—mostly young girls. Such attempts to stir up sectarian violence in Sunni-majority Afghanistan is part of an age-old strategy of Sunni extremists—the revival of which should cause the entire region much concern.

Renewed insecurity and greater instability within Afghanistan is not only against the interests of the region, but of the recently-established Taliban government as well, since it is yet to convince its neighbours and major donors and trading partners of its ability to govern effectively and peacefully. Although the initial tone taken by the Taliban seemed reconciliatory, they have already taken huge steps backwards by violating the rights to work and to receive an education of Afghan girls and women. When the Afghan government's ability to deal with an impending humanitarian and economic crisis is already in doubt, the last thing it needs is a resurgence of these disturbingly familiar patterns of violence.

The international community must not abandon the Afghan people in this great time of need. Simply making open-ended statements are not enough, there must be a serious push to ensure that the Taliban government holds terrorist groups like the IS to account and prevents them from operating within Afghanistan's borders. Failure to do so may lead to an escalation of violence that may ultimately cost them their seat of power. If IS is allowed to operate in Afghanistan, the repercussions for Pakistan, India and even Bangladesh can also be huge. We must be vigilant and ensure that the far-reaching arms of sectarian violence do not leave an impression within our borders as well.

Amazing progress made in Karnaphuli tunnel's construction work

Other infrastructure development projects should follow its example

WE are delighted to learn that the construction work of the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Tunnel under the river Karnaphuli, the first of its kind in South Asia, has been progressing at such a rapid pace that the authorities are hoping to open it to traffic well ahead of the project's deadline. Although the original deadline of the project was December 2022, the project authorities expect they will be able to open the tunnel for use much sooner, as 73 percent physical work of the 3.32km tunnel has already been done. According to project officials, boring, the most difficult part of the tunnel's construction, is already complete and the authorities are now constructing the 5.35km of approach roads, building the road inside the tunnel, and setting up utility lines, which we hope will not take long to get done.

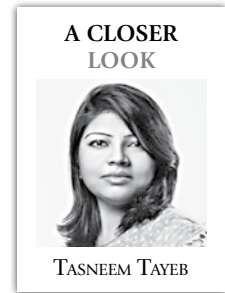
Over the years, delays and cost overruns in our major development projects have become the norm. In the last few months alone, this newspaper published a number of reports on project delays and cost overruns, mostly due to inefficiency and corruption in project implementation. One recent example of this is the Dhaka-Sylhet-Tamabil highway project, which will take another two and a half years to complete, while its cost will also double, according to a report published in this daily last September.

Under the circumstances, it is really encouraging that the China Communication Construction Company Ltd., which is constructing the tunnel, has not wasted any time after the tunnel's physical work started in February 2019, while the project cost has also stayed within its limit.

It needs to be mentioned here that once the tunnel becomes operational, it will have an immense effect on the country's economy. It will connect the southern and northern parts of Chattogram, creating economic opportunities for people in the region. It is also supposed to reduce congestion on both sides of the Karnaphuli and shorten travel time, and play a greater role after the construction of the deep-sea port and economic zone in Cox's Bazar's Maheshkhali and Matarbari are complete. Needless to say, the tunnel will improve the Asian Highway Network, strengthening connectivity between Bangladesh and its neighbouring countries.

Since the most difficult part of the project has been completed well ahead of time, we now hope that the remaining work will also be finished in time. And while we express our satisfaction at the pace of the tunnel's construction work, we also hope that other big infrastructure development projects in the country are worked on with the same sincerity and efficiency and are completed on time.

Pandora Papers: What does it reveal about the shadow economy?



A CLOSER LOOK

TASNEEM TAYEB

THE biggest journalistic partnership in history—consisting of more than 600 journalists from 150 media outlets, including the BBC, the *Washington Post*, the *Guardian*, *Radio France* and *Indian*

Express, among others—has recently exposed the financial misadventures of 35 prominent world leaders, more than 330 politicians and influential public office holders, from 91 countries and territories.

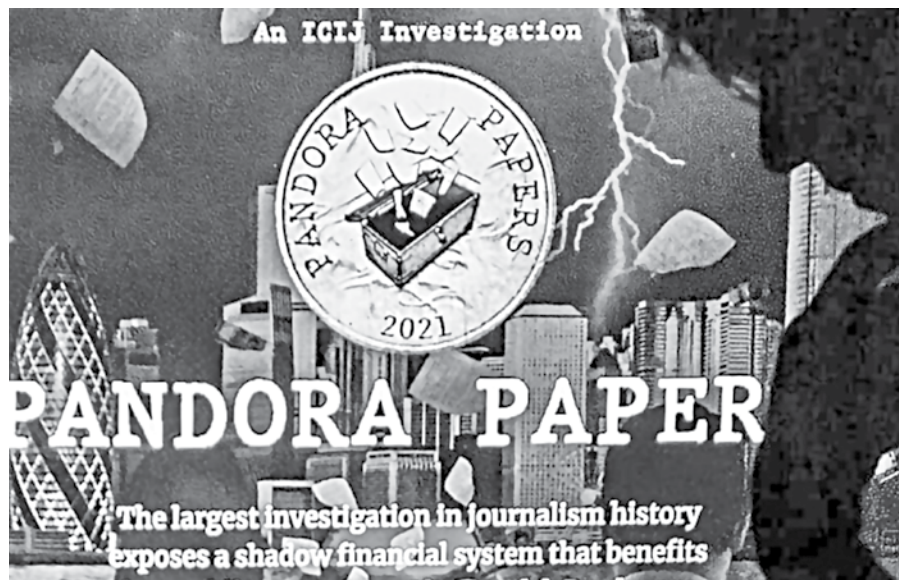
The two-year investigation conducted by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalism (ICIJ), involving scrutiny of 11.9 million leaked confidential files from 14 offshore service providers, has resulted in the Pandora Papers—one of the biggest revelations of financial misconduct of influential national leaders in recent history.

The Pandora Papers investigation has linked the names of Jordan's King Abdullah II; Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati; Hassan Diab and his predecessor, governor of Lebanon's central bank Riad Salameh, who is also undergoing investigation in France for money laundering; Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta, along with six members of his family; former British Prime Minister Tony Blair and his spouse; Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, a former comedian and a beloved figure in the country; and other influential leaders, with dubious offshore investments.

Some of the names have caught the world by surprise, because these leaders in the past has been very vocal in condemning tax abusers in their countries, including their political opponents. "We should not make our tax rules a playground for... tax abusers who pay little or nothing while others pay more than their share", Tony Blair had suggested earlier. Andrej Babis, the millionaire Czech Prime Minister, had expressed his desire to create a business environment in the country where "entrepreneurs will do business and will be happy to pay taxes." Kenya's Uhuru Kenyatta in 2018 had told the BBC, "Every public servant's assets must be declared publicly so that people can question and ask, what is legitimate?... If you can't explain yourself, including myself, then I have a case to answer."

These same leaders are now at the centre of the Pandora Papers scandal.

So, how come these prominent world leaders—many of whom have advocated for stricter tax rules and punishment for tax dodgers—find themselves embroiled in a scam like this? The answer perhaps lies in the fact that these leaders themselves are involved in the making of



Allegations in the Pandora Papers range from corruption to money laundering and tax evasion. PHOTO: AFP

such laws.

Pandora Papers could be the largest such revelation, but it is not the first one. There had been LuxLeaks in 2014, Panama Papers in 2016, Paradise Papers in 2017 and FinCen files in 2020. While there have been some positive result of these exposures connecting influential national leaders, politicians, businesspersons and celebrities with the shadow economy—former Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had been disqualified from office by a Supreme Court verdict in the aftermath of the Panama Papers leak—the shadow economy continues to operate smoothly with the blessings of its beneficiaries.

The reason being, the people who are responsible for safeguarding the money of the common people are making personal gains at their expense. These people hire expert tax lawyers who are well versed in manipulating the loopholes in the existing system and allow their clients to circumvent the rules—all at the expense of the common people's interest.

For instance, Tony Blair and his wife brought a British Virgin Islands (BVI) company, through which they became owners of a Victorian building worth USD 8.8 million. This enabled the couple to evade paying a property tax of more than USD 400,000. The building currently houses the law firm of Tony Blair's wife.

Similarly, while on the one hand the Lebanese people are struggling to cope with one of the worst economic meltdowns in recent history—with stores shutting down and people not being able to buy the daily essentials because of a sharp spike in inflation—the current Lebanese Prime Minister, his predecessor, the country's former minister of state and the chairman of Al Mawarid Bank, have all been linked to offshore wealth.

On the one hand, these revelations

expose the sheer apathy of the politicians towards the interests of the common people who elect them to power. On the other, they also raise questions about the system that allows these individuals to get away with amassing illegal wealth while the people suffer. And they can do it because they have the money and the means to access expensive lawyers and their unethical services.

These revelations have become a norm now—more like a leitmotif in a drama. It is the same plot, the same cast, the same act and the same scenes playing out again and again with no result.

When the revelations of the global shadow economy began to unfold in 2014, governments around the world promised to take strong measures to stop the practice of hiding disclosed wealth by the rich and the influential through offshore investment mechanisms. Unfortunately, not much has changed today.

While offshore investment is not illegal itself, using this mechanism to hide illegally amassed wealth and or evade taxation is. But this practice continues—the repeated failed attempts by journalists and investigators to break this system only reveal the strength of the underground economy that is growing in size. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime estimate, the volume of money laundering every year is around two to five percent of the global economy—or about 800 billion to two trillion in US dollars.

And the volume of this will increase, unless world leaders see the folly of their actions and acknowledge their role in nurturing it. Those who are involved in illegal offshore financial transactions should acknowledge their misdeeds and step down.

The Financial Action Task Force on

Is it all blah blah on climate action?



ANDREW SHENG

AT the end of this month, the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow (COP26), under the presidency of the United Kingdom, will begin. This time

around, expectations are high that something must be done to improve on the commitments made by governments at Paris COP21 in 2015.

On September 28, Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg threw down the gauntlet to world leaders and the media in her opening speech to the Youth4Climate summit in Milan: "We can no longer let the people in power decide what hope is. Hope is not passive. Hope is not blah blah blah. Hope is telling the truth. Hope is taking action."

Climate action optimists welcome US President Biden's commitment to double US aid to developing countries on climate action. Chinese President Xi agreed to stop financing new coal projects abroad. This week, Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam promised in her Policy Address to spend USD 30.8 billion and create a Climate Change and Carbon Neutrality Office to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050. For Hong Kong to finally address climate threats is welcome news.

Climate pessimists like Greta Thunberg are justifiably disillusioned by more green talk and less real deliverables. They feel betrayed by public leaders who repeat electoral promises that result in widening social inequalities, growing debt and planetary damage that coming generations have to clean up. They see businesses pushing consumerism that ends up destroying the planet through more carbon emission, pollution and biodiversity loss. At long last, more corporate leaders have moved from the denial phase to greenwashing their corporate strategies through Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) reporting. Funeral directors at least see calamities and deaths as profit opportunities.

Under lockdown during the pandemic, I zoomed with six experts who have deep experience in epidemiology, finance, complexity science, urban planning,



Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg arrives at the Youth4Climate pre-COP26 conference in Milan, Italy, September 28, 2021. PHOTO: REUTERS

water and food disciplines to collectively think through how we can help the young tackle the looming climate change crisis. Coming from different disciplines enabled us to cut through the silos in thinking, arrive at less technical jargon and move from theory towards a practical approach to speeding up real Climate Action.

The 2021 UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC6) published recently basically signalled that time is running out. If no serious action is taken by 2030, the world would witness temperatures rising more than two degrees Celsius, with the poorer countries bearing the brunt of the losses. The faster the planet heats up, the greater the losses, the less time to mitigate and adapt to worsening conditions. Climate damage has moved from crisis to catastrophic proportions, with melting of Arctic permafrost, loss of Amazonian rainforests, and rising sea levels. By 2040, 700 million people are likely to face droughts of at least six months duration, double the historical average. The world would have another 1.4 billion people to feed.

Our group therefore focused on "Buying Time for Climate Action", a forthcoming book to map out the key barriers to climate action and think

through how to act. Given the complexity of climate change at different geographies and national and local conditions, there is no silver bullet or one-size fit all solution. Complex problems do not always have simple solutions, but the general principles to tackle these complex problems must be simply understood simply for effective implementation. God takes care of elegant principles, but the devil is in the details.

Finding human solutions under complexity and uncertainty is therefore less about theory and all about experimentation and practice through diversity, exactly how Nature copes with profound change.

We must learn to live with Nature and fight less with each other.

The worst pandemic in a century required mobilisation at all levels of government and society. There may be more disasters and conflicts to come. Thus, we must move out of war against each other to mobilisation like a war on climate action. Everyone, especially the young, should be motivated to change their consumption patterns and behaviour.

The stumbling blocks to action that we identified—finance, talent, vested interests, bureaucracy and political will—

Money Laundering (FATF), an inter-government body with 39 members, responsible for developing standards for Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT); and United Nations Convention Against Corruption (UNCAC) should be empowered and strengthened so that they can continue to fight against the financial crimes of the political elites by formulating policies and standards to make money laundering more difficult.

The US banks and financial institutions also have a major role to play here, since the majority of these transactions are carried out in US dollars. "Because of the US dollar's status as the *de facto* global currency, most international transactions flow in and out of New York-based banking operations", the ICIJ report mentioned.

While the US has over the years coerced other banks, especially the Swiss banks, to disclose the names of US nationals involved in wealth hiding through offshore accounts, the US itself is rather unwilling to share "information about money moving through US bank accounts, companies and trusts... The US has refused to join a 2014 agreement supported by more than 100 jurisdictions, including the Cayman Islands and Luxembourg, that would require American financial institutions to share information they have about foreigners' assets," the ICIJ report added.

This attitude of the US is also a hindrance in addressing the issue of illegal offshore investments. Many US States, including South Dakota and Nevada, have emerged as major destinations for hiding illegal wealth—in South Dakota alone, assets in trusts have increased four times to USD 360 billion in the last 10 years, according to ICIJ. This is hurting the global economy and in the long-run will be harmful for the US economy itself.

By dismantling this system, the US can contribute significantly in curbing the illicit flow of money through offshore account transactions, and as an international power, it should prioritise global interests over national gains though illegal means.

While the international community together has a role to play in curbing illegal offshore investments, the common people should also wake up to the stark reality of the corruption and financial crimes of their leaders and raise their voices for justice. They must also create pressure from the bottom to end this economic and social injustice that continues to plague economies. In the long-run, this will yield disastrous consequences for both the culprits and the victims. Such an outcome would not be palatable for any party involved.

Tasneem Tayeb is a columnist for *The Daily Star*. Her Twitter handle is @tasneem_tayeb

can be overcome. Many climate activists complain that money and talent are in short supply. Ironically, central banks were able to print USD 9 trillion in 2020 alone, whilst there are millions of young who are willing to work passionately to innovate our way towards a green and inclusive future. We simply need to build the social media platforms that are able to deliver the necessary technical know-how and resources (crowd-funded if needs be) to the thousands of projects and programmes at the grass-root level to help deliver change.

The vested interests that stand to lose from change are resisting action, whereas bureaucracies designed for status quo are reluctant to change. Change cannot come without political will and public support. Brexit and the pandemic showed that scientific solutions are not enough when a significant proportion of the population react emotionally to oppose change.

In short, technology, science and knowhow exist for *technical* climate solutions. Money is also available, but not channelled to where it is needed, because as economists say, climate change creates market failures. The state needs to work with markets, namely businesses and the community, in a whole-of-society effort. Getting the political will and support therefore is a *mindset* barrier.

This book's conclusion is that we should think globally within the concept of OneEarth, but act locally NOW. We must act locally because climate mitigation and adaptation projects are only implemented at the local level, but they may need national technical assistance and resource allocation, supplemented by global aid.

The British Astronomer Royal, Sir Martin Rees, who gave the keynote and opening chapter to the book, understood well that "we can be technological optimists, but the intractable politics and sociology engender pessimism." The young will not wait for fatalistic pessimism. They want action today.

Greta Thunberg is right. No more time for blah, blah, blah. Up to leaders like Biden, Xi and Lam to prove that she is wrong, fast.

Andrew Sheng is adjunct professor at Tsinghua University, Beijing and University of Malaya. He was formerly the chairman of the Securities and Futures Commission, Hong Kong. Copyright: Asia News Network

WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY

'Mental health has always been a neglected issue'

Dr Mehtab Khanam is Honorary Professor, Department of Psychology, Dhaka University, and a renowned psychotherapist. In an interview with Eresh Omar Jamal of The Daily Star, Dr Khanam talks about the state of mental health awareness in Bangladesh and how much it affects general well-being.

What is the state of mental health awareness in Bangladesh and our attitude towards people who are having mental health issues?

There is very little awareness. We should have built more understanding and had a lot more discussions about this subject. Unfortunately, we have frequently sidestepped it because mental health is still a stigmatised issue in Bangladesh. Any time you say the word "mental", people get put off, even the educated ones. Just recently a woman told me that when she asked her husband if he would like to go see a counsellor, he said, "are you trying to take me to a doctor for crazy people?" A lot of people don't even know the difference between a psychiatrist and a psychotherapist.

When someone loses contact with reality, that is, when they are suffering from a mental illness, they need medication because their brain chemicals or neurotransmitters are imbalanced. This can happen from living a stressful life for a long time or because of substance abuse. Some people could also have a genetic predisposition to it, similar to physical ailments such as diabetes. People are willing to accept the latter positively, however, when people suffer from some sort of mental illness for genetic reasons, they are stigmatised, along with their family.

When people are physically sick, you don't see the family getting blamed for it, or family members fighting over it, blaming each other, but you see that happening when someone has a mental illness. That just tells you how it is seen through a negative lens. Instead of realising that the person who is suffering needs attention, we end up fighting amongst ourselves over whose fault it is.

There are many types of mental illness—some are neurotic and some are psychotic. When someone gets disconnected from reality that is

psychotic. And when someone suffers from anxiety, depression, irritability, those are traits that are associated with neuroticism. The latter are people who are functioning, even though they are suffering from many problems. These people mainly need psychotherapy. But unfortunately, we have very few psychiatrists and psychotherapists in the country, which makes it difficult for people to get the type of counselling or psychotherapy they need. And when neurotic patients don't get the treatment they need, there is a possibility of psychotic development. That is another reason why we must try and provide early treatment to neurotic patients.

There is also a gender aspect present here. In Bangladesh, women tend to be more conscious about mental health issues. Men have a tendency to not talk about it or address it. They try and suppress their emotions and just stay strong because that is what society tells them they should do—the message that society gives them is that men shouldn't cry, they should be bold and courageous and not be scared. As a result, they suffer more physical health issues that arise from mental health problems. Taking up too much stress and not addressing the mental health issues that comes from that eventually take their toll on men when they get older.

Some researchers have warned that a long-term serious mental health epidemic may break out because of the Covid-19 pandemic. What is your take on that and how can we address it?

Our society already has so many problems, mental health is not even on our list. I don't think we are at all worried about it, even though we should be. But still, there is an attempt to train up school teachers, which should have been done a long time ago. But I'm not sure how effective it's going to be simply because of the sheer size of our population and the huge number of



Dr Mehtab Khanam.

PHOTO: PROTHOM ALO

schools in our country.

I think we need a comprehensive effort here, and parenting has to be key. Due to the pandemic, the whole world is now talking about mental health. The World Health Organization said that improving your mental health will boost your immune system and keep you safer during the pandemic. That is why some people are now bothering with mental health. But towards the beginning of the pandemic, a research paper came out which said that teenagers will be its worst sufferers, because it's at that age when people tend to go out the most and meet up with their friends. It is something that teenagers need to do, as part of forming their own identities.

People go through many hormonal changes during their teenage years. Boys slowly turn into men and girls slowly turn into women—and this transition period can be quite confusing. At this time,

they need the support of their peer groups, which they have largely been denied due to the pandemic. The fact that we still have some semblance of familial bonding is good and helpful. But the pandemic is taking its toll and as a psychotherapist I can see that. Anxiety and depression among people have increased and so has suicides. The first step to addressing this is to increase consciousness among people, which is seriously lacking at the moment. Secondly, we need to have dedicated hospitals that treat mental health patients, which we are also badly missing. We do have two specialised hospitals, but they are not enough given the size of our population.

What advice would you give to young people in particular, who have been struggling with anxieties due to the uncertainty about their future because of pandemic-related issues?

What advice can I give them? These are real problems. Those who have had their salaries halved, yet have

four children to feed, can I tell them don't get depressed? Many people are in deep distress. If we are going to provide them with psychotherapy, then we cannot give such advice.

In developed countries, there are ways for people who are struggling with these issues to first get out of them. There are shelter homes for domestic abuse victims—they can easily seek help from the police. Over here we don't have adequate shelter homes or sufficient emergency helplines. Women and children in particular remain extremely vulnerable.

Children are literally at the mercy of their parents. If they are being abused by their parents, there is no one who would come and help them. That is why children should be given the right to call the police. But our children don't have any rights. We have to give children their due rights and protections and the nation state has to uphold them. The same goes for elderly people. Why should someone have to depend on their children when they get old? Shouldn't the state provide them with enough financial security?

One thing we can do is tell people not to lose hope. As long as they hold onto that there is a chance that they might be able to overcome their current crisis. But the state has to do a lot more to provide relief to people and to help them deal with their struggles.

How can someone who is struggling with mental health issues help themselves get better? For those who want to seek professional help, but are struggling financially, what facilities are currently available in Bangladesh?

They can turn to their loved ones for some sympathy. But often we see people who suffer from depression being told that they are pretending and they should just get over it. People are told there is nothing called depression. So this is something that needs to be discussed more and

family support is something that should be ensured. Our first reaction to someone who is suffering has to be more empathetic and supportive. Then we can try and motivate them.

For those who want professional help, the unfortunate reality is that we have very little professional help available in our country. We do have some psychiatric posts at district and sub-district levels, but they are nowhere near enough. Hospitals need to hire many more psychiatrists and therapists. A therapist has to give a lot of time to their patients, which means the ratio of therapists-patients has to improve. And we also need a lot more helplines with properly trained individuals.

Students in the country are now returning to their educational institutions after 1.5 years of school closure. What institutional steps should be taken by the government to help them adjust back into their respective institutions without facing mental health problems?

Well, teachers could have done a lot to address this, had we been conscious from before. They should have been trained to look after the mental health of children. We are talking about all these because of the pandemic. But have we done anything for children's mental health before the pandemic? So what can we do now to all of a sudden change it? Teachers themselves are now struggling with mental health issues because of the pandemic. How can they heal their children when they themselves are so stressed out?

But mental health has always been a neglected issue, which is why we are in an even more difficult situation right now. So, there are no quick fixes. We have to start from scratch if we want to create a system that considers children's mental health to be important. Only then can we do anything about it.

Fear, loss and isolation

The importance of connectedness for the elderly



SHAGUFTA HOSSAIN

HUMANS are social creatures. While all animals have a need to communicate, none have quite the same ability or need to organise themselves into communities the way humans do. This ability, besides

material needs, feeds off of the human being's need to belong, to feel connected. The need for connection is possibly as basic as food, shelter and clothing. An MIT study, published in November 2020, found that the region of our brains that makes us crave food is the same as that which makes us crave interactions, leading to the conclusion that connection is as important and as basic for humans as food.

Over the last couple of years, with the onset of the Covid-19 virus, we have been forced to think about just how important the need for connection is for us. With strict guidelines of maintaining six feet distance, touch has all but disappeared from a lot of our lives. And while we were being stripped of this basic human need, the release of oxytocin, dopamine, and serotonin had been replaced by adrenaline released by the activation of the fear centres of our brain. Fear kicked in, in slow motion, activating a fight or flight response releasing adrenaline. In ancient humans, this rush of adrenaline

could be channelled into running (away from potential threats), but here we were, modern day humans, stuck in our homes, unable to do little but let fear slowly engulf us. The fear of loss—loss of life, loss of a loved one, loss of freedom, loss of security and loss of connection.

A cross sectional study on the impact of the pandemic on mental health among the general Bangladeshi population (Das, Hasan, Daria, Islam, 2020) found the prevalence of loneliness to be a staggering

Although chronic loneliness itself is categorised as a mental illness, studies have also found a direct correlation between loneliness and other psychological disorders such as depressive disorders, anxiety disorders and other types of personality disorders. The same study reports that amongst the elderly, loneliness is associated with more than two fold risk of dementia.

71 percent. Other issues reported in the study included depression, anxiety and sleep disturbance. Although chronic loneliness itself is categorised as a mental illness, studies have also found a direct correlation between loneliness and other psychological disorders such as depressive disorders, anxiety disorders and other types of personality disorders. The same study reports that amongst the elderly, loneliness is associated with more than two fold risk of dementia, since it is related

to the loss of cognition in old age. In fact, some authors have signalled it as prodromal stage of dementia. When someone suffers from loneliness, they experience a more rapid decline in global cognition, semantic memory, perceptual speed, and visuospatial ability.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has rightly identified the increased demand for mental health services. Bereavement, isolation, loss of income and fear are triggering mental health conditions or

aggravating existing ones. As a result of the pandemic, many people may be undergoing increased levels of drug use, insomnia, and anxiety. Meanwhile, Covid-19 itself can lead to neurological and mental complications, such as delirium, agitation, and stroke.

I suppose, one positive outcome of the pandemic is that the need for mental health services has been brought to the forefront. WHO has previously highlighted the chronic underfunding of mental health related

programmes. Prior to the pandemic, countries were spending less than two percent of their national health budgets on mental health, and struggling to meet their populations' needs. In Bangladesh, the last revision of the mental health plan was done in 2006. While the mental health plan is incorporated into the policy, strategy and action plan for surveillance and prevention of non-communicable diseases (NCD) as well as the strategy and work plan for community based activities in mental health in Bangladesh, it was only last year that some of the goals identified in the last mental health plan were reached.

This, I suspect, occurred due to the pandemic forcing us to acknowledge the importance of our mental well-being. With the onset of the pandemic, what used to be an issue that was surrounded by silence and stigma, has slowly taken the spotlight as a result of growing awareness. Service providers have emerged with innovative solutions such as affordable, tele counselling provided by homegrown, often non-profit, organisations.

There is a gap, however. The services as well as the advocacy around mental health are mostly targeted towards the youth. While, at the beginning of the pandemic, there was an understanding of how the physical health aspect of Covid disproportionately affects the elderly, the same has not been true for the mental health aspect. There may be reasons for this—i.e. multiple studies showing that older adults may be less negatively affected by mental health outcomes than other age groups, the elderly reportedly have better

coping skills, etc. What remains a fact, at least for our part of the world, is that the elderly have obviously suffered more from the loss of connection. While the youth have had technology to keep them connected, the elderly who relied on neighbourly visits and hugs from their children and grandchildren, have felt a definite adverse effect on their sense of well-being.

Additionally, while the youth have been able to teach themselves to talk about mental health without fear of stigma or repercussion, the same is hardly true for older people. They are far less likely to ask for professional help if they suffer from feelings of loneliness or depression. And since they are unwilling and unlikely to rely on professional help, without technological access to help them, they are likely to suffer in silence, further eroding their physical health. This, then, has a compound effect owing to the downside of connection; that as we connect, we feel responsible for those we connect with. The younger ones then, suffer from feelings of guilt, shame, and inadequacy, as a result of an inability to care for older people, once again leading to anxiety and depressive disorders.

I don't necessarily have a solution to the problem. I do have an acute awareness of one fact, though. Connection is important, and connection is important for most humans. And maybe in our quest to build healthier societies, we should consider taking an inclusive approach to the elderly as well.

Shagufta Hossain is a freelance consultant and the founder of Leaping Boundaries.

QUOTABLE Quote

TOM ROBBINS
American novelist
(born July 22, 1932)

Equality is not in regarding different things similarly, equality is in regarding different things differently.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Constellation part
- 5 Book of maps
- 10 Plumbing piece
- 11 Peanut, informally
- 13 Resting on
- 14 Turn
- 15 Fast sailing ship
- 17 Top-secret govt. org.
- 18 Main courses
- 19 Friend of
- 20 "My country ___ of thee"
- 21 One-sided win
- 22 Girder metal
- 25 Doesn't own
- 26 Exist

DOWN

- 1 Word separator
- 2 Giant of myth
- 3 Left, on a liner
- 4 Witty banter
- 5 Concur
- 6 Handyman's

collection

- 7 Whole bunch
- 8 Leave high and dry
- 9 Begins
- 12 Gasps, say
- 16 Face concealer
- 21 Takes back
- 22 Trombone parts
- 23 Rants
- 24 Difficult to pin down
- 25 Lion sound
- 27 Frightens
- 29 Get a goal
- 30 Love, to Luigi
- 31 Under
- 32 Bed boards
- 36 Cowboy nickname

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YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

F	A	M	I	S	H	T	O	G	A
A	T	O	N	C	E	O	R	A	L
R	A	T	T	A	N	T	E	L	L
E	L	T	O	N	R	E	G	I	S
S	L	O	T	F	E	M	A	L	E
K	A	L	A	M	A	Z	O	O	
R	A	N	R	U	L	E			
E	R	A	S	E	R	P	L	A	N
P	A	G	E	S	S	H	O	R	E
A	C	R	E	S	A	Y	S	O	S
S	H	A	M	U	N	R	E	S	T
T	I	M	E	M	E	S	S	E	S

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

Low-income group half-fed

FROM PAGE 12

Similarly, a kg of flour costs Tk 23 at the truck in contrast to Tk 30 elsewhere.

Behind Sultana in the queue was Sumana Begum, a housemaid in the Shewrapa area of the capital.

Her family's situation is even worse: after paying for rent and her son and mother-in-law's treatment, she does not have much left for food.

"We are going hungry," said Sumona, whose husband is a day labourer.

Like Sultana and Sumana, the low- and middle-income group are making do with the food price hike by reducing their intake of proteins.

Food prices have been on an upward trend all year. In August, food inflation rose to 5.16 percent, up eight basis points from a month earlier, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

In the last couple of weeks, the prices of sugar, flour, chicken, fish, cooking oil, spices and vegetables have gone up due to supply constraints amid recovering demand from the pandemic and soaring prices in the international commodity market.

Visiting the kitchen markets at Kawran Bazar, Mirpur-1, Shewrapara and Kazipara in the capital yesterday, the correspondents found that broiler chicken was selling for Tk 170 a kg, up from Tk 140 a fortnight ago.

The farm's chicken eggs were seen selling at Tk 115-120 a dozen, up from Tk 110-115 a dozen seven weeks earlier.

The average prices of fish price have also soared have increased by Tk 20-100 per kg, said Sumon, a fish trader in the Karwan Bazar.

The price of onion has been increased by at least Tk 30 per kg within a week. Yesterday, the essential cooking ingredient was selling at Tk 75 to Tk 85 per kg.

Also, the prices of most vegetables have gone up by Tk 5-10 per kg in the last one week.

The price of tomatoes has gone up from Tk 100 to Tk 120 per kg last week but now it is selling at Tk 150 to Tk 160 per kg.

The price of carrots has increased by at least Tk 10 in a week to Tk 150 while green chilli was selling at Tk 200 per kg.

"The vegetable prices usually remain high every October due to shortage of supply," said Ghulam Rahman, president of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh.

But in the case of other products, including oil, sugar, flour, the prices in the local market have gone up much more than that in the international market.

"Our traders hike prices on the pretext of international market prices," he said.



Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau greets the Rahimi family (Ayat, Arezoo, Hawa, Obaidullah) who recently resettled in Ottawa from Afghanistan, in Ottawa, Canada, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Edge-of-space balloon trip

FROM PAGE 12

spaceport -- and trips are priced at \$50,000 per seat.

The company claims in its press release that "the World View space tourism experience is the most affordable, longest duration and most accessible space experience on Earth."

Based out of Tuscon, Arizona, and headed up since 2019 by former Insitu CEO Ryan Hartman, World View has ambitious, pan-global plans.

After an Arizona opening for its first spaceport at the Grand Canyon, its next targets are -- in order of projected opening dates -- the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, the Serengeti in Kenya, the Aurora Borealis in Norway, Amazonia in Brazil, the Giza Pyramids in Egypt and, finally, the Great Wall of China in Mongolia.

These are the locations World View is calling the "Seven Wonders of the World, Stratospheric Edition."

The idea is that flights will take off from these premium locations and lift eight passengers and two crew members up to 100,000 feet

altitude, about four times higher than a standard commercial airplane flight, and nearly 23 miles into the stratosphere.

They'll zoom on up there in a zero-pressure balloon and pressurized space capsule, which will then gently float in the atmosphere, allowing guests to experience the Earth's curvature and the awesome darkness of space.

Each trip on board the craft will last six to 12 hours, during which time guests can enjoy the inflight dining and bar and internet data connection, make use of the inflight concierge, check out the Earth-view cameras, star-view telescopes and individual viewing screens, or just chill on the fully reclining seats.

It's all part of what promises to be a five-day immersive experience during which participants will be offered trips out from the spaceports to explore the local wonders at ground level.

Hartman tells CNN that this might include "helicopter tours, hot-air balloon rides, high-dining experiences and many other excursions."

City sees 2nd metro test run

FROM PAGE 12

in December next year.

At least, the service will be available between Uttara and Agargaon, a distance of 11.73km, by the end of next year, he said.

The Uttara-Agargaon section is part of the 20.10km metro route till Motijheel. The Mass Rapid Transit Line-6 or MRT-6, the country's first metro rail, is being built at a cost of Tk 21,985 crore.

Five of the 24 trains to be used in the service have reached Dhaka from Japan while two are at the Mongla port. The rest will reach the depot gradually.

Testing of the trains inside the depot started on May 11 this year.

The overall performance tests may take six months and the integrity tests may continue for another three months, Quader said on August 29.

After that, five months of trial runs without passengers will be carried out before starting the commercial

services, he added.

The original implementation period of the fast-track project was from July 2012 to June 2024.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the physical work in June 2016.

She later directed the authorities to make the metro services on Uttara-Agargaon route operational by 2019, and Agargaon-Motijheel by 2020.

Failing to meet the deadline, the authorities in May 2019 said the services would be launched on December 16 this year to coincide with the golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence. But construction work lost pace amid the pandemic, forcing the authorities to extend the deadline again, officials said.

As of August, this year, the project made 69.43 percent overall progress, with the first phase Uttara-Agargaon witnessing 88.58 percent and second phase -- Agargaon-Motijheel -- seeing 67.91 percent progress.

Taiwan 'reunification'

FROM PAGE 1

"The complete reunification of our country will be and can be realised," Xi said.

He also warned against foreign interference in Taiwan after a Pentagon official confirmed US special operations forces have been quietly training Taiwanese troops for months.

"The Taiwan issue is purely China's internal affair and does not allow any external interference," he said.

"Nobody should underestimate the Chinese people's firm resolution, staunch will and formidable capacity to defend their national sovereignty and territorial integrity," he said.

Beijing has ramped up pressure on Taipei since the 2016 election of President Tsai Ing-wen, who views the island as "already independent."

"Taiwan independence is the biggest obstacle to the reunification of the motherland and a serious hidden danger," Xi warned. "Those who forget their origins, betray the motherland, or split the country never meet a good end, and will inevitably be spurned by the people and put on trial by history."

Tsai is scheduled to speak today at an event commemorating the 1911 revolution, one of the few events that unite China and Taiwan.

Taiwan's defence minister said Wednesday that military tensions with China were at their highest in four decades, after around 150 Chinese warplanes -- a record number -- made incursions into Taiwan's air defence zone in recent days.

Xi's comments come after Britain

last week sent a warship through the Taiwan Strait, challenging Beijing's claim to the sensitive waterway, and a French delegation visited Taiwan despite warnings from China.

On Friday, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian rebuked comments made by French delegation member Alain Richard, who referred to Taiwan as a "country" during a speech on Thursday.

Zhao said Richard, a former French defence minister, made the remarks "out of self-interest to undermine relations between China and France," adding that his use of the term "country" had "blatantly violated" international practice.

Xi's yesterday's speech struck a slightly softer tone than in July, his last major speech mentioning Taiwan, in which he vowed to "smash" any attempts at formal independence. In 2019, he directly threatened to use force to bring the island under Beijing's control.

Still, the speech was poorly received in Taiwan.

The presidential office said they were a sovereign independent country, not part of the People's Republic of China, and had clearly rejected China's offer of "one country, two systems" to rule the island.

"The nation's future rests in the hands of Taiwan's people," the office said.

In a separate statement, Taiwan's China-policy making Mainland Affairs Council called on Beijing to "abandon its provocative steps of intrusion, harassment and destruction" and return to talks.

High-level US delegation meets Taliban

FROM PAGE 12

own actions. They need to establish a sustained track record," the official said.

The United States' two decades-long occupation of Afghanistan culminated in a hastily organized airlift in August which saw more than 124,000 civilians including Americans, Afghans and others being evacuated as the Taliban took over. But thousands of other US-allied Afghans at risk of Taliban persecution were left behind.

Washington and other Western countries are grappling with difficult choices as a severe humanitarian crisis looms large over Afghanistan. They are trying to formulate how to engage with the Taliban without granting it the legitimacy it seeks while ensuring humanitarian aid flows into the country.

Many Afghans have started selling their possessions to pay for ever-scarcer food.

The departure of US-led forces and many international donors robbed

the country of grants that financed 75 percent of public spending, according to the World Bank.

While there was an improvement for humanitarian actors get access to some areas that they haven't been in a decade, problems still persisted, the US official said, adding that the US delegation would press Taliban to improve.

"Right now, we are facing some real access issues....There are a lot of challenges in ensuring that female aid workers are provided unimpeded access to all areas," the official said and added that Washington needed to see an improvement by the Taliban on this front "if we are to contemplate even more robust humanitarian assistance."

PRESSURE ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS While the Taliban has promised to be more inclusive than when it led the country from 1996 to 2001, the United States has repeatedly said it will judge the new Taliban government based on its deeds not its words.

The Taliban drew from its inner

high echelons to fill top posts in Afghanistan's new provisional government announced last month, including an associate of the Islamist militant group's founder as premier and a wanted man on a US terrorism list as interior minister. There were no outsiders and no women in the cabinet.

The European Union foreign policy chief said on Sunday its behavior up to now was "not very encouraging."

"We will certainly press the Taliban to respect the rights of all Afghans including women and girls and to form an inclusive government with broad support," the EU official said.

He added that there were discrepancies between the Taliban's promises of continued safe passage and implementation.

"As a practical matter, their implementation of their commitments have been uneven. It is true that sometimes we receive assurances from certain levels but then follow through on those assurances has truly been uneven," the official said.

Chunnu made secy gen of JP

FROM PAGE 12

general of JP fell vacant following the demise of Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu on October 2.

Talking to The Daily Star, Chunnu yesterday said his first task would be to strengthen the main opposition party from central to the root level.

"My first priority will be to strengthen the party up to grass root level. Taking all leaders and activists of the party, I will start working to achieve this target," he said in his primary reaction.

Chunnu, a veteran freedom fighter, also a five-term MP of Kishorganj-3, is known in and out of parliament for his bold statements on different public-interest issues.

In the 2014 parliamentary elections, Chunnu was one of the key leaders of JP who had played a significant role to bring JP into the election, going against the party chairman's decision to boycott it.

From November 21, 2013, to January 12, 2014, he served as the Minister of State for Youth and Sports in the all-party government during the election.

On January 12, 2014, he was sworn in as the Minister of State for Labor and Employment in the Awami League-led government, according to the government website.

On different occasions, Chunnu lambasted the health minister and

different ministers in parliament for their failure to serve people.

He is also vocal in parliament against corruption and irregularities of different ministries including the health ministry.

Born in 1954 in Kishorganj, Chunnu started his service life as an assistant judge. In 1986, he quit the government job and entered in law profession and politics.

Rashidul Hasan Mujibul Haque Chunnu, a co-chairman and lawmaker of Jatiya Party yesterday was made the secretary general of the party ending the weeklong division and tension in the main opposition in parliament.

Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader appointed him in this post exercising his power in line with the party's charter.

The post of secretary general of JP fell vacant following demise of Ziauddin Ahmed Bablu on October 2.

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Chunnu, a veteran freedom fighter, is a fifth times MP from Kishorganj-3

and known as a popular politician in and outside of parliament for his bold statement on different public interest issues.

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Chunnu who is currently chairman of the parliamentary standing committee on labour ministry said

Tribunal summons IO to explain inaction

FROM PAGE 12

college student was found dead in a Gulshan flat in April.

Besides, the court would also seek an explanation as to why DNA samples were not collected to confirm whose child she was carrying. The post-mortem report confirmed she was 2-3 weeks pregnant.

Also, police did not seize enough CCTV footage of the house where Munia lived in Gulshan and the surrounding buildings to learn who went in and out of the apartment on the day of her death, April 26. The court will also seek an explanation on this.

The court directed the IO, PBI Inspector Golam Moktar Ashraf Uddin, to appear in person and explain these points after a petition was filed by Masud Salahuddin, the lead counsel for Nurat Jahan Tania, Munia's elder sister and sole guardian, who is the plaintiff in the case.

Meanwhile, former model Faria Mahabub Piyasha, the seventh accused who became the first person to be remanded across two cases over Munia's death, was sent back to jail on Thursday after two days in remand. She was already in police custody for her involvement in an unrelated case.

The IO in his forwarding report to the court said Piyasha gave important information about the incident, which was being verified.

But according to Masud Salahuddin,

when Tania as the plaintiff called the IO to enquire, he told her they were having difficulty managing women officers to interrogate Piyasha satisfactorily.

"So we entered a petition with the court seeking explanation on those four points," Masud Salahuddin told UNB.

It may be mentioned that two of the accused, Ibrahim Ahmed Ripon, the owner of the flat where Munia lived and where she was found dead, and Sabrina Sobhan, Anvir's wife, have secured anticipatory bail from the High Court, although the same was rejected in the case of Anvir.

When Anvir's counsel Yusuf Hossain Humayun was arguing on his behalf during the hearing on September 29, the senior judge of the bench stopped him and said, "The autopsy report says there were multiple injury marks on the body. We have several other matters to hear. For now, we are granting bail to one of the accused [Sabrina]."

While the rejection of anticipatory bail does not necessarily compel the arrest of a person by the investigating agency, the reference to the injury marks in the court's observation is said to be highly indicative of its own interpretation of the case.

As police continued to dither and over a week had passed, the order was passed summoning the IO to explain his actions, or inaction, on Wednesday

(October 6) -- the same date when the investigation report of PBI in the case was due, but the IO did not even show up on the court premises.

Apart from the summons to the IO, November 2 has been set as new submission date for PBI's investigation report.

Guards shoot dead six migrants at Libya detention centre: IOM

AFP, Tripoli

Guards shot dead six migrants at an overcrowded Tripoli detention facility on Friday, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said, the latest violence against migrants following mass arrests in recent days.

"Shooting broke out and six migrants were killed in total. They were shot by the guards," the UN agency's Libya chief Federico Soda told AFP.

"We don't know what triggered the incident today but it is related to overcrowding and the terrible, very tense situation" at the Al-Mabani facility in the capital, he said.

He added that at least 20 other migrants were wounded and that many more had escaped in the chaos.

KSA DRONE ATTACK

3 Bangladeshis among 10 hurt

AFP, Riyadh

Ten people, including three Bangladeshis, were wounded in a drone attack on a civilian airport in the Saudi city of Jeddah that was blamed on Yemen's Iran-backed Huthi rebels, official media said yesterday.

The Saudi-led coalition fighting alongside the Yemeni government, quoted by the Saudi news agency SPA, said travellers and airport employees were among those injured in Friday's attack, updating an earlier toll of five.

Six Saudis, three Bangladeshi nationals and one Sudanese were injured in the attack, SPA said, citing a coalition spokesman.

The "Iran-backed Huthi militia" was behind the attack "using a bomb-laden drone, which resulted in (10) injuries among civilian travellers and airport staff", coalition spokesman Turki al-Malki was quoted as saying.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility by the Houthis.

SPA said the attack caused "minor material damage and some broken glass fronts" at King Abdullah Airport in Jazan, about 60 kilometres from the Yemeni border.

The Shia Huthis have been stepping up attacks on Saudi Arabia, which has escalated air strikes on rebel forces closing in on Marib, the last government-held stronghold in northern Yemen.

Pope's appeal

FROM PAGE 12

raided occupation army position in Bhotemari and killed 10 enemy soldiers.

In the Jashore-Khulna-Kushtia sector, Mukti Bahini killed 7 occupation soldiers in Ghugri while they ambushed enemy troops patrol. In this action, one of the freedom fighters was wounded. On the same day, Mukti Bahini raided occupation army position at Madankati School of Khulna district killing four and injuring seven enemy soldiers.

In the Mymensingh-Sylhet-Moulvibazar sector, Mukti Bahini raided Pakistani troops' position in Kulaura killing five enemy soldiers. During this action, two Razakars surrendered to the freedom fighters with their rifles. On the same day, one enemy bus was blown up due to mine explosion in Pagla area killing one enemy soldier. Mukti Bahini also raided and destroyed a launch between Joykhalas and Derai on the same day. In another operation, Mukti Bahini raided occupation Army position in Chargram and killed two enemy soldiers.

UNICEF TO SEND BLANKETS FOR EVACUEES

The Unicef was planning to send about three million blankets for Bangladesh refugees, informed Henry Labouisse, executive director of the Unicef. He added that it was distressing to see many children suffering from malnutrition. Something must be done to provide them with proper food, he urged.

Labouisse further informed that the Unicef had already sent protein food for the children, hospital equipment and medical supplies in addition to shelter materials and other goods. About \$22 million were given to the Unicef to undertake "one of the biggest operations" for the refugees.

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

Victim valiant

FROM PAGE 12

with gang-rape.

"Even before she was gang-raped, she was taken to the middle of a lake and raped on a boat."

After the incident, she escaped from her home and took refuge at her sister's house. Although local influential people knew about the incident, nobody took any steps to get justice for her, he added.

The former president of the Noakhali Bar Association lamented that there was an effort to change the system only when blood was shed -- this was not a constant process.

Khushi Kabir, coordinator, Nijera Kori, said that legal struggles were not to impact change if there is no proper social resistance against cases of rape.

"If the witnesses feel threatened by the society then the witnesses will step back," she said.

"If Shahoshika had not shown the courage to fight back, nobody would have been able to come to this point. The kind of role played by this woman who is disadvantaged from all sides, and the way she had undergone and experienced everything that has happened to her, shows the individual sense of resilience and dissent that she has," said Kabir.

Taslama Akhter, president of Garments Sramik Samhati Andolon, pointed out that Shahoshika's appeals had ignited the fire of protest.

"Now she needs to move on with her life. She needs to learn an income-generation activity and stand on her own two feet," she said.

The speakers sought the same level of promptness from the state in all cases of rape.

'Seeing a yellow card for team's sake is a positive'

ANISUR RAHMAN From Male

On the back of only a week-long preparation under interim coach Oscar Bruzon, Bangladesh national team surprised all in their first two matches against Sri Lanka and India in the ongoing SAFF Championship before suffering a defeat against hosts Maldives in their third match, in which Bangladesh also drew the attention for being booked five times.

Bangladesh, so far, in three matches of the SAFF Championship, have conceded 64 fouls – 20 against Sri Lanka, 14 against India and 30 against Maldives – that projected a slightly negative impression for the men in red and green, even though committing fouls from aggressive intent remains a part and parcel of the game.

The apparent recklessness from the players on the pitch also left Bangladesh in a spot of bother, where they had to miss the services of defender Bishwanath Ghosh and winger Rakib Hossain in the match against Maldives, due to their one-match suspension from having been cautioned previously.

Does the lack of players' techniques lead to the mistimed tackles on the pitch or is it the consequence of the players just following coach's instructions?

AFC A license coach Saiful Bari Titu told The Daily Star, where he shed some light on this matter.

"Fouls occur on the pitch for many reasons and I don't know what the Bangladesh coach briefed to the players before the match. But I think, fouls happen when



TEAMS' DISCIPLINARY RECORD SO FAR IN SAFF CHAMPIONSHIP

TEAM	MATCHES	FOULS CONCEDED	YELLOW CARDS	RED CARDS
Bangladesh	3	64	9	1
Sri Lanka	3	40	7	1
India	2	30	2	0
Nepal	2	20	3	0
Maldives	2	19	3	0

there is emotional instability," Titu opined.

"I mean, if a player can't control his emotion after being beaten, he may commit a foul. And if a player isn't technically sound, he may commit a foul to make up for

his weakness. Then again, a foul can be professional, in which the player must know when, why and how to commit such an act.

"If you play counter-attacking football, you've got to be patient to deal with the transition but it's true

that you can't stop a quality player with tackles. And sometimes the fatigue of the players also leads to mistimed challenges," Titu said, adding that instructions from the coach also have an impact on the game.

Bangladesh team manager Satyajit Das Rupu defended the aggressive playing style, especially against Maldives.

"There were moments of aggression in the game to stop the opponents. It [foul] happens only because of timing mistakes," Rupu said.

"Foul is a part of the game and it seemed to us that they [Maldives] also committed some but the referee didn't blow the whistle in our favour. I think the players' mindset changed after conceding the goals, that's why they were booked more," opined the former national player.

According to Defender Tapu Barman, his team is more focused on earning points from the matches rather than thinking much about fouls or bookings.

"While playing pressing football, if your opponents react fast but you're a bit late, then fouls will occur. From our game-plan, we try to steal the ball as soon as possible. So from that perspective, fouls may happen often," Tapu told The Daily Star yesterday.

"According to the coach, the best players of Bangladesh are in the national team and each player also has a couple of replacements. So a player seeing a yellow card for team's sake is a positive. "A player playing with that mindset, doesn't care of being booked and our main target will be to collect points from the game [against Nepal]," concluded Tapu.

Tigers head for the UAE



SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh team will travel to Abu Dhabi, UAE from Oman today after the International

Cricket Council (ICC) had postponed the travel plan by a day, in order to maintain the bio-secure bubble for the teams.

According to Bangladesh team officials, the ICC rescheduled the chartered flight to Sunday evening, from Covid-19 health and safety related considerations, and Bangladesh will now travel to UAE from Muscat along with Oman and Sri Lanka in the same flight.

Bangladesh will take part in two official practice games on October 12 and 14 against Sri Lanka and Ireland, respectively, in the UAE.

Following three days of training sessions and a practice game against Oman A team on Friday, Mahmudullah Riyad and his troops rested at the team hotel in Muscat yesterday.

Liton captained the Tigers in absence of regular skipper Mahmudullah, who was rested for Friday's warm up game against Oman A.

Bangladesh registered a comprehensive 60-run victory over Oman A after posting a huge total of 207 for four, riding on half centuries from opener Liton Das and Mohammad Naim and a blistering 15-ball 49-run knock from Nurul Hasan, that included seven sixes. Oman A team in reply were restricted to 147 for nine, courtesy of some tight bowling.

"We had an excellent outing with

the bat. Naim and Liton bhai got us going and Sohan [Nurul Hasan] bhai gave the finishing. I'm hopeful that our batters will do well on the wickets here [in Oman]," said the young batsman Shamim Hossain to the media on Friday.

The left-hander also impressed with his 19-run cameo off ten balls and complemented Nurul as the Tigers hammered 81 runs in the last five overs of the innings.

"I've no option but to go for boundaries because I get to bat mostly after 15 overs. So I aim to finish the innings for the team," said Shamim while giving credit to the bowlers as well.

"The bowlers played their part well too. The team combination looked good in this game and there was good communication between the players," Shamim added.

Meanwhile Shakib al Hasan and Mustafizur Rahman will be joining the team in UAE following their stint in the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL). Mustafizur has already joined the team hotel in Dubai while Shakib, who will not be available for his IPL team for the Play-offs, is set to join today.

Bangladesh team is scheduled to return to Oman on October 15, after which they will face Scotland in their first qualifier match on October 17 at the Al Amerat Cricket Stadium in Muscat.

The Tigers will then encounter co-hosts Oman on October 19, followed by Papua New Guinea on 21, with both games to be played at the aforementioned stadium.



Abahani striker Pushkor Khisha Mimo is ecstatic as he celebrates his late winner against Mohammedan during their 1-0 win in the eagerly anticipated fixture of the SIBL Club Hockey Tournament at the Maulana Bhashani Hockey Stadium yesterday. The arch-rivals found it hard to break the opposition in a feisty affair before Mimo broke the deadlock in the last minute with a field goal, earning a second win in two matches for the Sky Blues.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Athletics dream with Imranur

ASHFAQ UL MUSHFIQ

After the inception of the South Asian Games in 1984, Bangladeshi athletes had produced stellar performances in the first three editions, with Shah Alam becoming the fastest man in 1985 and 1987.

Bimal Chandra Tarafder won the 200m sprint in 1993 while Mahbub Alam became the champion in the 100m sprint in the 1995 SA Games, taking Bangladesh's tally to five golds, nine silvers and 20 bronze medals in the first 11 years of the tournament.

However, such successes in athletics were not witnessed in the last couple of decades as Bangladesh has not been able to add to their gold tally for the past 32 years, even after participating in ten more Games during this period.

Accepting the liability of their decay and in hopes of bringing back the golden days, Bangladesh Athletics Federation (BAF) introduced Imranur Rahman, a London-born Bangladeshi athlete, to trial in the 100m sprint and to participate for the country at home and abroad.

He was presented before the press at the Bangabandhu National Stadium yesterday.

As per BAF, even though Imran's favourite event is 60m, the 28-year-old holds a track record of 10.27 seconds in the 100m sprint, 0.01 seconds faster than the

South Asian Games record set by Sri Lanka's Himasha Eashan in 2016 and 0.23 seconds faster than the latest timing of Mohammad Ismail, the current fastest sprinter in the country.

However, on his trial in the BKSP yesterday, Imran finished the 100 metres trial in 10.40 seconds (hand-timing). Both Imranur and the federation believe that the athlete can perform even better and bring glory to the country subject to regular training and grooming.

"My fitness is not at peak currently," Imranur said. "I came here to prove that I'm eligible to perform as a sprinter. With more training and conditioning, I will be ready for competitive races."

It was his love for the motherland that made the London-born Imran choose Bangladesh over England.

"Money is not the issue. I could also perform for the UK. But both my parents are from Bangladesh and I felt more connected. Hence, I decided to participate for Bangladesh," he added.

From footballers Jamal Bhuiyan and Tariq Kazi to England-born Bangladeshi swimmer Junayna Ahmed -- athletes of foreign descent have made a name for themselves representing the country over the years. Hence it would not be an audacious hope that Imran could also follow the same trajectory in future.



Young Spain up against France's forward threat

REUTERS, Turin



Spain and France meet at the San Siro stadium on Sunday in the Nations League final after a week in which the competition, in just its second edition, truly delivered on its promise.

UEFA launched the Nations League in 2018 amid much puzzlement about the format and scepticism about whether such a competition was needed or desired given the prominence of the European Championship and World Cup for national teams.

The argument from European soccer's governing body was that replacing friendly matches with competitive games in a mini-group format, with a Final Four tournament at the end, would deliver better entertainment value for fans and more meaningful action for the players.

This week's games, delivered in a rapid playoff format, certainly provided the quality and excitement fans crave and no-one who witnessed them, either in the venues or watching on television, would have considered they were in anyway 'meaningless' for the players.

In fact, in this concentrated format, the competition delivers the business end of a tournament without all the labouring through a group stage, the travel between multiple venues and the slow burn

build-up throughout a month of games.

Spain's 2-1 win over European champions Italy in Milan on Wednesday, followed by France's thrilling comeback to beat Belgium 3-2 in Turin a day later, were games which could have graced the latter stages of either of the established international tournaments.

Sunday's final promises more of



the same.

France are world champions and possess a front three that is arguably unmatched in the game — the brilliance and speed of Kylian Mbappe, the deadly finishing of Karim Benzema and the craft and guile of Antoine Griezmann.

Spain have been going through a transition period under coach Luis Enrique, not only in terms of personnel but also style, and against Italy they offered clear evidence of their direction of travel.

Luis Enrique has been willing to turn to the most inexperienced of young players, with Barcelona's 17-year-old midfielder Gavi enjoying an impressive debut against Italy, having made only three starts for his club Barcelona.

Injuries mean that Spain are without their recognised forwards in Alvaro Morata and Gerard Moreno this week, but in their absence Manchester City's Ferran Torres, nominally a winger, played in the middle and scored both goals against Italy.

While Spain still treasure possession, they transition through midfield much more quickly than in the past and have a refreshing directness in the wide areas where Mikel Oyarzabal and Pablo Sarabia shone against the Azzurri and another teenager, Yeremi Pino, impressed off the bench.

France coach Didier Deschamps has switched his team to a 3-4-3 formation with attacking wing backs in Benjamin Pavard and Theo Hernandez dangerous throughout against Belgium and it will be fascinating to see who takes control of the wide areas in the final.

At the end of Sunday night, one team will raise the Nations League trophy and while that silverware does not carry the prestige of the European Championship won by Italy in July, it will be hard for anyone to claim it is meaningless.



Argentina, Brazil in action again

AGENCIES

Group leaders Brazil, eight points adrift of second-placed Argentina in the 10-team South American World Cup qualifying table, have won all nine qualifiers so far. And they could make it 10 out of 10 when they take on hosts Colombia at the Estadio Metropolitano in the wee hours of Monday.

Their arch-rivals Argentina, who have been struggling to get close to a qualifying spot along with Brazil, would hope for faring better when they face Uruguay at home hours later.

In the 33 matches played between the two sides, Brazil hold a clear advantage over Colombia. The Selecao have won 20 games, lost three and drawn 10. The two countries last faced each other earlier this year, with Brazil beating Colombia 2-1.

Neymar is expected to return for Brazil after a suspension and he's the only good news for the team after a below-par performance at Venezuela, who led the match till the 71st minute.

Lautaro Martinez is set to start for Argentina against Uruguay after he had missed their 0-0 draw against Paraguay due to a muscle injury. Lionel Messi is reportedly carrying a slight knock in his left foot but is expected to start as well. Beyond the fact that Marcos Acuna recovered from the muscular discomfort sustained in the last game, there is a chance that Nicolas Tagliacico can appear in his place.

The previous meeting between the two teams took place in the Copa America this year and ended in a 1-0 victory for Argentina, with Guido Rodriguez scoring the winner.

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SPIRALLING FOOD PRICES

Low-income group half-fed



SHAHEEN MOLLAH and AKANDA MUHAMMAD JAHID

For Razia Sultana, a 50-year-old widow with three children to look after and a Tk 22,000 of fixed monthly income, every paisa counts.

And the ongoing price spiral of daily essentials has left her double-counting every paisa that she spends.

Which is why, she braved indignation and scorching temperature yesterday to stand in a queue for about two hours to buy 5 kilogram of rice and 3 kg of flour from an open market sales truck parked near her home in East Kazipara.

She would be able to save Tk 131.

"This is humiliating for me but I had no other option," said Sultana, whose family has halved their food intake since the price spiral and stopped eating meat.

A kg of rice costs Tk 30 at the OMS truck run by the Directorate General of Food -- Tk 22 less than at the retail level.

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Metro rail goes on a performance test run on Diabari-Mirpur route in the capital for the second time yesterday. The authorities plan to open Uttara-Agargaon route by December next year. The photo was taken at Mirpur point.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

City sees 2nd metro test run

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The authorities yesterday operated metro train on viaduct for the second time as part of a series of test runs to be done before the new mode of public transport is formally launched in the capital.

The six-coach train was operated at 25km per hour on the main tracks twice between 9:30am and 12:56pm.

The train left the metro rail depot at Diabari and travelled to Uttara north, Uttara centre, Uttara south, and Pallabi stations before returning to the depot.

"This was the second performance test on the viaduct," Project Manager ABM Arifur Rahman told The Daily Star yesterday. Several tests with four other trains were underway inside the depot, he said.

Road Transport and Bridges Minister on August 29 inaugurated the series of test runs. That day, he announced that the country's first ever metro rail service will be launched

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

BEGUMGANJ RAPE TRIAL

Victim valiant against rapists

Say speakers at discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Even though the rapists who gang-raped the housewife in Noakhali's Begumganj got life-term for the heinous crime they committed, this is just one case of many, pointed out speakers at a webinar yesterday.

The woman, nicknamed Shahoshika, whose gang-rape video went viral last year and sparked a massive protest nationwide, had bravely fought against her rapists at court, they said at the webinar organised by Nari Sanghati.

On October 4, her rapists Delwar Hossain alias Delu and Mohammad Ali alias Abul Kalam were sentenced.

Veteran rights lawyer Salma Ali said, "It is sad that Shahoshika would not have access to justice if the video of her rape had not gone viral."

Shahoshika was gang-raped in September, but it was only after the rapists released her video that she had access to justice.

Advocate Habibur Rasul Mamun, one of the lawyers supporting her legal battle in Noakhali, said, "The main rapist had entered her home before and when she refused his advances, he threatened her

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6

ROAD TO FREEDOM

THIS DAY IN BANGLADESH LIBERATION WAR HISTORY

Pope's appeal for Bangladesh refugees

OCTOBER 10, 1971

SHAMSUDDOZZA SAJEN

BANGLADESH LEADERS CONFIDENT OF EARLY FREEDOM

The roving ambassador of Bangladesh, Abdus Samad Azad, addressed a meeting in London today expressed his confidence in early liberation of Bangladesh. He stressed the unity achieved by all sections of the Bangladesh people.

Professor Muzaffar Ahmed, chief of NAP (Muzaffar), who arrived in London along with Abdus Samad, said the majority of the nations at the UN was in full sympathy with the aspirations of Bangladesh. He also visited Washington, and it was his belief that there was no chance of Pakistan getting an extension of the debt service moratorium by October 31, 1971 nor a further loan from the World Bank or the Aid Pakistan Consortium.

'HELPING EAST BENGAL MEANS CONTRIBUTING TO GENUINE PEACE'

Pope Paul VI today voiced his satisfaction over the huge response to his appeal to help Bangladesh. He thanked them for heeding to his appeal to make today a day of prayer and fasting for the millions of suffering and dying Bangladesh refugees.

He declared, "To help East Bengal means to contribute to genuine peace."

There is possibly no parallel in world history to the distress in East Bengal, the Pope added.

ON THE WAR FRONT

In the Rangpur-Dinajpur-Rajshahi sector, Mukti Bahini today

SEE PAGE 10 COL 6



MUNIA MURDER CASE

Tribunal summons IO to explain inaction

Asks why the accused not arrested yet

UNB, Dhaka

The special tribunal to protect women and children in Dhaka has summoned the investigating officer of the Munia murder case to appear before it in person today to explain the lack of visible progress on four particular points, including why the accused have not been arrested yet.

Bashundhara Group Managing Director Sayem Sobhan Anvir and seven others stand accused in the case over rape and murder.

The court would also seek an explanation on why the DNA of Anvir or anyone else has not been matched with the samples collected from the body, room, or clothes of Mosarat Jahan Munia, a 21-year-old

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3

Edge-of-space balloon trip to cost \$50,000



CNN ONLINE

What do you do for ultimate bragging rights when you've already visited the Grand Canyon, the Great Barrier Reef, the Serengeti and the Giza Pyramids?

You go see them all again -- but from the edge of space.

Stratospheric ballooning company World View has just opened up reservations to get in line for epic five-day balloon voyages that promise to take travelers 100,000 feet above some of the most magnificent landmarks on the planet.

The company's first commercial flights are slated to begin in early 2024 -- with Grand Canyon National Park as the location for its first

SEE PAGE 10 COL 1

Chunnu made secy gen of JP

RASHIDUL HASAN

Jatiya Party Co-chairman Mujibul Haque

Chunnu was the party's secretary general yesterday, ending the weeklong division and tension in the main opposition in the parliament.

Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader appointed him to exercise his power in line with the party's charter.

The post of secretary

SEE PAGE 10 COL 3



PRAYER TIMING OCTOBER 10

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 4-45 12-45 4-15 5-45 7-15
JAMAAT 5-20 1-15 4-30 5-50 7-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



An artisan is putting the final touches to the idol of a deity at Ramna Kali Mandir in the capital as the last moment preparations are on ahead of Durga Puja. The largest religious festival of the Hindu community begins tomorrow.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

DOHA TALKS ON AFGHANISTAN

High-level US delegation meets Taliban

REUTERS, Washington

A US delegation was scheduled to start a two-day meet with senior Taliban representatives in Doha yesterday in their first face-to-face meeting at a senior level since Washington pulled its troops from Afghanistan and the hardline group took over the country, two senior administration officials told Reuters.

The high-level US delegation will include officials from the State Department, USAID and the US intelligence community, will press the Taliban to ensure continued safe passage for US citizens and others out of Afghanistan and to release kidnapped US citizen Mark Ferlic, the officials said.

Another top priority will be to hold the Taliban to its commitment that it will not allow Afghanistan to again become a hotbed for al Qaeda or other extremists while pressing the group to improve access for humanitarian aid as the country faces the prospect of a "really severe and probably impossible to prevent" economic contraction, US officials said.

US Special Representative Zalmay Khalilzad, who has for years spearheaded US dialogue with the Taliban and been a key figure in peace talks with the group, will not be part of the delegation.

The US team will include the State Department's Deputy Special Representative Tom West as well as top USAID humanitarian official Sarah Charles. On the Taliban side, cabinet officials will be attending, officials said.

"This meeting is a continuation of the pragmatic engagements with the Taliban that we've had ongoing on matters of vital national interest," said a senior administration official, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

"This meeting is not about granting recognition or conferring legitimacy. We remain clear that any legitimacy must be earned through the Taliban's

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