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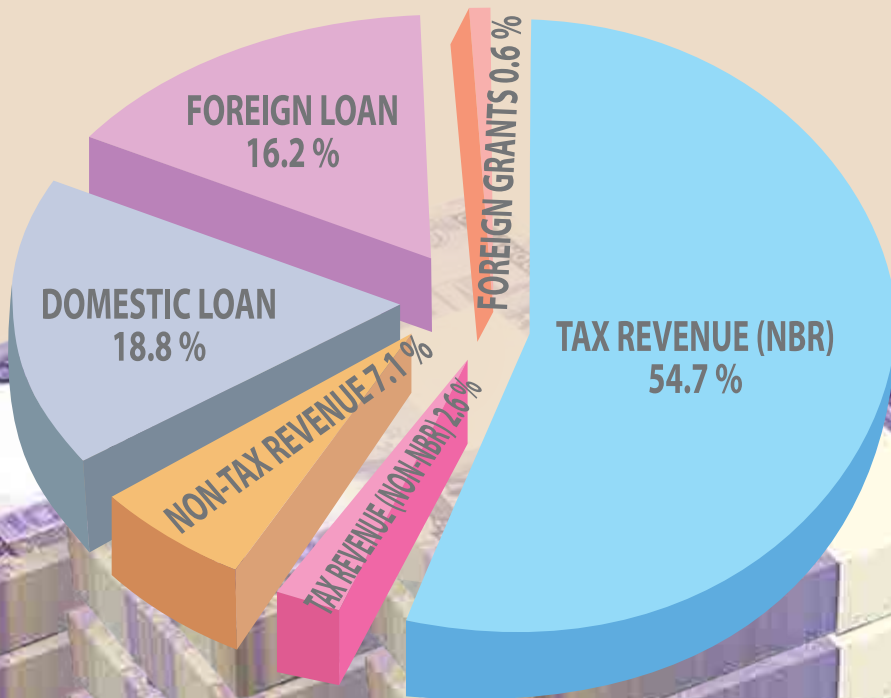


Budget 2021-2022: Protecting Lives and Recovering Economy

Impact of Covid-19 in Bangladesh and Challenges Ahead

Rabindranath as a Poet of Nature, Love and Mankind

Nazrul's Eternity of Beauty and Truth



Tk 6.03 Trillion

Bangladesh

QUARTERLY

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina signs the finance bill of Fiscal Year 2021-22 at the special cabinet meeting in the parliament on 3 June



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Editorial

The National budget of Taka 6.03 trillion for the fiscal 2021-22 has been placed in the Jatiya Sangsad, with a 7.2 percent GDP growth target and the average inflation rate at 5.3 percent. It attaches priority to the lives and livelihood of the country's people and recovering its economy from the prolonged effects of the Covid-19 pandemic. Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal highlighted various steps of the government to mitigate the shocks from the pandemic and the way forward to a sustainable economic recovery.

The country has been passing through a very hard time since the beginning of the last year after worldwide spread of coronavirus. Presently it affected 222 countries and territories. The government has declared 23 incentive block allocation, declared SSNP allocation, in addition to usual health sector allocation to meet the above challenge. Besides, Covid-19 committees at different levels at national down to upazilas have to be equipped with necessary authority, expertise, resources and capacity.

Poet Rabindranath Tagore and poet Kazi Nazrul Islam are the pioneers in Bangla literature. Both are multifarious genius. Rabindranath is a poet of nature, love and mankind. As a poet of nature, he had deep attraction for nature and its beauty. Nazrul's eternity of beauty and truth are manifested in his literary works. His artistic forms, sequence and style are reflected in his poetry and various innumerable songs.

Other than the above, an article titled 'Bangabandhu and Bangladesh in a Riverine Life' written by Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, State Minister for Shipping and Bangladesh's 50 Years Economic Achievements, Freedom of media, Payra sea port, tourism, wildlife and a story have also been accommodated in this issue.

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Budget 2021-2022: Protecting Lives and Recovering Economy

Munshi Jalal Uddin

National budget of Taka 6,03,681 crore for fiscal year 2021-22 (FY22) has been placed in the Jatiya Sangsad, with a 7.2 percent GDP growth target and the average inflation rate at 5.3 percent. It attaches priority to the lives and livelihood of the country's people and recovering its economy from the prolonged effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The lives and livelihood of the marginalised people of the country are getting special priority in the proposed budget.

In his budget speech under the title 'Bangladesh Towards a Resilient Future Protecting Lives and Livelihoods', Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal highlighted various steps of the government to mitigate the shocks from the COVID-19 and the way forward to a sustainable economic recovery.

The total budget size for FY22 is 17.5 percent of GDP. Total allocation for operating and other expenditures has been set at Taka 3,78,357 crore, while the allocation for the Annual Development Product (ADB) is Taka 2,25,324 crore. The overall budget deficit will be Taka 2,14,681 crore, which is 6.2 percent of GDP. Out of the total deficit, Taka 1,01,228 crore will be financed from external sources, while Taka 1,13,453 crore from domestic sources of which Taka 76,452 crore will come from the banking system and Taka 37,001 crore from savings certificates and other non-bank sources.

Major Allocations

The major allocations are distributed in the budget in this way: Taka 1,70,510 crore (28.25 percent) for the social infrastructure sector, Taka 1,79,681 crore (29.76 percent) for the physical infrastructure sector, Taka 1,45,150 crore (24.04 percent) for general services, Taka 34,648 crore (5.74 percent) for public-private partnerships (PPP), financial assistance to different industries, subsidies, equity investments in state-owned, commercial and financial institutions, Taka 68,589 crore (11.36 percent) for interest payment and Taka 5,103 crore (0.85 percent) for net lending and other expenses. In the physical infrastructure sector, Taka 74,102 crore will go to overall agriculture and rural development, Taka 69,474 crore to overall communications, and Taka 27,484 crore to power and energy.



President Md. Abdul Hamid authenticates the national budget for the fiscal year 2021-22 at his parliament office on 3 June

Tax and Revenue, Exemption, Reduction

Listing the number of current taxpayers at 25.43 lakh, Kamal said emphasis would be given in the next budget to bring eligible taxpayers under the tax net by taking necessary steps to boost tax collection. 'Moreover, our Tax-GDP ratio is low compared to that in other similar economies. Measures will, therefore, be

taken to increase the Tax-GDP ratio at a reasonable level,' he added.

The government has set the target for total revenue income in the FY22 at Taka 3,89,000 crore, which is 11.3 percent of GDP. Out of this, Taka 3,30,000 crore will be collected through the NBR sources. Tax revenue from non-NBR sources has been estimated at Taka 16,000 crore, while the non-tax revenue is estimated to be Taka 43,000 crore.

Kamal proposed to further reduce the tax rate for companies not listed in the stock exchange to 30 percent from 32.5 percent, and the tax rate for listed companies to 22.5 percent from 25 percent for FY22. With a view to further formalizing the economy and to encourage formation of One Person Companies (OPCs), he proposed a tax rate of 25 percent for the OPCs. The rate of tax for individual taxpayers kept unchanged. However, he proposed to fix the tax-free ceiling at Taka 3,50,000 for the taxpayers of the third gender.

To boost the inward remittance flow, the cash incentive at the rate of 2 percent will be continued in the next fiscal year as well. In addition, special 'package programmes' will be initiated by concerned banks to increase the flow of remittances through the banking channel.

Advance tax is cut by 1 percent for import of raw materials for industries. Advanced Tax is proposed to decrease here from 4 percent to 3 percent.

Bangladesh plans to exempt private hospitals from taxes if they are set up in locations other than Dhaka, Narayanganj, Gazipur and Chattogram. While placing the national budget, the finance minister said the government was 'promise-bound

to ensure standard health care facilities at an affordable cost for each and every citizen' to meet the Sustainable Development Goals. He expressed his concern that despite the leap in quality of the standard of specialised health services, the private initiatives in this sector remained 'extremely city-centric'. Hence, he proposed to offer tax exemption, subject to certain conditions, to general hospitals with a minimum of 250 bed capacity and having child and infant care, women and mother care, oncology, wellbeing and preventive medicine units, and also to specialized hospitals with a minimum of 200 bed capacity for 10 years.

Bangladesh has announced a 10-year tax exemption for six individual sectors in agro-based industries to generate employment and tackle the drought in investment caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

COVID-19 and Health

The health system of Bangladesh is facing challenges like most of the countries of the world due to the prevailing situation caused by global pandemic Covid-19. The finance minister said the pandemic is not only threatening the healthcare system, but also putting economic advancement in limbo. 'Given this situation, we are now paying our attention to combat the pandemic by enhancing the capacity of our healthcare system and tackling the economic shocks,' he said. The finance minister, like the outgoing fiscal year, proposed an allocation of Taka 10,000 crore in the next fiscal year to meet the emergency requirements to face the COVID-19 challenges.

The minister said the government procured 3 crore doses Covishield vaccine of Oxford-AstraZeneca from the Serum Institute of India. 'In addition, 6.80 crore



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina participates in general discussion on the Budget FY 2021-22 in the parliament on 29 June

doses of coronavirus vaccine will be available from the Covax facility under the World Health Organisation for 20 percent of our population, that is, for 3.40 crore people. Out of this 1.06 lakh doses have already been received', Kamal said. He said there are plans to buy vaccines from the Governments of China and Russia, Pfizer Co. from the USA and Sanofi/GSK from France/Belgium. Negotiations are at the final stage for procuring Sinopharm vaccine from China and Sputnik-V vaccine from Russia, and, if necessary, manufacturing the same in Bangladesh, he continued. The minister said the 'COVID-19 Emergency Response and Pandemic Preparedness' project, supported by the World Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is in progress.

Giving an utmost priority to the programmes and steps taken by the government to address the COVID-19 pandemic, Kamal proposed to allocate Taka 32,731 crore for the Health and Family Welfare sector in the next fiscal year, which was Tk. 29,245 crore in FY21.

Social Safety Net

Considering the impact of the pandemic, the government has made allocation of Taka 1,07,614 crore in the social safety net sector, which is 17.83 percent of the budget and 3.11 percent of the GDP. This budgetary allocation is a 12.5 percent increase from that of the revised budget of the fiscal year 2020-21. From the next fiscal year, the coverage of 100 percent deserving beneficiaries under the 'allowance for widows, deserted and destitute women' programme will be implemented in another 150 such upazilas in addition to 112 upazilas belonging to the extremely high and high poverty groups. "This will add 4.25 lakh new beneficiaries and an additional allocation of Tk. 255 crore will be allocated for this purpose," added the minister.

"Due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, people from all walks of life have to follow the hygiene rules to save their lives. As a result, many low-income workers and people engaged in informal works have become unemployed," said Kamal. The government is taking various steps to widen the coverage of the social safety net in order to protect the country's poorest segment from unemployment and loss of income due to the pandemic, he added.

Smokers set to pay more

Bangladesh plans to push the price of cigarettes to reduce smoking and increase tax revenue. The minimum price for 10 sticks of low-tier cigarettes will be set at Tk 39, with a supplementary duty of 57 percent. The minimum price of mid-tier cigarettes will be set at Tk 63, high-tier cigarettes at 102, and premium tier cigarettes at Tk 135, with a supplementary duty of 65 percent for these tiers. The government has decided to keep the existing prices of bidi unchanged.

Price Down, Price Hike

Proposed changes to duties on different products may result in increase and decrease in their prices. Price of locally manufactured or assembled blender, juicer, mixer, grinder, electric kettle, rice cooker, multi cooker, pressure cooker, washing machine, microwave oven, and electric oven may decrease. Price of locally produced or assembled computer, laptop, notebook, notepad, tab, keyboard, mouse, motherboard, power bank, router, network switch, network device/hub, speaker, sound system, earphone, headphone, pen drive, micro SD

card, flash memory card, CCTV, monitor, projector, USB cable, data cable, power tiller, combined harvester may decrease. Price of locally produced sanitary napkin, fresh fruits, paper cup, LED light, microbus, hybrid vehicles, moped, puffed rice may decrease. Price of stainless steel, poultry feed ingredients, material used for manufacturing medical devices, ingredients used in anti-cancer medicine, ingredients used for producing medicine, raw material for tiles may also decrease. Besides, price of imported cell phone, industrial salt, imported iron wire, imported meat, meat, sugar confectionary, vehicles' safety glass, iron bar and rods, motor over 750W, mineral oil, soap, carnival/entertainment articles, rice bran oil and mushroom may increase.

Freedom Fighters Honorarium

The honorarium of the valiant freedom fighters will be increased from Tk. 12,000 to Tk. 20,000 per month in the next fiscal year, according to proposed budget for FY 2021-22. The finance minister said this will require an increased allocation of Tk. 1,920 crore. In addition, work has started for building 30,000 'Bir Nibas' for the freedom fighters at a cost of Tk. 4,122 crore to ensure their safe accommodation. To improve the socio-economic condition of the valiant freedom fighters, construction of Muktiyoddha Complex in every district and upazila of the country is at the final stage.

Experts Comments

Former advisor to the caretaker government AB Mirza Azizul Islam says government will find it difficult to implement FY22 budget. "Financing won't be a big problem. The problem is spending the money on the right area at the right time," said Mirza Azizul. He praised the proposals made in the budget to raise allocations for social protection, agriculture, and job generation amid the coronavirus pandemic.

The Institute of Chartered Accountants of Bangladesh (ICAB) in its initial reaction to the national budget said that the proposed budget has focused on employment generation through skill development, exemption in light engineering, exemption of agro-based industry and bringing the new concept 'Made in Bangladesh'. The ICAB President Mahmudul Hasan Khusru commented this way.

Dhaka Chamber of Commerce and Industry (DCCI) in its initial reaction for the national budget said that the budget is a big one with an aim to economic recovery and effort to balance between life and livelihood. In his reaction, DCCI President Rizwan Rahman said the budget is by and large inclusive and pro-people. He thanked the government for reducing corporate tax both for listed and non-listed companies. It will help boost investment, he commented. He urged to widen tax net, collection of due taxes, tax collection in the district level, tax automation for more revenue collection. Mandatory e-TIN for national savings, cooperatives, postal savings will increase tax. New industry like home appliance, light engineering, automobile, ICT got tax exemptions, which is good for the industrialization, he said.

The author is Deputy-Press Secretary, Public Division, President's Office, Bangabhaban, Dhaka



Bangabandhu and Bangladesh in a Riverine Life

Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury

Bangladeshis one fiery revolutionary slogan was proclaimed – ‘Your and my address is Padma, Meghna, Jamuna.’ We realized that our destination was Padma, Meghna, and Jamuna; our only hallmark was – ‘This struggle is for our freedom, this struggle is for our independence’. At that time, millions of Bangalees plunged into the war against enemies with their lives at stake, responding to the call made by the greatest Bangalee of all time- Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. With their majestic sacrifice, we have obtained an independent country- Bangladesh, riverine Bangladesh.

Our life is riverine. From time immemorial, we are tied to the umbilical cord to rivers. Our livelihood, transportation, agriculture, industry, economy, consciousness, culture- all are fluvial. It can be said that rivers were the sole bridging point between our social and commercial relationship. Rivers are such an entity in the life of a Bangalee that it has got honed in the innermost cognition of our blood vessels for ages. Whenever we had been tested by the voice of nation, crisis of existence and necessity of self-introduction, at those critical moments our rivers surged through our consciousness and kept vigilance like a sibling. During the Liberation War, in the hearts of millions of



Narayanganj River Port



Chattogram Port, the largest seaport of Bangladesh

For the Mujib Birth Centenary and Golden Jubilee of Independence, we vowed that Bangladesh will stand tall in the World Map with her head held high. We can state with pride and dignity, Bangladesh stands up right now. Once upon a time, for constructing a road, a small bridge or even a culvert, foreign assistance was required. But now Bangladesh is building the Ruppur Nuclear Power Plant. The Payra Deep Seaport is also being constructed. Once Khaleda-Yunus conspired against the Padma Bridge but that bridge has now surfaced over water in front of the people. Now the whole world witnesses Bangladesh through all these various development projects. At present, Bangladesh is the name of an esteemed developing country. For taking Bangladesh to such a lofty height, the person whose contribution is immense is the daughter of Bangabandhu, Gem of the Country, honorable Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina.

Currently, public healthcare service in Bangladesh has improved and at the same time, medical facilities have reached the doorsteps of Bangladeshi people. People no longer die without treatment. There is no shortage of food or of clothes. Helpless, vagabond people are being given shelter; homeless people are being given houses for free. Free books are being distributed to the students of all educational institutions up to secondary level. Every kid of the country is now attending schools. No child will remain without education, no human being will remain homeless – this is our oath. It has been possible to advance gradually to this state of infinite possibilities because of the appropriate leadership of the Jewel of the Country, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Many governments were formed before her government, but they only filled office and left. But they did nothing for

the public. They repeatedly looted our country's wealth, jested with people's fate, and turned the country into a centre for corruption. They tried to disable the youth by creating a chain of drugs, terrorism, and degenerated culture. With ardent efforts put forth by the present government, Bangladesh has now made an about-turn from its previous wretched condition.

While the whole world is plagued by the Covid-19 outbreak, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina alongside 16 crore of her people are fighting against the Coronavirus with patience, diligence, and prudence. Due to Coronavirus pandemic, Bangladesh along with the entire world is facing a time of harsh reality. Since March 2020, we have been living in a different milieu. The so-called civil society of Bangladesh anticipated that lives of thousands and millions of our densely populated country would be endangered; a possibility of turmoil in economic, social, education and health system would arise and the entire system of Bangladesh might go downhill. Because of the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, it has been possible to handle this impending catastrophic situation. We have been able to show the world how with a qualified leader a nation can tackle a calamity successfully. Commonwealth Secretary General Patricia Scotland has attributed to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina with an outstanding inspirational female leader for her incredible leadership quality. She has named three 'phenomenal women leaders and deeply inspiring' prime ministers from the countries under the Commonwealth and they are Jacinda Arden, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, Mia Amor Mottley, the Prime Minister of Barbados and Sheikh Hasina, the Prime Minister of Bangladesh. She has referred to the Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina as a remarkable one among the three. Besides, as an acknowledgment the World Health Organization (WHO) has congratulated the Prime Minister for handling the Covid pandemic situation nicely. By this time, Corona vaccines have arrived in the country and vaccination programme has begun; to ensure health protection of everybody Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has declared free vaccine to every citizen.

Bangladesh is a developing country now. Therefore, we have started to dream to grow into a developed country from a developing one. The country is forging ahead. Even amid the ongoing pandemic crisis, Bangladesh has hit a record of 43 billion dollars in foreign exchange. GDP per capita income has surpassed 2000 dollars. With the appropriate leadership of honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the country is riding a rollercoaster of development and progression with glory. Prime Minister announced a manifesto of a change in upcoming days for betterment. She has transmuted Bangladesh into a developing digital Bangladesh. She not only makes us dream for future but materializes the dream into reality too. With her leadership, we have reached the row of developing countries from a poor country and by 2041 we will transform ours into a developed one. Hence, we are on the way to conquering our dreams. Today each person of Bangladesh believes - the days have changed.

Many challenges created impediment to the development of the country. We have been successful to vanquish all challenges with the guidance of the Prime Minister. The government is implementing important mega projects with

self-financed endorsement. Today people of the country assert with pride – the Padma Bridge is being built with our own money. With the leadership of the honorable Prime Minister, Bangladesh has joined the nuclear club by constructing the Ruppur Nuclear Power Plant. For the first time, Bangabandhu Underwater Expressway Tunnel is going to be built under Karnaphuli River. Previously there was no highway; now city transit system is being radically altered with the construction of modern elevated expressway, metro railway and so on. Furthermore, an extensive direct railway line is under construction from Chattogram to Ghumdhum, Cox's Bazar.

With the ingenious and sagacious leadership of the ideal daughter of the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, Jewel of the Country, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, we are going to be bestowed an up-to-date developed Bangladesh. The activities of the Prime Minister are not only being praised in the domestic land; rather being applauded all over the world. In the arena of development, she is now a 'role model' to the world. Bangladesh will step into a developed country with her leadership skill before 2041 – it is all of our hope.

In the frontiers of naval and marine sectors of the country, there are endless potentials for advancement. By utilizing those possibilities with expert hands, we have to lead the country ahead. The activities of the Padma Bridge and the Payra Seaport will be extended across whole Bangladesh gradually and each citizen of the country will be benefitted from these directly and indirectly. Cerulean marine resources will be conducive to domestic economic growth of Bangladesh. Our coastal riches will play the most important role to metamorphose us into a developed country by 2041.

However, we can never progress forsaking the ideals of Bangabandhu. After the contribution made by Bangabandhu for 3 and half years during his ministerial service, no one else bequeathed anything to Bangladesh. Bangladesh took a path of regression. During Bangabandhu's time, the Bangladesh Shipping Corporation



Mongla Sea Port

began its journey with 19 ships. By 2010, the number decreased to 2 ships. But instead, there should have been hundreds of ships by that time. Bangladesh walked backward, that's why from 19 ships, and the figure tumbled down to only 2. With the leadership of the Deshratna (Gem of the Country), the Bangladesh Shipping Corporation has taken a U-turn again. Bangladesh did not have a deepwater pier, but at present a deep harbor is being built at Matarbari in Cox's Bazar with an estimated project of 17000 crore taka. The Payra Haven is visible today. Ships from different countries are making anchorage at the Mongla Port. In this way, Bangladesh is making progression in all aspects.

We are in the Mujib Millennium and about to embark upon the Golden Jubilee of Independence. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has emboldened the people of Bengal. She has opened Bangladesh to the world. Not only the maritime boundary but we are also striving to bring the whole world within our grasp. The expedition will be a long one. Our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is leading the maritime sector forward to reach that goal.

For the economic development of our riverine Bangladesh, the role of shipping belt is important. Considering the importance of rivers for the development of agriculture, fisheries, trade and commerce, and communication, a holistic and integrated programme has been launched to protect rivers. With the visionary leadership and general instructions of the well qualified daughter of the Father of the Nation, the Gem of the Country, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and the maritime sector is spreading fast. Different river ports have been modernized and renovated. With a view to building an epoch-making, modern and eco-friendly aquamarine port, suitable for the twenty first century, the third largest seaport in the country, the Payra Deep Seaport is being constructed in Patuakhali to meet the increasing demand of import-export. By 2023, the Payra port will be furnished as a world class up-to-date harbor.

To excavate waterways, 34 dredger machines have been acquired and to manage ferry-crossing properly, 17 ferries have been built. More dredgers for excavation are going to be collected and capital dredging work is going on. Necessary initiatives have been taken for the excavation programme of 10000 kilometer of waterways, eviction of grabbers of river banks and to bring back the navigability of the rivers. To ensure and enhance the navigability of rivers and to prevent occupation and pollution, the National River Conservation Commission has been formed. An Inland Container Terminal has been built at Pangaon. Implementation of different large-scale activities has been made to create mobility in Chattogram and Mongla ports, and a plan for establishing a bay-terminal in Chattogram is under way. In order to develop human resources in maritime sector, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Maritime University and four new marine academies have been founded in Sylhet, Rangpur, Barishal and Pabna. Steps have been taken to modernize and renovate the Bangladesh Shipping Corporation, and six ships have been acquired; further acquisition of another 6 ships is going to be made. For sailors who work on foreign ships a procedure of providing machine readable identity papers 'ID Card' is being operated. A venture for the development of ten new land ports including Benapole Land Port is going on.



Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Maritime University

The Prime Minister of a war-torn, newly liberated country Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman made Bangladesh shine wherever he went on this planet. Today we can dream because of the political philosophy of Bangabandhu. At this moment ours is a middle-income country, on the way to be a developed one – it has been possible for internalizing the ideology of Bangabandhu. If we can retain Bangabandhu each moment of every day, only then we shall march forward. From 1949 to 2021, the Awami League has been into politics to establish the rights of the people of this land.

Whenever this party has taken the responsibility to administer the country, people have achieved something. Behind every country's progress, there is politics. If that politics is for honesty, righteousness and patriotism, the country cannot lag behind. Bangabandhu struggled for 24 years with an honest and upright aim in view. For this reason, he could emancipate a country.

The worthy daughter of the Father of the Nation, Sheikh Hasina is running the country with transparency and devotion. On the other hand, a profound conspiracy is being plotted against Bangladesh. Even plots against our patriotic army are being framed. The Bangladesh Army has been continuously playing a gigantic role in the development of Bangladesh and for world peace. Nonetheless, a deep conspiracy is going on to sabotage the army by making its contribution questionable. When with the leadership of the honorable Prime Minister, Bangladesh has reached a prestigious position of a free democratic country, the economy of Bangladesh has become a matter of pride, at that moment an attempt to create an arena of conspiracy in the international hemisphere is being made to set back its progress. We must remain extremely vigilant against these anti-national schemes.

Translated by: Sheikh Masud Kamal, Joint Director, BIWTA

The writer is the State Minister, Ministry of Shipping, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh



Impact of Covid-19 in Bangladesh and Challenges Ahead

Md Quddus Khan

(covid-19) has spread quickly throughout the world within a short span of time since late 2019. Presently it affected 222 countries and territories. As of 27 June 2021, more than 180 million cases have been confirmed, with more than 3.91 million confirmed deaths, making it one of the deadliest pandemics in the history. At present Covid-19 scenario in Bangladesh, in the world and in the top 3 infected countries (USA, India & Brazil) are as follows:

Name	Total Infected	Total Death	Total Recovered
Bangladesh	8,17,819	12,949	7,57,569
World	17,48,02,787	37,64,256	15,82,28,033
Figure of Top 3 Countries with Covid-19 Infections			
USA	3,42,42,866	6,13,052	-
India	2,90,89,069	3,53,557	-
Brazil	1,70,38,260	4,77,307	-

Source: Prothom Alo, June 10, 2021

Before I go on to discuss impact of Covid-19 in Bangladesh and its challenges ahead, I would like to take some of my readers time to share with them my personal experience and its impact on me and my family members. As a senior retired government servant, on my request IEDCR officials came to my New Eskaton residence on 22/9/2020 to collect covid samples of my family members and me. We received our report on 23/9/2020. Report showed that me, my wife Johora, my younger son Barrister Nabil tested covid positive. My elder son Dr Mosabbir (mukit) who is a government doctor tested positive in an earlier report of Square hospital. Both of my sons, wife and me being infected lived together in my Eskaton residence and received treatment at home. Both of my sons used to record our temperature with thermometer and oxygen level with oximeter for showing it to the senior Dr. We used to wear mask and followed health rules vigilantly. We did not have major covid symptoms except my wife who had minor



The first consignment of 5 million doses, purchased from Serum Institute of India (SII), arrived in Dhaka on 25 January 2021

breathing problem and a bit of high fever. In one night, at about 3 am my wife's oxygen level fell from 98% to 93% (danger level). I contacted nearby hospital for an ambulance and asked them to remain standby. We mentally

prepared ourselves to go to Kurmitola Covid hospital but at this stage I prayed to almighty Allah for my wife's life and asked my sons to recheck the oxygen level of my wife by oximeter. And found that her oxygen level has risen from 93% to 96% (safe level). We decided not to take her to hospital. After a few days I had no fever and no symptoms but my sons had minor fever and no major symptoms. My wife however continued to have a bit of high fever and her oxygen level fluctuated. My elder son, my wife, myself became negative after 14 days but it took 28 days for my younger son to become negative. During the whole period when all of my family members were Covid patients I felt that Allah might terminate life of anyone of us at any time. But always prayed that it does not happen. But actual feeling of the fear of losing my wife for life came when her oxygen level came down to 93% at 3 am. I fervently prayed to Almighty Allah for my wife's life. Soon Allah's blessings showered on her and her oxygen level rose to 96%. I shall never forget this fateful night when her life was threatened. Covid gave me opportunity to rediscover my love for my wife. Covid made me more God fearing. Covid gave me opportunity to learn that we owe our life to each other in the society by keeping ourselves safe from covid we also helped others around us to remain safe from the same and vice versa. It teaches dependence on each other.

Impact of Covid-19

Impact of Covid, in general may be discussed in various heads: psychological, social, administrative, judicial, security, political, economic etc.

- a. Psychology has developed that nobody is immune from covid-19. Anybody can be infected at anytime. Everybody is in fear. In some cases family bonds were shaken. It has been reported in the press that covid patient old mother has been left on the street for the safety of family members.
- b. Social bond was also shaken. Others are eschewing a family that has a covid patient. It is one kind of social ostracism. Family visits have become almost nil except emergency. Social gathering not only discouraged but sometimes also banned by the authority.

- c. Government has formed covid committees at national, district and upazilla level to monitor and implement government decision on covid-19. Administrative offices and judicial courts were closed or run in a limited way to avoid gathering of people. Virtual official meeting and virtual courts are being held to meet urgent matters and cases. Law has been amended to hold virtual courts on the advice of the honourable Supreme Court.
- d. To maintain health security and contain spread of covid-19, various measures have been undertaken. Travel by road, waterways and airways has been banned or restricted in the name of lockdown to contain corona virus. Buses, trains etc have been advised to carry passengers-at half of their capacity. Restaurants, hotels etc. have been allowed only to go for takeaway service. People are advised not to go out of home during the night except for emergency reasons. People are also advised to maintain social distance (3-6 feet), to wear mask when outside , use disinfectant or wash their hands with soap, floor of the house, offices also to be disinfected with disinfectant. People are advised to avoid social gathering etc. mobile courts were conducted to enforce the above health guidelines.
- e. Political parties irrespective of their political identities have been advised to play their role in creating mass awareness to abide by health rules. Also to go for humanitarian assistance for the people who have gone out of employment due to Covid lockdown. Opposition political parties are urging the government to take all necessary steps to contain Covid and take necessary steps for humanitarian assistance for them.
- f. Our neighboring country India is the second highest Covid affected country in the world. Therefore our border districts with India have been heavily affected by Indian Covid virus delta. Therefore border management has become a priority for the government. Government has already closed the border with neighboring country India keeping some border posts opens for emergency purpose such as treatment and goods movements have been allowed for economic reasons.
- g. Apart from health issue Covid-19 is a fundamental economic issue. 'Making balance between life and livelihood' is a fundamental issue in Covid management.
- h. Our national budget for 2021-2022 amounted to 6,03,681 crores taka. From which 1,07,614 crores taka have been allocated for Social Safety net Programs (SSNPS). SSNPS includes 23000 crores taka allocation for retired government servants. This SSNPS will bring around 14.27 lacs more elderly citizens, widows and people with disabilities under its umbrella. Apart from usual allocation of taka 32, 731 crores for health sector, taka 10000 crores block allocation has been made to meet Covid-19 challenges. Besides VAT rebate has been retained for corona virus test kits, personal protection equipments, vaccine imports, production at businessman level etc. The Finance minister also announced that 80% of our population will be brought under vaccination in phases. The Daily Star carried a report on June 4, 2021 under the heading, 'Poverty reduction; pandemic eats away 30 years of progress. In it, it shows that poverty rate was 56.07% in 1991 and 20.5% in 2019 in Bangladesh. The World Bank report released in 2021 estimated that the poverty rate in Bangladesh has jumped to 30%, a Brac study showed that the pandemic's

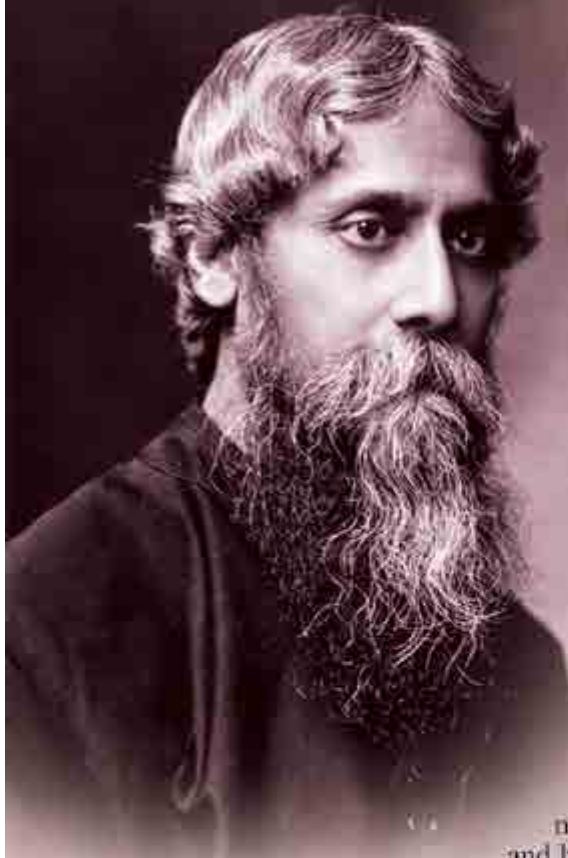
economic shock pushed 2.45 crore people to poverty even before the second wave of pandemic (in 2021)

Challenges ahead

- a. Balancing between life and livelihood is the fundamental challenge. Lockdown programs of government must take care of these two aspects: protection of life and protection of livelihood. Government has declared 23 incentive packages and SSNP allocation, in addition to usual health sector allocation to meet the above challenge.
- b. Implementation of government targeted Covid programs is a major challenge. Implementation by health and other related sectors of government are marred not only by corruption and also by poor capacity. Therefore eradication of corruption and capacity building are two major challenges to be met with courage, honesty and patriotism by our leadership both political and administrative.
- c. Prevention is better than cure holds true still. This is very true in case of pandemic Covid-19. To follow health guidelines is the answer. To make people used to follow health guidelines is a challenge in Bangladesh.
- d. In a pandemic situation vaccination has no alternative. Bring the population under threat to covid-19 under vaccination programme is a major challenge. In his budget speech the honourable Finance Minister declared that 80% of population will be brought under vaccination program. Government efforts to purchase vaccine from one source (India) have not worked. Therefore government has taken steps to bring vaccine from various sources such as China, Russia, USA, UK, COVAX etc. it is expected that challenge of vaccine procurement will be met with success. Diplomatic efforts at apex level and leadership intervention will be helpful to meet this challenge.
- e. Covid-19 committees at different levels at national down to upazillas have to be equipped with necessary authority, expertise, resources and capacity. They should work as mini government 'at each level to balance between life and livelihood. The committee should include not only public representative and government servants, but also civil society people with expertise. They should ensure observance of health guidelines. For which they will try to build up public opinion in its favour and also arrange mobile courts to enforce it. Our neighboring countries covid situation poses a threat to us. Therefore border management with neighboring India is a challenge for our Covid management.
- f. Finally a national recovery plan may be prepared and implemented involving all the relevant sectors of government to fight Covid 19 and Covid related impact for achieving freedom from covid, economic and social recovery and national development.

Covid-19 is not only a health issue it is also a social and economic issue. Balancing of life and livelihood is the key to its success. Our government efforts so far have been satisfactory in this respect.

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A black and white portrait of Rabindranath Tagore, showing him from the chest up. He has a long, full, grey beard and mustache, and is looking slightly to the right of the camera. He is wearing a dark, high-collared garment.

Rabindranath: Poet of Nature, Love and Mankind

Dr. Md. Matiur Rahman Khan

Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941), a pioneering figure in the awakening of the Bengalis, was born on 7 May 1861 (25 Baishakh, 1268 in the Bangla calendar) in the affluent and culturally rich zamindar family of Kolkata's Jorasanko. His grandfather was Prince Dwarkanath Tagore and his father was Maharshi Debendranath Tagore. Rabindranath was the youngest of Debendranath Tagore's fourteen children. By dint of his genius and merit, he gradually became a prominent figure and bright star in the domain of Bengali literature.

As a versatile poet, he left evidence and ample traces of his genius in poetry, novels, short stories, plays, including songs, almost in every field and area of literature. His *Gitanjali* (song offerings) brought him in 1913 the best honour the "Nobel Prize", and this achievement of the "Noble Prize" gave him the honour as the chief of the poets. His literary composition and collection are vast and large in number and quantity. He composed 12 novels, more than 1000 poems, 119 short stories and more than 2000 songs. He composed not only songs but also set tunes to them too. Apart from those, he wrote many articles on different topics. Moreover, he wrote many stories on travel and peregrination too. He also travelled many countries all over the world.

But as a man, the poet, by nature, was also very loud and protesting against injustice, unfairness and unlawful acts. During the lifetime of the poet, it happened that the then British soldiers on April 13, 1919 killed 379 people very mercilessly and ruthlessly at Jalianwala Bagh, which is known in history as 'Jalianwala Bagh Massacre'. Rabindranath in protest against this ruthless massacre renounced the title 'Knight' which was conferred on him by the British rulers.

However, the poet had a life for about 80 years of which he spent for about 68 years in literary pursuits. On his death bed the poet orally composed for the last time in his life: *Tomar sristir path rekhechho akirno kori* (the way to your creativity has been spread everywhere.)

But during his lifetime the contribution that he made to Bengali language is really incomparable and inexhaustible. His genius is multifarious. Some of his multifarious geniuses are that he is a poet of nature, love and mankind. As a poet of nature, he had deep attraction for nature and its beauty. He loved nature and enjoyed its beauty very intimately. The beauty, flavour and smell of nature attracted him very deeply. On the occasion of the supervision of the zamindari, he travelled around many places of Kushtia, Pubna and Rajshahi, and at that time he got the opportunity of being acquainted with the rural Bangla, and he became charmed at the unique views and beauties of the rivers, canals, marshlands, houses surrounded by water, villages and crop-fields. As a result of travel, he could visualize and realize a real complete picture and form of human life in the strange plain land washed away by the Padma, the Jamuna, the Brahmaputra, the Gori, Ichhamoti etc. rivers. He composed his literature based on these views and forms taking them as the means and support of his writing. As a result, we find that his love and attraction for nature are significantly manifest in his writing. Therefore, he obtained good name as a poet of nature.

Again, from the very boyhood, poet Rabindranath had deep love and strong attachment for nature. He could never forget nature. The nature appeared to him as a unique young, mysterious, wonderful and enigmatic attraction. The beauty of nature filled the poet's heart with much pleasure. If any rift and breach of the relation between the poet and the nature occur, we find that the poet's mind was filled with melancholy and gloom. We can explore the mental depression and dejection from the poet's "*Sandhyasangeet*" (Evening Songs) after the rift and split of the poet's relation with nature. He in his frustrated state of mind expressed his mental pain and restlessness. In addition, we can learn from the poet's "*Probhatsangeet*" (Morning Songs) that he developed deep relation with the nature. The poet in his memoir narrated: "From my boyhood, I had a very easy and intimate connection with the universal nature. As soon as I woke in the morning the earth's ecstasy called my mind out as his playmate, at noon the whole sky and the time became very keen and pushed down in its depth and made me indifferent, and in the darkness the secret door of the way of illusion that was opened led beyond the boundary of the possible and the impossible to the unique wonderland of the fairy tale crossing the place beyond the remote corner of the world where human being can hardly go". We find the poet's book "*Chhobi O Gaan*" (Pictures and Songs) where he enjoyed nature's outstanding and breathtaking beauty and felt romantic, passionate and closely attached. He observed the nature profoundly and intensively, and in the rainy days in the land of the variety of seasons in solitary house he lonely remarked:

*"Tuptup bristi pore
Pata hote patay jhore
Dale bose bheja ekti pakhi"*

(It's raining drop by drop
on leaves to leaves.
A bird is soaked sitting atop
one of the branches.)

The poet in his "*Kori O Komol*" (Soft scale relating to musical notes in Bengali) poetry book expressed his intense love and attachment to the nature, universe, and life. He was very charmed by the natural beauty. The exquisite beauty of nature

and the wonderful variety of pleasure overwhelmed the poet with mysterious beauty of grace. The poet loved the nature, the world, and the universe so much that he liked to live on this earth forever. He did not like to depart from this earth. So, he opened his mind in this poem "Pran" (Life) of the poetry book "Kori O Komol" as:

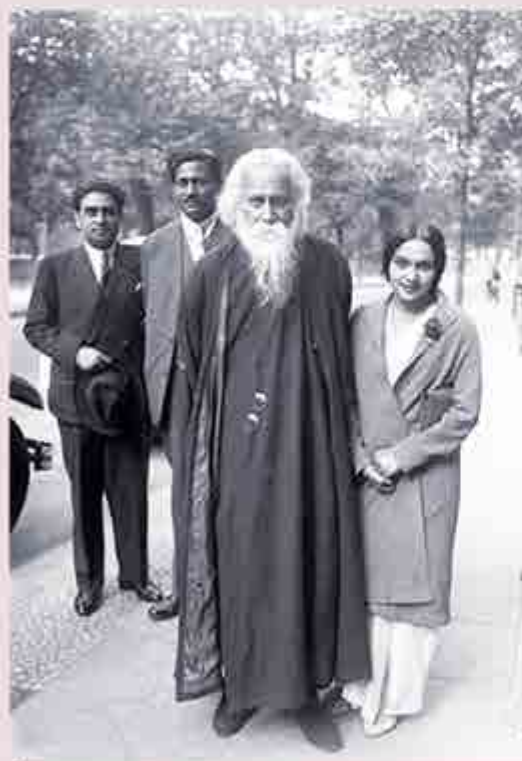
*"Morite chahina ami sundor bhubone
Manuser majhe ami bachibare chai"*

(I do not like to die in this beautiful earth.
Rather I would like to live
among the human beings from birth.)

We understand that Rabindranath even in his old stage of life could not forget the nature. He wrote in "Shymoli" (Greenish black)

*"Se jeno gramer nodi
Bohe nirobodhi
Mridumondo kalkole
Toronger bhongimay aborter ghurni nai jole"*

(The river flows eternally
through the bedecked village
murmuring, singing slowly,
that waves don't whirl amaze.)



Rabindranath Tagore on his 70th birthday, May 1931

Rabindranath the worshipper of nature had inseparable connection with nature. So, we find that Rabindranath was a poet of nature.

Now, we may take an attempt to show that Rabindranath was a poet of love. Usually poets are worshippers of love. In this connection, Rabindranath in the domain of poetry was not an exception. The subject-matters of many of his poems are "love". In many cases his thoughts and ideas in the poems were based on love. His poems and songs are devoid of vulgarity. In his poetry book "Kori O Komol", deep love has been expressed, as if his latent love has arisen in this youth because of the touch of the golden stick. The poet has attained the stage of the bloom of youth. He became enamoured of love. So, the poet expressed:

*"Amar jauban sapnae jeno
chhae achhe bishwer
akash."*

(As if my youthful dreamy image overwhelming the sky gaily!)

We find the painful passions that occur in men in the prime of life mainly for women, and the love and beauty that arise in the youthful stage of men are found to be on the basis of women. This special auspicious moment of time of life and youth in the eye of men and women is breathtaking beautiful and pleasant. This is what is called the characteristic of the youth of men. The poet felt that the surroundings around him became womanly. He even felt the touch of beautiful women, when there was actually the touch of natural flowers on him. From this feeling the poet in his poem "*Gitoschhas*" (Outburst of singing of spring songs) wrote:

*"Nirob bashorikhani bejchhe abar
Priar barota bujhi esechhe amar
Bosontokanon majhe bosonto somire"*

(The silent flute blows its notes
with the message of the darling
breaching the silence, whistling
in the garden of the spring
and the spring air starts blowing!)

In the poet's depiction and pen picture of the beauty of women bodies, there is neither indecency nor obscenity, there is no any vulgar sensual enjoyment nor did any craving for worldly pleasure nor had even any arduous endeavour to obtain pleasure. The poet delineated with graceful style the particular organs of women body as an object of attraction of beauty. The poet in his poetry book "*Manusi*" has marked and observed a new form of beauty. He got an opportunity of meeting his spiritual lover for a short time, and then separation took place. After separation, the poet remained in meditation for his spiritual lover. The poet did not desire for parting from his lover, but he desired to have reunion with his spiritual lover. The poet thought or believed:

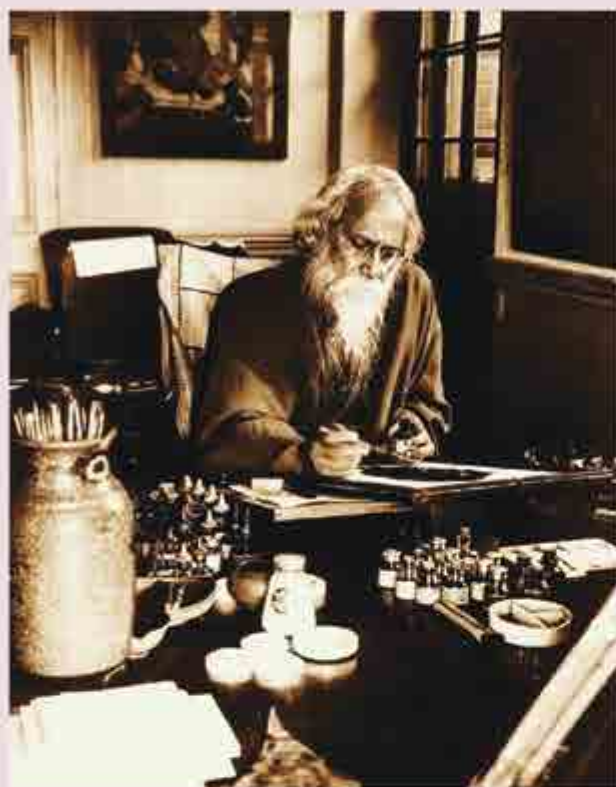
*"Anurag ghethe premer unmes, birohe ase upolabधि,
Ebang milane ase premer sarthokota"*

(Revelation of love outbursts
in the making of love
but separation insists that love is glorious of all above.
As soon as the lovers' contact is sublime the union of love
Comes true to their dream)

He felt that men were not created only to satisfy the sensual and worldly enjoyments, nor women were created for the enjoyment of sensual pleasures of love. We find the reflection of this kind of mentality in his poem "*Nisfal Kamana*" of the poetry book "*Manosi*". The poet quotes:

*"Khudha metabar khadyo nohe jei manob
Keho nohe tomar amar...
Bhalobaso, prem hau bali
Cheona tahare"*

(It's not the provision of hunger, O Man!
None of you and I can claim it as anyone's own...
Better love and give up yourself to love,



Poet Tagore at his study room

Not to ask for anything more than above.)

We find that the poet endeavoured to determine the right and deep nature of love. We find in the poem "Nari Ukti" (Woman speaks) of the poetry book "Manosi" the poet expressed women's love for men, and commented:

*"Buk fete keno aushru pore
Tobuo ki bujhite parona?
Tarkete bujhite ta ki? ei muchhila akhi-
E shudho chokher jol. e nohe bhartsona"*

(Why tears burst out of the heart?
Can't you understand as yet?
What can you understand in debate?
Just I weep out my tears from the eyes.
It's simply tears of eyes, it's not reproaches.)

Correspondingly, the poet expressed the love of men for women in the poem "Puruser Ukti" (Man speaks) of the same poetry book. Here, the poet expressed his feelings as:

*"Patropuspo grohotara bhora
Nilambore mogno charachar,
Tumi tari majkhane ki murti akile prane-
Ki lolat, ki noyon, ki shanto adhar.
Tire ami darae sourave akul."*

(The sky is full of stars and planets
While the earth is full of leaves and flowers
Where you simply enliven the statue at heart!
What the forehead, the eyes and the calm lips!
While I am on the bank standing
overwhelmed with fragrance.)



Poet Rabindranath Tagore with son Rathindranath Tagore, Daughter-in-law Pratima Devi & C F Andrews

The poet in his poem "*Manassundari*" (Beauty of love) of "*Sonar Tari*" (Golden Boat) poetry book depicted and represented the ideal of mankind and the nature of the world through women and the poet understood that in his life. The poet sought for deep union and alliance with the sweetheart of fancy (with the women conceived in his mind). He expressed with his restlessness in order to take various tests of love. He called upon his ladylove to fill his life with pleasantries, embraces, kisses and songs. And the poet is also very eager to see his sweetheart of fancy in a visible or tangible form and image.

The poet thinks that love gives men honour, glory, courage and strength. The power of love is so unlimited that

it can make the impossible possible, and can make the distant relatives to be close ones. He in his poem "*Premar Avisek*" (Coronation of Love) in the poetry book "*Chitra*" narrated:

*"Tumi more korechho samrat,
Tumi more paraiachho gourab mukut;
Puspodorei sajiechho kontho more
Tobo rajtika dipichhe lolat majhe
Mahima shikha aharnishi"*

(You have made me the emperor
You crowned me with glory
You have dressed me with flowers
Your royal crown is glowing in my forehead,
And that glorious flame of fire is burning day and night.)

Moreover, we get further say of the poet in his poem "*Santona*" (Solace) in the poetry book "*Chitra*" Here, the main point of the poet is that a ladylove for her

undying and selfless genuine love can sacrifice any interest and gain, and this sacrifice is possible only for true and pure love. Love makes a man liberal and removes the narrowness of mind and teaches to share the sorrow and suffering of lover or the ladylove. The poet again says:

"Nirobe laibo prane tomar hriday hote nirob bedona" (Hence, I shall take silent sorrow of your heart silently to my heart.) The welfare-woman-statue in the poem *"Ratre O Provate"* (At night and in the Morning) of *"Chitra"* had impressed the poet forever. And hence, the poet expressed:

*"Tumi sakal sohag shoyechile sokhi, hasimukolito mukhe,
Madhu jaminite jostsna nishithe nabin milon sukhe"*

(Your caress me with love and with a smiling face.
We were honey-mooned with happy union.)

Furthermore, the poet felt his love in *"Mohua Kabya"* as a noble strength. Love makes men and women unusually strong and courageous. Love comes out victorious in the struggle of life. But this platonic love does not call for women for bridal chamber or bridal bed for sensual pleasure but this love strengthens spiritual power and encourages overcoming the struggle of life. Love gives self confidence and boldness. It being encouraged and strong in love, the lady love in *"Sabala"* (Full bloomed young girl) poem of *"Mahua Kabya"* expressed:

*"Jabona basorkakkhe badhubese bazaiye kinkini
Amare premer birje koro asonkoni"*

(I shall not get in the bride chamber
ringing the bangles as the new bride
Rather make me fearless with heroic spirit of love)

Hence, it can be said that Rabindranath is an expert and pensive poet in the realm of love poetry.

Rabindranath is again a poet of the Bengalis and mankind. In his poetry the Bengalis and the whole world have become manifest and visible in the unique form, frame and feature of breathtaking and exquisite beauty. His creative literature has surpassed the narrow boundary lines and limits of countries, times and persons and has assumed as a universal form. So, his literary composition is for all mankind of the world.

As no blowing air of a country can be stopped by a particular boundary, so the literary composition of Rabindranath cannot be limited to a country or nation. So, the poet said that he had close and spiritual connection with this earth. He became to be one soul and one body with this earth.

The poet in his poem *"Bishwanrityo (World Dance)"* expressed his desire and willingness to join this lively dance of mankind by breaking the wall of his mind and going beyond the bounds and limit of his poetic imagination. He did not like to be limited only to the Bengali nation but he liked to be associated with other nations to have sense of flavour of the worldly life. So, the poet expressed his feelings as follows:

*"Hriday amar krandan kore
Manob hridayei mishte
Nikhil-er sathe moharaj pathe
Cholite dibos nishethe"*

(My heart cries out day and night
to join every human heart on the royal road.)

The poet avoided insularity of mind and expressed his deep eagerness and fervency to be associated with people of the world. The poet in his "*Balaka Kabya*" felt a sense of motion in the nature of world and also realized that the people are following the go of the world through death. In the poem "*Bharatritho*" of "*Gitanjali*" he desired to bring mankind under the same rule. He urged to give up meanness, narrowness, provincialism and referred to universality. He wished good to all the people of the world and urged:

*"Eso hey arjo, eso anarjo, Hindu-Musalman
Eso, eso aj tumi ingraj, eso, eso Khristan,
Eso Brahmon, suchi kori mon dhoro hat sabakar
Eso hey, pathuk, houk aponito sob apamanbhar*

... ..
Aji Bharater mohamanober sagartire"

(Come O Aryan, non-Arya, Hindu and Muslim.
Come, come today O the English, come O the Christian.
Come O Brahmin, make your mind pure, have hands in hands of all,
Come O travelers, let burden of insult fall.)

... ..
Today on the sea-coast of the great men in India)

The poet thinks that because of unbearable heat of human sin, there has started an earthquake on earth in the struggle between the powerful and the hungry people. The weak have been disheartened and feeble because of torture on them by the oppressive. This thinking and idea of the poet left a deep painful impression on the mind. The poet in his poem "*Prashchitto*" (Atonement) says: "The days of the oppressive has come to an end. Peace will come on earth again." He hopes that welfare of men will be promoted by the struggle of men. The poet waits for that human welfare and peace. Rabindranath is a world famous poet., so he sings:

"Amar sonar Bangla ami tomay bhalobasi"
(O my Bengal of gold, I love you)

To rouse human beings and make them conscious, the poet has more mental pain and agony for their timidity, cowardice and weakness than irony. The poet in his poem "*Deher Unnati* (Development of the body) remarked:

*"Dur hok ei birambona, bidrupe bhag
Sobari chahi bedona dite bedoa bhora pran"*

(Let this portion of deprivation and mockery remove
And let that pain overwhelmed the heart goes.)

So, he may be called a poet of mankind.

We have so far tried to cite and quote from some of his poetical compositions in order to prove that Rabindranath had love for nature and mankind. The citations and quotations lead us to conclude that Rabindranath is really a poet of nature, love and mankind.

The writer is former joint Secretary to the Government of Bangladesh



Nazrul's Eternity of Beauty and Truth

M. Mizanur Rahman

Nazrul's eternity of beauty and truth as manifested in his literary works is supposed to be nature-oriented. His artistic forms, sequence and style in poetry and his composition of various innumerable songs are having acute sense of purpose embellished with due rhymes and rhapsodies in excellent tones and tunes.

However, in all forms, his coining of words with appropriate metaphors, similes, syntax and syncopation seem to have been made marvelous. And all these qualities along with objective ideals he could reach the climax of his readers' unparalleled appreciation. What his desired end was his eternity symbolizing the core of universal humanitarianism. In this context his man and woman work at par in all performances of worldly affairs. Nazrul sings in ebullience:

"I sing of equality-
that there's nothing said to be great and glorious
than the human.

He(God) remains relative of everyone
at every time, in each abode, in every place
for every nation
distinguishing none of the time, people and place
in the sense of relativity!"...

He has tuned the song of this relativity in his poem, "The Woman"-

"I sing of equality-
In my eyes there's no distinction
between man and woman.
Whatever good and beneficial works have been done
for human beings in this world,
the half of them have been done by the woman
and the other half done by man..."

Nazrul had his commitment to his people and the country as a poet and writer to bring about peoples' awareness and to fight against the oppressors who made them poor depriving them of their minimum subsistence by exploiting their hard labor. He exhorted-

“Awake, you, the oppressed unfortunate,
Strike the oppressors with weapons of thunder.
This is the bidding of the New World
which has come into existence...”

He understood his eternity and the tremendous force of creation and destruction of this man is irresistible. Nazrul created his great poem, “The Rebel” in which he characterized the indomitable spirit of man to rise above his powerful soul that can supersede God. Here he simply symbolized God reflecting the force of human character in his sentimental airs in all spheres. To his power the Himalayan peaks do bow down.

But his struggle is there. That is indomitable spirit of the human. Who once lost the paradise but regained it by means of his/her undaunted perseverance. What Milton cries out in his “Paradise Lost”;

Of Man's first disobedience and the fruit
Of that forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste

Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
Sing Heavenly Muse....”



Kazi Nazrul Islam in the British-Indian Army during World War I

Since human struggle for existence has been continued but no exception of it can be discerned. Though human beings are born free yet they are in chains everywhere. They are to set themselves free from every bond no matter how many skies fall overhead. All barriers and impediments that stand on their ways to peaceful life must be overcome. What Shelley sketched in his “Prometheus Unbound” as saying-

“We have passed Age's icy caves,
And Manhood's dark and tossing waves,
And Youth's smooth ocean, smiling
to betray;
Beyond the glassy gulfs we flee
Of shadow-peopled Infancy,
Through Death and Birth...”

As a matter of fact Nazrul is a romantic poet. His ultimate goal is love unlike any other poets of the world. But what makes him rebellious? He got the cause before him. At that time his country India was under the

foreign subjugation where injustice, exploitation, misrule and oppression of the people had been prevailing. Especially the downtrodden ones were teeming millions for whom Nazrul spoke virulently against the oppressive rulers of any measure. In fighting for the people in his literary works he had to be languished in jail and most of his printed books and edited news papers were proscribed. But he was not subdued because his eternity of beauty and truth inspired him to raise his head high above every sphere.

Say, O Hero,

My head's raised ever high!"...

"In this perspective we may recall Shelley:

All else had been subdued to me; alone

The soul of man, like extinguished fire,

Yet burns towards heaven with fierce reproach, and doubt

And lamentation, and reluctant prayer

Hurling up insurrection, which might make secure,

Our antique empire in though built

On eldest faith..."

Actually Nazrul was much more romantic than rebellious in his trend of literary movement. He did not like human bloodshed in the fighting of man against man at war. And it is evident that he remained restless due to human folly of such clashes between each other for certain trifling interests. He, at last, said:

"I would be calm that day

when the cry of the oppressed
would never rend the sky
and air.

When the brandishing weapons of death of the tyrants

would not be rattled in the fiercest battle field.

I would be calm that day..."

Otherwise his Eternity of being chanted love songs melodiously which were played on in his Bengali Bamboo-flute. Notwithstanding his chorus of marvelous rhymes go on thus-

"I am shining, I am brilliantly shone,

I am the restless water rolling on,
unlike sparkling wave's rolling,
as if, swinging cradles 're billowing!-

I am the virgin's unwound braid of hairs

with anguish of youthful eyes,

I am the elixir of love of lotus- hearted

sweet sixteen, for I am carnally happy!....

...I am the flute of Orpheus..."

Dr.Syed Sajjad Hossain has rightly appreciated Nazrul in his article "Nazrul Islam :An Assessment" as saying... "The poem that gave him nickname as The Rebel is fascinating study in Nazrul Islam's artistic choices. There is hardly a source that he does not tap, irrespective of whether it is associated with any particular cultures. With almost reckless impetuosity he throws together images drawn from Muslim lore, Hindu mythology, Greek legends, the modern industrial west and local stories connected with Bengal's countryside. Arsh (seat of God) and Israfil



Poet Nazrul Islam listening to his song performed by Renu Bhowmick in Dhaka

(the angel whose trumpet will announce the coming of doomsday)-these from Muslim sources-happily comingle with Siva, Indra, Parsuram, Durga and other Hindu deities; for good measure Orpheus is brought in, so is the mine employed in modern warfare...It is no casual knowledge that he displays, but familiarity of a man steeped in them in the way Milton or Spenser was steeped in classical Greek and Roman mythology. Nazrul Islam set his readers a poseur by stringing together in this rhapsody not only diverse myths but also ideas which seem at first sight to contradict each other.

What he set out to celebrate was the principle of rebellion, but the symbols he chooses range from the violent hurricane, which like Shelley's "West Wind" is an embodiment of an uncontrollable fury but also the soft tremor in the heart of a girl in love."

Leaving aside all conventionalities the contradictory character of human beings is put here as the very forceful spirit of Nazrul's eternity. He is as strong as the unbreakable element and as frail as lovelorn girl. Most of these symbols he used in his lyrics are vivacious and visionary. According to the researcher William Radice, "Bidrohi" 'The Rebel', is usually regarded as Nazrul's most characteristic poem, and only he could have produced its blend of exuberant rhetoric, metrical turbulence, social idealism and romantic egoism..."That is, 'the Rebel, the Universal Mother's rebellious child.'

Needless to say once again that Nazrul's rebellion against oppression, injustice and war by man against man, but he had also underscored a tender-heart of the human being which is full of romance and as a poet, he felt all those natural phenomena.

Beside human sorrows and sufferings, trials and tribunals, his/her tremendous achievements in the field of science and technology, Nazrul had never ignored social, political, economic ideology and the wide area of cultural sphere. His inspirational patriotic songs, march songs, Hindu-Muslim devotional songs,

essays on different subjects, novels, stories and plays are ample examples towards his acute affinity of rational and passionate feelings of humanism. He moved from here to eternity honestly and with absolute sincerity.

Some excerpts of the poet Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899-1976) are appended hereto in support of his Eternity-

“This sun, moon and stars preach your bidding
From the morning to the evening
That none of these day, night, air, and sky is monopoly of anyone.
Whatever resources this earth has since been possessing,
Those scented flowers, sweet fruits with full of juices,
Most compassionate soil, water like nectar
And the songs in bird’s voice have been serving equal rights-
for everyone. This is your order! God O God.”

“Those days are not far away
When the world would sing of victory of man
with woman.”

“Let all people of all countries converge in a single outlet
And hear the flute-tone of a single human unison.

If one hurts the other, equally it strikes at the heart of everyone.
Insulting a single human being appears to having been insulted
with the shame of the entire community of mankind.”

“In the core of luxury lie kings and ministers
drinking life-blood of the peasants and the workers,
While we work ourselves to death
to support those tyrants to our breath!

...
Come, O Workers of the world,
trample those lots, hold fast your hammers,
Scythes and shovels and advance in the song of unison.”

...
“Who are you brother to look for God throughout
the heaven and the earth?
Who are you wandering in the woods?
Who are you climbing the mountain-peaks,
Alas! Risci-Darbish (Ascetics,
you are looking for
Him here and there), holding that in your
own heart you look for Him abroad !

You shut your eyes, whereas
the creator looks at you! See
on the mirror, His shadow
reflects your entire body,
(From your body to your feet below)!”
(Iswar)

Nazrul’s “Iswar(God)” reflects Hugo, Victor Marie(1802-1885)’s “Les Miserables”. In which the author expresses its core, as ‘Human heart is the temple



Poet Nazrul surrounded by his pupils teaching Nazrul-Sangeet

of living God'. Nazrul said, "In seeing myself I could perceive my unseen Creator."

"The Rebel" of Nazrul manifests an exultant expression of egoistic stunt of incredible contradictory human sentiment. Could that human reach beyond trials and errors in the spirit of personality?

Here some sparks of influence emanate from the philosophy of "Beyond good and evil" of Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche (1844- 1900), Friedrich George Wilhelm Hegel(1770-1831)'s "Philosophy of Right" and H. Karl Marx (1802-1883)'s "Das Capital" and "Communist Manifesto". Moreover Nazrul coined and used a huge powerful words and characters of Indian, Greek Mythology and Islamic culture to embellish especially his great poem, "The Rebel". Rhetorically he used them in artistic forms as metaphors. The forceful vibrations of such powerful Bengali words make the person who recites this poem appears to be a content rebellious hero himself. It seems an unprecedented classical theme that is yet to be elixir among the world poetry in general and Bengali poetry in particular. So was the powerful poet Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899-1974) who struck the gamut of the intelligentsia in 19th century Bengal when the genius-laden Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) was at the zenith of Bengali literature, art, and culture on the firmament of Bengal shining brilliantly! Since Nazrul brought about an epoch-making new trend in Bengali literature. Subsequently Jibananondo Das (1899-1954) and Sukanto Bhattacharya (BS.31st Srabon 1333-29th Baishakh1354) emerged as the famous and powerful poets of Have-nots of Bangla literature through this axiomatic trend. But "The Rebel" of Nazrul would remain unparallel, even in the sphere of world literature.

And as such Nazrul's voice on eternity of beauty and truth gives hopes and aspirations for all the people of the world with fervent vigor and vitality in sublime fervor.

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Bangladesh's 50 Years Economic Achievements: Expectations for the Future

Md. Azgar Ali

be cooked for their digestion. Be that, we have to go back a little bit and if we take a look at the side picture of its success stanzas, where we can see how this country has developed and changed in the last 50 years. Bangladesh has already achieved a lot. This is being spoken by everyone today, including those who opposed the birth of Bangladesh. Henry Kissinger's 'Basket Case' stigma was smeared on the forehead of Bangladesh like an abusive child. Now Bangladesh is a prosperous and self-reliant country. At present Bangladesh considered a role model of development and one of the emerging economies in the world. And this

The transition from a least developed country to a developing country is a new and wonderful achievement for Bangladesh. In the midst of a terrifying environment of the world plagued by Covid-19, the Bengalis are enjoying their golden jubilee with the joy of contentment and the expected dreams and aspirations in mind. In this golden jubilee, the nation wants to see this country as a developed, prosperous and a civilized nation of the planet called earth so that no one can neglect it.

Although it is possible to provide limited recipes in the report written on the paper of this article in the eyes of the general public which wouldn't



Export Processing Zone, Dhaka

achievement was not accomplished suddenly. Collecting baskets of fruits from rows of trees planted in the garden and selling them in the market effortlessly at a cash price. Behind this is the essence of the last 50 years of hard work. Particularly, Bangladesh's soil, its large working population, social and political factors have contributed immensely to this unprecedented and amazing success of Bangladesh in economic development. Today, Bangladesh is moving forward with huge potential at an irresistible pace.

The tragic picture of post-independence devastated Bangladesh is no more. Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's aim then was to rebuild the war-torn country. In order that in November 1973 the First five-year long-term plan (1973-78) was implemented. The main goal of the First Five Year Plan was to reduce poverty. The strategy to achieve the goal was to increase job opportunities, equitable distribution, increase agricultural and industrial



Expressway, Bhanga, Faridpur connects the Padma Bridge

production, and increase economic growth from 3% to 5.5%. Since gaining independence in 1971, Bangladesh's economy has grown rapidly. Until the 1980s, Bangladesh's economy was largely dependent on jute products. From the 1980s to the present, the garment industry has made the greatest contribution to the economic development of Bangladesh. It is said that the garment industry has laid a solid foundation for the economic development of Bangladesh and the economy as a whole. At present, more than 82 percent of export earnings come from the garments sector and Bangladesh ranks second in the world in terms of exports. The total number of industrial establishments was 23,752 in FY 1988-89 while it has increased to 47020 as per the economic census of 2013. In 1972-73, the contribution of agriculture sector to GDP was 49.57 percent. At the same time, the contribution of the service sector was 37.86 and the contribution of the industrial sector was only 12.56. On the other hand, the contribution of the agricultural sector decreased to 13.32 percent in 2018-19. At the same time, the contribution of service sector increased to 55.53 and the industrial sector followed by 31.15 per cent. Now, the country's export income is also increasing as a result of it being



Hilsa Fish production: Bangladesh ranks 1st in the world

growth of national production does not go down. From 2001/2002 to 2008/2009, the total national annual growth rate was 5.6%, and then it has increased by more than 6% every year and increased to 8.2% in 2020-21. The per capita income in 1972-73 was US\$ 88, in 1982-83 it was \$189, in 1992-93 it was \$285, in 2002-03 it was \$471, in 2012-13 it was \$ 1054, in 2017-18 it was \$ 1752 and now it is \$ 2064. Bangladesh is not lagging behind in other social indicators either. In some cases many pioneers from many developing countries of the world. While the poverty rate was 48% in 2000, it has come down to 20.5% in 2018. The extreme poverty rate was 34.5% in 2000 which has come down to 10.5% in 2018. Maternal mortality and infant mortality under 5 (five) years have been reduced. In 2012, the under-five mortality rate per thousand living children was 42, which has come down to 28 in 2019. The maternal mortality rate in 2012 was 2.03 which has come down to 1.65 in 2019. On the other hand, the life expectancy of the people of the country has increased from 64.9 years in 2012 to 72.6 years in 2019. It is very much astonishing that the total production of rice has increased more than three-times to 363.91million metric tons in 2018-19 from 108.68 million metric tons

multiplied. For more than three decades now, the industry has been booming in the country's economy, maintaining its uniqueness and accelerating at a breakneck pace. The total number of industrial establishments was 23,752 in FY 1988-89 while it has increased to 47020 as per the economic census of 2013. With the growth of economic institutions, the average annual



Padma bridge, the largest river bridge of the country, is being constructed by gov't own funding.

in 1970-71. At present, Bangladesh ranks 1st in the world in hilsha fish production, in terms of production of jute, readymade garments, jackfruit, goat's milk and outsourcing are in the 2nd (second) place, 3rd in vegetable and inland wetland fish production, 4th in rice production, 6th in the potato, 8th in mango, guava, foreign remittance and 10th in tea production respectively. Now, the practice of open defecation and use of raw latrines (non-sanitary) in the open space of the people of the country is seldom noticed where the sanitary toilet facility is 81.5% (2019). Use of drinking water (taps and tube wells) has reached 98.1%. The use of kerosene-used coupe/hurricane is declining drastically. At the same time, the use of electric lights is increasing at an expected rate. At present (2019) 93.5% is covered by electricity facility. According to BBS's provisional estimates, the contribution of the 'transport, storage and communications' sector to GDP in the 2018-2019 fiscal year is 10.98 per cent and the growth rate is 6.88 per cent. The



Metro Rail on test run

government is working to ensure access to reliable, affordable and modern telecommunication services for all the people of the country. By January 2019, the number of mobile phone subscribers in the country has exceeded 15.75 crore and the number of internet subscribers has crossed 9.14 crore. Broadband internet is being developed all over the country. Despite the limitations of resources, the total size of the budget of Bangladesh in 1972-73 was only Tk 786 crore, now it has increased to Tk 523190 crore in 2019-2020. In 1977-78, the number of expatriate Bangladeshis was 16.9 thousand and their remittances were 92 million US dollars. On the other hand, in 2016-17, the number of expatriate Bangladeshis was 880 thousand and their remittances were 14982 million US dollars. Employment in the agricultural sector has decreased from 78.7 per cent in 1974 to 40.6 per cent in 2016-17. On the other hand, employment in industry and services has increased from 21.3 percent in 1974 to about 60 percent in 2016-17. In post-independence Bangladesh, the total export income in the fiscal year 1973-74 was 297.41 million US dollars, while it was increased to 36668 US dollars in 2016-17.

Large projects like the Padma Bridge is being implemented with own funds. Work on mega projects for the construction of Dhaka Metrorail, Payra Deep Sea Port,



Ruppur Nuclear Power Plant under construction in Pabna

Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant, Karnafuli Tunnel and development of large export oriented industries is in full swing. These are a happy surprise!

Undoubtedly there has been a change in our economy. It is also true that the 50 years of statistics mentioned in the article show that Bangladesh is now on the development highway. Therefore, the continuity of development must be maintained. This is not the end of the story. While this is a major milestone in the history of the nation, economic rivalries will intensify in the days to come and the outlook for the world economy may change. But we have a long way to go to reach the same level as the developed countries. Obstacles to advancing the trend of economic development to the level of 'self-reliance' need to be overcome. In the development plan of the country, importance should be given to electricity, gas, energy, communication, vocational education, creation of new employment opportunities and heavy industry. We should adopt an investment program so that we can reach the desired goal ahead of time. In order to become a high middle income country by 2030 and a prosperous developed country by 2041, we have to join the fourth industrial revolution. Therefore, research and innovation in all fields including agriculture, industry, science and technology need to be increased. In the Fourth Industrial Revolution, we need to increase our capabilities in sophisticated technologies including science and technology related topics such as: artificial intelligence, robotics, drones, and space technology. At the same time, researchers and scientists need to pay more attention to the challenges that exist in the industry.

Finally, yet most importantly, Bangladesh will take its place in the world as a credible and dignified country. We need to consolidate and sustain this achievement. It is hoped this is a special step for us to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, to become a high middle income country by 2031 and to become a developed country by 2041 and beyond.

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Payra Sea Port Development: Unique example for rehabilitation of distressed families

Dr. M. G. Neogi

EEZ, airport, port city, dockyard/shipyard, eco tourism etc. centering to the port. By this time, custom clearance facilities, VHF communications, banking, enlistment of ship handling operators, C&F, shipping agent, channel marking with lying of buoys at river and approach channel, marking of Payra inner and outer anchorage area has established. In addition, implementation of ISPC code, UN locator code and port security including a Bangladesh coastguard station with high-speed vessel and work force etc. has already completed as per planned programs.

To increase the economic activities in the central zone and access to wider communications throughout the world market as well as fulfill the future demand of the nation, the third seaport named as 'Payra Sea Port' has been established in between latitude 21.9890 north and longitude 90.2792 east on the bank of Rabanabad channel of Kalapara upazila under Patuakhali district.

The port will be operational with a 16m channel where at least 10 kilometers container and other terminals with all other associated facilities including establishment of



Payra deep sea port



Houses built for the affected families of Payra port.

In this connection, the government has acquired around seven thousand acres of land including homes and agricultural land, through which, around four thousand two hundred families lost their homes including their agricultural land where most of them are hardcore poor. Acquisition of land by the government for development of the country is a very common practice in all over the world. It is fact that when the state conducts land acquisition, it leads to changes in the livelihoods of people.

However, as per government general rules for acquisition of land, all loosing families of Payra seaport areas are getting compensation as usual. It is our general observation that the loosing families those were received compensation money from the state, mostly invested in housing and family furniture, while little spent on income-generating activities. Thus, it may create a negative impact for such families to survive in future.

To understand the reality, the Honorable Prime Minister has come-up and extended her hands to these poor families under a special consideration. In addition of general compensation, the government developed cement made pakka buildings for 1,165 loosing families who lost 20 or more than 20 decimal of land including their houses. These buildings have been built in 978 square feet of land within 4 Kathas (2,880 square feet) of homestead.

In similar way, the government has developed another 2,258 cement made pakka buildings for each of the distressed families who lost less than 20 decimal of land including their houses. These buildings have been built in 885 square feet of land within 3 Kathas (2,160 square feet) of homestead.

All these 3,423 houses ornamented with three bedrooms, two bathrooms,



Mosque and Eidgah in the rehabilitation complex

one kitchen including one verandah, of which one master bedroom constructed with an attached bathroom. In addition, all these houses having one thousand liter capacity overhead tank for drinking water purposes. Besides these, one septic tank has been installed for four houses where fifty family members can use it.

Moreover, all these 3,423 houses are linked under the multi-purpose facilities where school with community clinic cum community center, open play-ground, mosque including Eidgah are available. In addition, every house having electricity connections including deep tube-well with underground water reservoir system for availability of pure drinking water. The RCC drainage system with culvert, internal road connections with bricks, ponds with cement made stairs, shopping center, rainwater harvesting facilities, social forestation, graveyards are available in such housing campus as complete package program.



Electronics practical training for affected people.

All these activities are implementing by the Development Infrastructures/Support Facilities for Operation of Payra Port (DISF) project under the Payra Port Authority (PPA), where the Bangladesh Navy under Ministry of Shipping guides Payra Port Authority.

In order to create alternative income generating activities for the all the 4,200 families, the Payra Port Authority facilitated hands-on training program (one member from each family). Most of the women households received three-month long tailoring and garments training while men received three-month long vehicle driving training as per their choice. As per their interest and local demand, both men and women also received different type of practical trainings like mason, livestock rearing, fish rearing, homestead gardening, mobile phone servicing, motor-cycle, rickshaw repairing, television, DVD, repairing, refrigeration and air-conditioning repair training, etc.

All these hands-on training conducted by the Development Organization of the Rural Poor (DORP) at field level. A few examples can share about these distressed families – how they are passing the days after training!

Reksana Begum, a housewife of 32 years old living with her husband Habib Khan with two children at Banatipara bazar of Lalua union under Patuakhali district. Her husband had 36 decimal of land along with a tiny homestead, which was acquired by the government for the development of Pyra Sea Port. They received Tk. 4,35,000 as compensation for surrendering their homestead. After receiving compensation, Reksana knows that the honorable Prime Minister has extended her human hands to these distressed families while they will get pakka house. Reksana and her husband was so surprised and excited to know this miracle news! It was a dream for them to have a pakka house in near future where they and their children may live!

In addition, the Payra port authority asked Reksana whether she could involve in any income generating activities to improve her family livelihoods. She chose tailoring and received three-month long hands-on training. She received Tk. 500 per day as daily honorarium for this training, where she got Tk. 36,000 as training honorarium for three months long training program. After training, she started her tailoring business at her house along with her husband while she had a plan to use this Tk. 36,000, which she received as honorarium to enhance their shop in coming days. Their tailoring business is now gradually increasing while she expected to earn around twenty to twenty-five thousand taka as net profit from coming Eid festival.

Samsun Nahar (35) along with her husband Md. Altaf Gazi and two children are living at Doshkani village of Banatiparamouza under Lalua union of Kalaparaupazila. They had 91 decimal lands with a tiny homestead which was acquired by the government for the development of Payra Seaport. As compensation, they received Tk. 14,91,000 from the government. Under a special consideration, they received a pakka house as the gift from the honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. In addition, Samsun Nahar received a 3-month long practical training on 'Tailoring and Garments'.

After receiving training, she purchased a shop for tailoring at women market of Banatipara bazar where she is now investing her time as a successful entrepreneur. Due to in-coming Eid festival, she is now receiving huge order to make dresses while she is expecting to earn around fifty thousand taka from this end.

Harun Mridha received a



Tailoring training for affected women

3-month long hands-on training on Masonries from the DISF project. After training, he is now involved with the construction works as Mason and receiving higher income. Side by side, he developed a poultry farm at his house after getting orientation from DORP on poultry rearing. Through this training, he developed an integrated homestead farming at his house and getting income round the year.



Orientation on possible income raising activities in saline area

Abu Sayed received three-month long practical training on 'Basic Computer' under DISF project while he is now involved in a government job at Kalapara upazila as computer operator. In same way, after receiving a month-long training on mobile phone servicing, Aminul Islam has established a mobile phone servicing center at Banatipara bazar, where he is now well-known as mobile phone mechanics.

Zeba Afroza, the Team Leader of DORP pointed that the women households under this project are becoming the asset of their family and contributing significant role to make their family with food and nutrition security through hands-on training and then involving themselves with the income-raising activities where most of them were housewife before.

Captain M Muniruzzaman, the Project Director of DISF project confidently expressed that after establishing the planned development programs of this project, Kalapara would be a surplus food basket, which is now a food deficit and most vulnerable area in the country.

Through observing the project sites, it is my personal understanding that the field activities of this project is continuing under a strong monitoring system where the Project Director of DISF project Captain M Muniruzzaman and the Team Leader of DORP Ms. Zeba Afroza are directly involved. It is our expectation that after involving with this project, the vulnerable households may able to greening their fallow land in dry season by adopting newly developed salt-tolerant crops variety along with the recent innovated affordable climate-smart technologies and may ensure with good harvests, which is now totally vacant around seven months in dry season.

We hope, the government would consider this project as role model for sustainable development of the vulnerable communities in the country and replicate the same in others area. It is our also expectation that the government will consider this innovative model as national program to improve the livelihoods of vulnerable families.

Dr. Neogi, is Deputy Project Leader of University of Western Australia and may be reached at mgneogi@gmail.com

Dr. M. G. Neogi received Independence Award – 2021

Dr. Mrinmoy Guha Neogi has been awarded the 'Swadhinata Puraskar (Independence Award – 2021)' for his outstanding contribution to science and technology. This is the highest state award of the country. Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina handed over this prestigious award to him on 20 May 2021. Dr. Neogi is now working in the coastal regions as Deputy Project Leader on 'Incorporating Salt tolerant wheat and pulses into small holder farming systems in Bangladesh' under



Dr. M. G. Neogi receiving Independence Award from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Ganobhaban on May 20, 2021

University of Western Australia. The project is an Australia-Bangladesh joint collaborative research project to develop stress tolerant wheat and pulses variety and technologies to greening the coastal Bangladesh.

Dr. Neogi was born on 1 January 1957 in Tangail district. He graduated in Agricultural Science from the Sher-e-Bangla Agricultural University while post-graduated from the Bangladesh Agricultural University. He received his Doctorate degree on Monga mitigation issues from the Jahangirnagar University and completed higher degree on International Development Studies from the Oslo University in Norway.

Dr. Neogi was very much involved with the research and development programs on Monga (a famine like situation during mid-September to mid-November) mitigation issues in greater Rangpur district for about 18 years and successfully developed short duration rice-based cropping pattern. He refined the *Ratoon* rice production technology as additional rice harvests from the same plant of boro rice.

Dr. Neogi was involved with reputed international organizations like German Technical Assistance, RDRS Bangladesh, International Rice Research Institute and a project of World Bank.

Dr. Neogi visited Switzerland, England, Italy, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, Japan, South Korea, Tanzania, India, Philippines, Thailand, Cambodia, and Nepal, where he shared his research findings in different science forums. His published research articles and books have been highly praised by the scientists of world-renowned universities and organizations.

M. G. Neogi is one of the regular contributors to the Bangladesh Quarterly.



Govt's Steps to Ensure Freedom of Media in Bangladesh

Md. Saifullah

of expression of opinion in the society.

The present government is firmly determined to uphold the freedom of press as envisaged in the Constitution of Bangladesh. Accordingly, the government of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina just after assuming office in 2009 enacted laws and rules on 'Right to Information'-RTI and instituted the Information Commission. The government officials are now bound to provide information to the newsmen within the time frame stipulated in the law which is playing a vital role in maintaining transparency and accountability in running the government. Following RTI, there are assigned officials at each and every office to provide information to media people and others as they need. The number of such officials at the public and private offices all over the country is 42,254. Under the law, 1,19,831 individuals were served with the information as per their demand across the country during July, 2009 to December, 2020. The law has been proved so useful that the Information Commission has to dispose 2218 cases relating to RTI out of 2315 accepted for hearing since its inception. Punitive actions have been taken in such 62 cases. Many government officials have been punished for their negligence or failure in co-operating the media people as per the RTI rules. The power of arresting journalists without court-warrant under the Special Power Act has been ceased. The journalists in the country are now working without any fear. Stringent measures have been taken against the incident of attacks on journalists and bloggers by the vested quarters and militants. Such attacks on media people have drastically come down due to the government's instant action of zero tolerance policy. The Press Council is working to resolve the disputes among the stakeholders of the media.

Newspaper owners can import tax free newsprint and other printing materials from abroad. On the other hand, they are bound by law to offer their journalists a salary package recommended by the wage board constituted by the representatives from the government, journalists and the owners. The government has already announced the 9th Wage Board Award. The government is also contemplating to include journalists, camera-persons and other related support service people in the private TV channels in the wage board. Imposing ban on airing commercial ads in the down linked foreign satellite TV channels and control on the digital content uploaded in the social media greatly help the flourishing of the local media. Income from the government ads and supplements also help them.

The Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh guarantees freedom of thought and conscience and of speech as fundamental rights. The present democratic government led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina firmly believes in freedom of press, as the fourth estate after executive, legislature and judiciary to run the state-craft. Article 39 of the Constitution of Bangladesh lays emphasis on the freedom of press and uninterrupted flow of information excepting issues relating to sovereignty and integrity of the state. Following the spirit of the constitution, the government provides all-out support to the media and thus upholds freedom



Bangabandhu-1 satellite ground station at Gazipur

Digital Bangladesh Programme being implemented by the government has reinforced media manifolds. County-wide availability of electricity, high speed internet, mobile phones, computers, laptops, television channels contribute to bring information at the finger touch of the people. The present democratic government is providing policy support by framing various laws and regulations. Right to Information Act 2009, Cable Television Network Operation and Licensing Regulation 2010, Private FM Radio Centre Installation and Operation Policy 2010, National Broadcasting Policy 2014, Bangladesh Journalists Welfare Trust Law 2014, and National Online Mass Media Policy 2017(amended in 2020) are very much mention-worthy. To make media more pro-people, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting following National Online Mass Media Policy so far approved 85 online news portals and online news version of 92 established newspapers of the country. Registration of the approved online news services is going on under the supervision of Press Information Department. More online news media would be approved soon. The government has a plan to develop a new agency named 'National Broadcasting Authority' which would ultimately oversee the online media.

With the support of the media friendly policy of the government, a huge number of newspapers are being published in the country. According to information received from the Department of Films and Publications, there are over 700 media enlisted newspapers in the country. Out of all these, 560 are media enlisted dailies of which 255 are being published from the capital Dhaka. Electronic media have got a great jump with the Digital Bangladesh Programme. Along with state run TV and Radio, the government has provided license to 45 private TV channels, 27 FM radio and 31 community radio stations. As per official data, 31 TV channels, 22 FM and 17 community radio stations are now in transmission and the rest are taking preparation for launching. Launching Bangabandhu Satellite-1 has strengthened media arena in the country. All the TV channels of the country are being transmitted through Bangabandhu Satellite-1 at subsidized rate. The plan of the government to launch Bangabandhu Satellite-2 would surely contribute more in this regard.

Both the print and electronic media enjoy full freedom in running their activities. Live programmes like talk-show, discussion, debate in the TV channels are very

popular in the country. Noted personalities, politicians, intellectuals, educationists, journalists and even grass-root people regularly participate in these live events and freely express their opinion. They most often go on rampant criticism of the government or of its activities without any censor. The government never interferes such free expression of opinion and views. Other electronic media even newspapers taking the advantage of 360 degree strategy also telecast such live participatory programmes. The freedom of expression of opinion and also free flow of information has been strengthened with the widespread use of social media and mobile phones. Presently, about 17 crore mobile SIM and 11 crore internet users in the country show an immense potentiality of the non-traditional 'neo-media' in the society. Considering its importance, the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has decided to create its new wing named 'Social Media Wing.'

In true sense, an era of free electronic media began in the country during the first tenure of Sheikh Hasina's government (1996—2021) with the approval of the private TV channels for the first time. The installation of the first private TV channel of the country, Ekushey TV, is mention-worthy. The subsequent BNP-Jamat Government following their anti-mass media policy stopped the transmission of the TV channel.

The Awami League government has taken necessary steps for grooming up equipped manpower for the ever expanding media arena of the country. The government arranges training for the journalists across the country to raise their professional standard. The government has also taken steps to create the scope of higher education on journalism at various public and private universities. A huge number of university graduates are now being engaged in the ever expanding media world. The government established Bangladesh Cinema and Television Institute in 2014 for developing skilled media people for the potential electronic media. The government spent 20 crore taka for the expansion of Press Institute of Bangladesh and National Institute of Mass Communication who also provide training to the media people. To extend necessary support to media, the 16-storied 'Tothyo Bhaban'- Information Building costing about 105 crore taka has been built. The government has taken a project to develop Information Complex at the district level. And lastly, Press Information Department, a government agency directly working with the journalists in providing them with professional support, is going to open its offices at Sylhet, Barishal, Mymensingh and Rangpur Divisions.

The journalists suffer from job insecurity in their own working environment in the both print and electronic media which is also a threat to the freedom of press. To ensure their job security, the formulation of the Mass Media Workers Act is at the final stage. Formation of the Bangladesh Journalists Welfare Trust is another epoch-making media friendly step of the present government. The trust running with the contribution from the government has given about 18 crore taka to 5263 insolvent and poverty-stricken media workers since 2011-12. In two Phases, 3 crore 66 lac taka was provided to the media people distressed due to the spread of coronavirus with 10,000 taka for an individual. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina donated 10 crore taka to the Bangladesh Journalists Welfare Trust for the corona virus victim media people for the fiscal 2020-21. The distribution of the fund is going on.

The writer is Senior Deputy Principal Information Officer, PID, Bangladesh Secretariat



Promoting Fairs and Festivals as Tourist Attractions

Md. Ziaul Haque Howlader

importance issue. It says - 'Fairs and festivals were special events that broke up the cycle of the Renaissance year. A fair was essentially an economic event—a large multiday market. A festival, by contrast, celebrated a holiday or other special

Fairs and Festivals are the basic components of culture of any nation. Fairs and Festivals are quite often termed as the jewels of culture of a country. Fairs and Festivals mean cultural demonstration, exhibition, instruction, conservation, identity formation, an enjoyment. Krishenblatt – Gimblett (1990:146) and Williams (199:161) points out to the importance of festivals in turning a cultural history into a national identity. Fairs and festivals were specials events that broke up the cycle of Renaissance year. Regarding Fairs and Festivals Encyclopedia stated an



People embracing each other after Eid prayer



Durga Puja, the biggest religious festival of the Hindu community

occasion. Fairs and festivals not only spiced up Renaissance life but also gave people of different regions and social classes a chance to interact. Fairs became a significant form of economic activity

between the 1000s and the 1200s'. Banglapedia explains Festivals are common to all societies and cultures. With the change of social and economic structures, the natures of festivals also change. But some festivals are so deeply rooted in the social organism that they continue to entertain from generation to generation. Some of the festivals bear the mark of the community and nationality, some have the stamp of religion, and again some bear the impression of politics.

Fairs and Festivals are the integral part of our culture and heritage. These are an important segment of cultural tourism in Bangladesh. Fairs and Festivals both religious and social always play a significant role in the life of the people of Bangladesh. The proverb 'Thirteen festivals in Twelve months' is a testament of Bangladesh abundant with fairs and festivals. Fair and festivals are organized throughout the country round the year. Bengali New Year Day, Independence Day, National Martyr's Day – the International Mother Language Day, Ekushey Book

Fair, Sonargaon Folklore Fair, Lalon Meal in Kushtia, Harvest Festival, Spring Festival, Eid-ul Fitr, Eidul Azha, Durga Puja, Buddha Purnima, Christmas Day, Jabbarer Boly Khela (wrestling), Sangrai (Biju) Festivals in CHT,



Mangal Shobhajatra- Procession on the Bengali New Year's Day



Buddhists light Fanush (large paper balloons) into the sky during Probarona Purnima

Kantajeu Temple Fair in Dinajpur, Rash Mela at Dublar Char of the Sundarbans, Poet Modhu Mela at Sagardari, Poet Jashim Uddin Mela in Faridpur, Water Festival of Rakhaine, International Trade Fair, Asian Tourism Fair, Bangladesh International Tourism Fair etc., which are just a few of such

thousands of national events and festivals exist in Bangladesh. The fair and festivals of Bangladesh include traditional, cultural, religious and political.

The 'Tourism Development Policy 2010' and 'Cultural Policy' of Bangladesh has emphasized for promoting cultural tourism, among which fairs and festivals are the salient activities. The Cultural Policy of Bangladesh describes the well documentation, presentations and preservations of tangible and intangible cultural heritages of the country. Fairs and festivals bear the intangible values of our cultures and heritage. That is why with the initiative of Bangladesh government, the *Mangal Shobhajatra* of Bengali New Year has been declared as world intangible heritage.

The SDG no 8.9 and 12.b have clearly narrated the preservation and conservation of local culture and traditions. Fairs and festivals are the most important elements of the culture and tradition of a country. A fair was essentially an economic event – a large multiday market. A festival, by contrast, celebrated on a holiday or other special occasion. Fairs and Festivals not only invigorate a nation for unity but also offer opportunities to its people of different regions and social classes a chance to interact.

Many countries of the world even the neighboring countries India, Nepal, Bhutan are promoting fairs and festivals as an important element of cultural tourism. Tourists want to see the authentic culture and heritage of a country, which can be demonstrated to the



Cultural programme on the occassion of Nabanno Utsab (Harvest Festival)



Amar Ekushey Bhai Mela- month long book fair at Bangla Academy premises

tourists by organizing fairs and festivals. Like all other country, Bangladesh has many unique cultural traits, which can be developed as tourism products for the foreign tourists. As Bangladesh has 13 festivals in 12 months, here fairs and festival can be regularly organized in every month across the country that can be drivers of local economic growth and cultural continuity. Fairs and festivals, if developed as tourism attractions, more tourists will visit Bangladesh, which definitely will help

generating the employment and develop the local economy. As the benefit will cascade down to local people, the overall socio-economic condition of the country will improve to a large extent. Moreover, the country's image will be enhanced.

Though it is a widely uttered Bangladesh is a land of Baro Mashe Tero Parvon, the country is yet to cash in properly by promoting its unique fairs and festivals as tourism products. There lack proper inventory and documentations in the form of photography, videography, constitution of cultural troupes etc. Fairs and Festivals contain the intangible value of the country. Due to absence of proper initiatives, these treasures of Bangladesh are on the verge of extinct and some have already extinct forever. There are other problems that fairs and festivals can be very good tourism products, which was never conceived earlier and as such, no study was carried out. Owing to their financial crises, many cultural troupe/ family members of cultural groups, fairs and festivals organizer switched their profession to other activities for their livelihood. Moreover, the sky-culture wields a negative impact on the culture and heritage of Bangladesh. Also with the advancement of science technology, our culture and heritage .i.e. Fairs and Festivals are being withered away. A comprehensive initiative is required to safeguard our culture, heritage, and regular organizing our traditional fairs and festivals against the sky-culture and globalization.

The young generation of Bangladesh is tend to enjoy only alien festivals as traditional festivals are yet to be properly portrayed to them. Hence, Bangladesh can develop a published fairs and festivals calendar so that both the foreign and domestic tourists can book their packages accordingly. On the other hand, domestic tour operators are not much aware about the existing fairs and festivals in detail. Therefore, it is necessary a proper inventory and survey as well as documentation and publications are done. On the other hand, its publicity in social media is most essential for promoting the fairs and festivals of Bangladesh as tourism products.

The author is a Manager of Bangladesh Parjatan Corporation

The Evening Hue

Tahmina Begum



It's 5 am. Mr. Karim performed his morning prayer (Fazr Namaz). It's still dark at that time.

After the retirement from service he did not like to stay in this populous city. He has two sons and one daughter. The daughter is the oldest. He was retired from the government service as the Upper Division Assistant. He brought up his children facing very hard and arduous time. After his elder daughter he got two sons also.

His only daughter Ruba – Rubayat is married to an engineer. It's good luck that he got such a very good son-in-law. She was very well in education. She did her M. A. in Geography. Hereafter out of his two sons the elderly one is the Captain of the Land Forces and the younger one has obtained M.B.A degree from the Dhaka University. Allah must have rewarded Mr. Karim for his honesty and patience.

His elder son is posted to Chittagong Cantonment and his daughter in law is a housewife. His daughter stays with his son-in-law at Jashore. Only the younger one used to stay with them in a rented house in Dhaka. Recently he is employed in a noted private company. Meanwhile Mr. Karim has built a three-roomed building at his parental property. He was however yet to be convinced by his sons and daughter not to stay at their village home rather stay with them in the city at the fag-end of his life. Mr. Karim did not like the artificial life to be led in the city. Likewise Mrs. Rahela Begum, their mother rather consented to stay at their village home with their father.

Mr. Karim told them that the artificial life in the city that he enjoyed with them has no more charm. He wanted to stay at the village to inhale pure air and enjoy its environment. He would be happy with the parental property and the sum of money from pension he would earn at the fag-end of life is enough.

You know well that I am a son of a cultivator. I came to Dhaka empty handed with



the blessings of my parents after passing H.S. C. Firstly I got the post of typist as my first employment. I used to send some money to my parents at home and with the rest I used to run my life anyway. Later on I got married. And you came one after another. And to make you all fit for life I have to work heart and soul. Because it was government service, there's time to earn money by private tuitions, I don't fight shy of telling you the truth. That used to help me enough to run our family expenses. You were my property, as a matter of fact. You have been taught in the government institutions. What's more peaceful than this to me? I pray to Allah for my endeavor and success.

However, Mr. Karim has decided to live at his village home with his wife to enjoy a simple life. Time rolls on in busy city life. One morning he started saying, dear beloved wife, it is shame that I could not attend you for many times and excuse me about the carelessness.

Rahela Begum was startled on hearing it from her husband. What are you speaking all about! Look at our happy life. Our sons and daughters are so well brought up. We also marry off our elder son to a good family. We believe we will marry off our younger son to a good family too. Although you were not an officer and had retired as a UDA, but because of your honesty and hard labour this was made possible. We are grateful to Almighty Allah for this. Now what's our trouble? Rather we are now better off. Here we are very happy now. Not to be worried at all! All we enjoy happiness after overcoming troubles in life and hopefully we will be enjoying our conjugal life at our village residence together.

[Translated by M. Mizanur Rahman]

The author is a poet and writer



Spoonies: The Spatulate Birds of Bangladesh

Professor Dr. A N M Aminoor Rahman

example building nests, regulating body temperature, mating, defending themselves or fighting with predators and other birds crossing territories. The beak is an essential organ for birds, one that is strongly related to their behaviour.

In biological terms, beak is a type of mouth in which the jaws are covered by a horny layer of keratin (like the nails or horns of animals) and have no teeth at all. It is characteristic of birds, however other animals also have beaks, for example egg laying mammals platypus and echidna (monotreme mammals of Australia), turtles and some cephalopods, for example squid. Generally, many scientist refer to birds with sharper and pointier beak type as having beaks and birds with longer, flatter and softer beak type as having bills. Wading birds such as spoonbills, spoon-billed sandpiper and northern shoveler duck have large and long spatula-shaped (spatulate) beaks that help them pick up mollusks and small animals from the bottom of marshes. Today we will learn three of these spatulate migratory birds, which winters in Bangladesh. Of them spoon-billed sandpiper is rare and Critically Endangered worldwide, Eurasian spoonbill is also rare and Critically Endangered in Bangladesh but List Concern worldwide, and northern shoveler duck is common and List Concern worldwide now-a-days.

01. Spoon-billed Sandpiper (*Calidris pygmaea*). This very rare and Critically Endangered spatula-shaped or spoon-billed wader (shorebird) is also known as spoonbill sandpiper. The Bangla name of this tiny member of the Scolopacidae family is chamochothi chapakhi or kodalthoti chapakhi. It is said that since the 1970s the breeding population of spoon-billed sandpiper has decreased significantly and currently only an estimated 228 breeding pairs are left worldwide. The resident bird of Northern Russia winters in Bangladesh, Myanmar and Thailand as well as from South-east India and Sri Lanka to Indochina and South China, and South to Singapore and Philippines.

Spoon-billed Sandpiper shows very peculiar morphological feature. The species has a spatula-shaped bill that is very similar to those of spoonbills. The expansion

Birds are a class of warm-blooded feathered vertebrates with nearly 10,000 different species worldwide. Of the various common features of birds perhaps the most characteristic one is their beak. The beak has evolved differently in each species of bird has evolved to improve its functions in response to its environment. As the beak is mainly used for feeding, therefore, the variation in beak size and shape mostly has to do with the food, which each species prefers. Besides feeding, the specific beak shape can also be served for other purposes, for



The Critically Endangered spoon-billed sandpiper at Kaladia Char of Sonadia Island, Cox's Bazar

of the bill increases the size of the tactile surface that enhances the detection of the small prey eaten by this tiny wader. The spatulate bill is very useful in soft sediments and shallow water where the species usually forages. Length and wingspan of the adult bird is 14-16 centimetre (cm) and 32-38 cm, respectively. Female is slightly larger than male and average weight of male and female is 29.5 gram (g) and 34 g, respectively. The plumage colour of breeding bird is chestnut-red with dark brown streaks on the head, neck and breast. The colour of upper part is blackish with buff and pale rufous fringing. Non-breeding adult birds lack the

reddish colouration and its upper part is pale brownish-grey with whitish fringing to the wing-coverts. The underpart is white. The eyes are dark brown, surrounded by narrow, white eye-ring. The unique, spatulate bill is black, with flattened and expanded tip. Legs and feet are black.

In Bangladesh, spoon-billed sandpiper winters in the south-east (Sonadia of Cox's Bazar), south (Nijhum island of Hatia, Noakhali) and south-west (Domar Chor of Bhola) coastal areas. This diurnal, aquatic, terrestrial and aerial birds are found single or in small groups, often in mixed groups of small shorebirds. It forages in shallow water and soggy sandy-muddy coastal areas, using its unique spatulate bill to find prey in low tides. The bird largely feeds on insects during the breeding season, including beetles, hymenoptera and diptera, but also take seeds, beetle larvae and small aquatic gastropods. During winter, it feeds on small invertebrates. Voice is soft rolling "preep" in flight followed by a shrill "wheel" as contact call.

The spoon-billed sandpiper pairs for the whole life. Breeding season is from July to August. The species breeds in the Chukotskiy Peninsula as well as South to North Kamchatka of Russia, usually in grassy areas near lakes and marshes. During the aerial displays, the male gives a cicada-like descending buzzing trill "preer-prr-prr". It nests on the ground, among mosses, sedges and creeping osiers. A shallow depression is made on the ground that is lined with leaves, usually of dwarf willows. This species produces a single brood per season, but a replacement clutch is usually laid if the first brood is lost. Female lays a clutch of 4 buffy-white eggs with rufous-brown markings, making them very cryptic and almost invisible on the ground. Both parents share the incubation during 19-23 days and tend the chicks, but the female leaves them 4-6 days after hatching. The male tends them alone. Father abandons the nestlings when they are 15-20 days old, able to fly and take care of themselves. Lifespan is 6-7 years.

02. Eurasian Spoonbill (*Platalea leucorodia*): This very rare and Critically Endangered spatula-billed migratory bird is a wading bird of the ibis family Threskiornithidae, is also known as Common Spoonbill. In Bangla it is known as

khunte bok, kodali or chamochthoti bok. The genus name *Platalea* is derived from Latin and means "broad", referring to the distinctive shape of the bill, and *leucorodia* is derived from Ancient Greek *leukerodios*, which originated from *leukos* means "white" and *erodios* means "heron". The bird was seen a few times in coastal areas, Padma river charlands of Rajshahi and Choroil Beel of Rohonpur, Chapainawabganj. It is a resident species of Africa, Asia and Southern Europe.

At a glance Eurasian spoonbill is egret-like bird with a large spoon-shaped bill. Length and wingspan of the adult bird is 70-95 cm and 115-135 cm, respectively. Irrespective of sex weight is 1.1-2.0 kg. Plumage colour is white. Bill is long, straight and its edges spread like spoon. The bill is black; upper bill has a yellow tip. Skin of the featherless part of the throat is yellow. Eyes are blackish-brown to brownish-red. Long legs and toes are black. A pendulous crest with long and thin feathers developed during the breeding season. Tips of the wing feathers become black. An orange hue is seen on the breast. Bare skin of the throat become dark orange-yellow. Juvenile bird is like the non-breeding adult; however, black tips of the wing feathers are quite extensive. Bill and the legs are pink.

Eurasian spoonbill inhabits in rivers, lakes, marshes, mangrove swamps, tidal creeks etc. Outside the breeding season Eurasian spoonbill forages singly or in small flocks of up to 100 individuals, usually in the same flock of herons, egrets, ibises and storks. Although it is diurnal but very active at dawn and dusk. It walk slowly in shallow water and feeds on shrimps, snails, small fishes, tadpoles, frogs, aquatic insects, plants etc. with its long spatulate bill. It uses sideways sweeps of the beak to filter out the tiny fish and shrimps. During flight it stretches the legs and the neck. The bird is usually silent but utters musical klick in the nest.

Eurasian spoonbill usually breeds from July to January. Breeding is normally in single species colonies or in small single species groups amidst mixed-species colonies of other water birds such as herons, egrets and cormorants. The nest is a platform of sticks and vegetation that is either constructed on the ground on islands in lakes and rivers or in dense stands of reeds, bushes or mangrove trees up to 5 metre (m) above the ground. Within colonies neighbouring nests are usually quite close together, no more than 1 or 2 m apart. The nest materials consists of sticks, twigs, grass or leaves. Female lays a clutch of 3-5 whitish eggs with dark-coloured fine spots and markings. Eggs hatch after 24-25 days of incubation.



Eurasian spoonbill foraging in a paddy field of Rohonpur, Gomostapur, Chapainawabganj



A flying northern shoveler near Sonadia Island.

chamochthuti hansh, kodaillah hansh or chorat in Bangla. This uniquely shaped bill gives rise to northern shoveler also being called "spoon-bill". Northern shoveler has a very broad geographical range. It breeds throughout Eurasia and western North America; and wintering in southern Europe, Africa, the Indian Subcontinent, Southeast Asia as well as Central, the Caribbean and northern South America.

Northern shoveler is slim duck with flattened bill and pointed tail. The species is unmistakable due to its distinctive long spatulate bill. Length and wingspan of the adult bird is 44-52 cm and 73-82 cm, respectively. Body weight of drake (male) and duck (female) is 470-1,000 g and 240-585 g, respectively. Marked differences are seen between drake and duck during the breeding season. The breeding drake has an iridescent dark green head, neck and speculum; grey back; white breast; bright chestnut belly and flanks; and blue forewing and rear end. Eyes are dark yellow and bill is black. Non-breeding (or eclipse) drake resembles the duck, but more rufous-brown. The female is buff-brown and heavily streaked by dark colour with a relatively pale head and grey forewing. Eyes are pale yellow and bill is orange. Legs are orange in both sexes. Tip of the bill is nearly double in width than as the base. Juveniles are similar to the duck, but no streaks are seen in the rump like the flanks.

Northern shoveler fly over the Himalayas to migrate to this country for wintering. In Bangladesh it is usually seen in flocks in the coastal areas as well as freshwater wetlands for example rivers, riverine charlands, haors, beels,

Both parents share the nest building, incubation and raising the nestlings. However, its bill is not look like a spoon at hatching. At around 9 days of age it started to flatten and takes almost 2 weeks to fully become spoon-shaped. The nestling can fly at 45-50 days of age. However, to become sexually mature it takes 3-4 years. Lifespan is more than 7 years.

03. Northern Shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*): This common and widespread spatula-billed migratory duck belongs to Anatidae family that is also known as shoveller. It is called

pantamukhi hansh, khunte hansh, chamochthuti hansh, kodaillah hansh or chorat in Bangla. This uniquely shaped bill gives rise to northern shoveler also being called "spoon-bill". Northern shoveler has a very broad geographical range. It breeds throughout Eurasia and western North America; and wintering in southern Europe, Africa, the Indian Subcontinent, Southeast Asia as well as Central, the Caribbean and northern South America.

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Pair of northern shoveler near Sonadia Island, Cox's Bazar



The spatulate bill of a northern shoveler duck

oxbow lakes, lakes, etc. Sometime also seen in mixed flocks with other duck species. This diurnal and aquatic duck feeds mainly by drawing water into its bill and then pumping it out through the sides with its tongue, filtering out minute food particles with long comb-like lamellae that line the edge of the bill. The particles mainly consist of tiny crustaceans, molluscs, insects, and their larvae as well as seeds and pieces of leaves and stems of plants. Except the breeding season the bird is usually silent. The drake has a clunking call, whereas the duck has a Mallard-like quack.

Northern shoveler usually breeds from to September. Nest is made on dry land close to fresh water and it is a shallow depression on the ground, lined with plant material and down feathers. The duck builds the nest by twisting her body on the ground. The drake is very territorial during breeding season and will defend its territory and partner from competing drakes. Duck lays 7-16 pale greenish-grey or olive-yellow eggs, which hatch after 23-25 days of incubation. Duck alone make the nest, incubate eggs and raise the nestlings. The nestling can fly 40-45 days of age and become independent. Lifespan is 4-5 years.

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DEVELOPMENT CHRONOLOGY

Major National Events

April-June

3 April, 2021

Films played role in building movement of independence, struggle for freedom: Dr Hasan Mahmud

Information and Broadcasting Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud greeted directors, producers, distributors, artistes and others of film arena marking the National Film Day in a video message telecasted in different TV channels on 3 April.

He said Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, realising the impact of films on society, tabled a bill in the provincial assembly of erstwhile East Pakistan for the formation of Film Development Corporation (FDC) in 1957 and in continuation to that the FDC was established.

Hasan said a number of timeless cinemas were made and artistes were born through the FDC and the movies had played a role in building the movement of independence, struggle of freedom and building post-independent Bangladesh.

He said, Film Artistes Welfare Trust has also been formed for the welfare of the artistes. The minister hoped that the film of the country will take place in world filmdom arena.

The Film Development Corporation has taken different programmes marking the day. *Source: The Financial Express*

6 April, 2021

PM offers economic zone to US investors

Describing Bangladesh as a promising destination for the US business and investment, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 06 April offered a special economic zone and a high-tech park to the American companies for their investments in large scale.

‘We are offering one dedicated special economic zone for American companies to establish manufacturing facilities,’ she said while virtually launching the US-Bangladesh Business Council through a message.

Pointing out that Bangladesh is now developing 28 hi-tech parks for ICT industries with local and foreign investments, she said, ‘We are offering one hi-tech park for ICT investment by US companies.’



Information and Broadcasting Minister speaking in a video message telecast on 3 April

PM said ‘We are constantly improving our physical, legal and financial infrastructures to facilitate foreign investment. My government is establishing 100 ‘Special Economic Zones’ for rapid industrialization.’ She added the United States has remained a strong partner in Bangladesh’s journey towards democracy and development.

According to the USAID’s Comprehensive Private Sector Assessment 2019 for Bangladesh, she said, the ICT industry is expected to grow nearly five-fold to reach nearly \$5 billion by 2025.

Source: The New Age

Policy support needed for expansion: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 6 April inaugurated the US-Bangladesh Business Council virtually to boost the bilateral trade and investment between the two countries.

The new trade body, an initiative of the US Chamber of Commerce, will act as a major platform for attracting foreign direct investment (FDI) from the American private and public sectors.

Different big industrial and business conglomerates from both the US and Bangladesh are the members of this newly launched trade body. Private sector investors, top diplomats, senior government officials and trade body leaders from both the countries participated in the inauguration.

Speaking at the programme, the Prime Minister said Bangladesh exports goods worth around \$8 billion to the US, of which 80 percent are garment items.

She said the launching of the US-Bangladesh Business Council reflects the growing interest of the US business community about investment and doing business in Bangladesh. The PM hoped it would help expand economic partnership between the two countries. *Source: The Daily Star*

7 April, 2021

Covid-19 vaccination Govt in talks with ADB, EIB for \$1.24b

The government has started holding negotiations with two multilateral lenders to borrow nearly US\$ 1.24 billion for buying Covid-19 vaccines.

They said the talks were on to get \$940 million from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and 250 million Euros from the European Investment Bank (EIB).

At the same time, a mission from the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has started



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gives a recorded welcome message at the launching of the US-Bangladesh Business Council at USA on 6 April

working out the ways of providing its loan for the vaccine procurement. The fund is expected to be confirmed within this month following necessary approval by the ADB board, said an additional secretary at the Economic Relations Division (ERD).

‘The ADB team has kicked off its fact-finding mission through a virtual meeting with the ERD on March 29 last. It is also holding discussion with the relevant ministries like health and finance on the proposed support’, he said. ‘The mission will be completed within this week, following which we’ll go for negotiations with the ADB,’ he added.

According to the proposed vaccine procurement programme, the government will form a \$1.35 billion worth of fund for importing the vaccine and developing its necessary logistics.

Accordingly, the health ministry recently revised the project incorporating the vaccine procurement components under the ongoing project. In April 2020, the health ministry took up the project with \$100 million World Bank lending on an emergency basis to detect, manage, and treat suspected and confirmed Covid-19 cases. *Source: The Financial Express*

8 April, 2021

10th D-8 Summit: Focus given on vaccines, economy

The D-8 countries have highlighted the importance of stronger cooperation on vaccine production, distribution and economic recovery in the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic.

At the 10th D-8 summit, hosted virtually by Bangladesh on 8 April, the D-8 leaders called upon the member states to cooperate in negotiations with the international pharmaceutical companies, which will give the members advantage in terms of quantities and prices of vaccines.

"The D-8 summit called upon member states to consider conducting a feasibility study for establishing a Pandemic Diseases Fund to fight diseases like Covid-19 and directed health ministries, public and private institutions to join hands to make the best use of the laboratories and research centres to contribute significantly to accelerate the global economic recovery," according to the 38-point Dhaka Declaration adopted by the D-8 leaders.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addresses the 10th D-8 Dhaka Summit virtually from Ganobhaban on 8 April

They expressed commitment to combined efforts in achieving effective adaptation to climate change through building climate resilience.

The theme of the 10th D-8 Summit "Partnership for a Transformative World: Harnessing the Power of Youth and Technology", emphasised on the power of youths and technology. *Source: The Daily Star*

13 April, 2021

Stay home, celebrate Pahela Boishakh: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on April 13, urged everyone to follow health guidelines and celebrate Pahela Boishakh at home when the nation enters a strict weeklong lockdown to contain the upsurge of coronavirus transmission. 'We have to remember that the lives of the people come first. If (we) survive, we'll be able to rearrange everything,' she said while addressing the nation on the eve of Bengali New Year, Pahela Boishakh. State-owned Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television (BTV) simultaneously broadcasted her address.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addresses the nation on the eve of Pahela Boishakh 1428 on 13 April

Private television channels and radio stations also aired the Prime Minister's speech. She also urged the countrymen not to be panicked at the second wave of covid-19 and assured that her government is always with them. She asked authorities concerned to take measures to provide necessary assistance to the poor and low income people. *Source: The Financial Express*

WB confirms \$500 million vaccine loan

The World Bank has confirmed three loans worth US\$1.04 billion to help Bangladesh procure Covid-19 vaccine, enhance private investment and create jobs and improve digital public procurement system, ERD officials said on 13 April. The Washington-based lender signed three separate credit deals with the Economic Relations Division (ERD) of the Ministry of Finance in a bid to disburse more than the one billion-dollar assistance, they said.

The Bank inked a \$500 million worth of loan agreement with the ERD on April 11 to facilitate the Covid-19 vaccine procurement. It also signed another \$500 million worth of loan agreement on 13 April to help the government facilitate private sector investment, create jobs and promote environmental sustainability. Besides, the Bank struck a \$40 million loan deal with the ERD for upgrading the Bangladesh's existing e-procurement systems. *Source: The Financial Express*

18 April, 2021

Govt launches \$7.5m CERF for pvt firms

The government introduced a US\$7.5-million Covid-19 Enterprise Response Fund (CERF) on 18th April to facilitate private sector firms in procuring plant tools as well as producing medical and personal protective equipment (MPPE) in

the country.

The Ministry of Commerce (MoC), through a virtual event, launched the fund under its export competitiveness for job project with the financial support of the World Bank (WB) Group.

Enterprises operating in Bangladesh can use fund ranging between \$50,000 and \$500,000 from CERF to produce MPPE along with clinical care and diagnostic equipment, targeting both domestic and overseas markets.

Launching the fund, Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi said eligible SMEs would contribute 40 percent and large enterprise would contribute 50 percent, while the remaining portions would be financed from the unique fund.

'This is a matching grant. Maximum amount of the grant is \$500,000 and the minimum amount is \$50,000.'

The minister noted that the Covid-19 pandemic adversely affected the global economy, including Bangladesh, and protective measures were required to fight against the deadly virus. 'CERF will give an opportunity to our producers to manufacture quality MPPE for both local and overseas markets. I hope our producers will take the opportunity and help tackle the viral disease outbreak,' he added. Speaking as a special guest, private industry and investment adviser to the prime minister, Salman F Rahman termed the special funding option one of the pragmatic initiatives of the government to contain the ongoing second wave of the coronavirus. *Source: The Financial Express*

PM to provide cash support to families affected by Covid, natural disasters

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will provide financial assistance to some 3.6 million families who have been hit hard by the ongoing coronavirus pandemic and recent natural disasters.

The 3.6 million families include 3.5 million low income ones engaged in different occupations but hit hard by the current coronavirus situation and the rest 0.1 million are farmers affected by recent natural disasters.

Tk 2,500 will be provided as cash support to 3.5 million families, while Tk 5,000 each will be given to one lakh farmer families, said PM's Press Secretary Ihsanul Karim.

The government will spend total Tk 9.30 billion to disburse cash money among some 3.6 million families as the allocation for Covid-hit low-income families is Tk 8.80 billion and for disaster-affected farmers is Tk 500 million. Out of 30,94,249 hectares of crop land in 36 districts, 10,301 hectares of cropland was completely destroyed and 59,327 hectares of cropland was partially damaged due to strong winds, hailstorms and cyclones on April 4, 2021. *Source: The Financial Express*

20 April, 2021

Ensure everyone gets vaccine

PM urges UN, global institutions to meet vaccine demand of all

Describing Covid-19 vaccines as global public goods, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 20 April said Bangladesh believes in primacy of United Nations and other international institutions to meet everyone's demand for vaccines and medical requirements on the basis of equity and justice.

'All nations need to work together to make the UN and other international organisations effective so that everyone's requirement of vaccines and medical requirement are met,' she said.

In her recorded speech aired in the plenary of a conference of the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA), the premier also said the WHO, GAVI and other relevant organisations must uphold the rights of the member states and ensure equity and justice.

'We strongly believe that Covid-19 vaccines should be declared as global public goods. Countries producing the vaccines should help others produce the vaccines with a view to attaining universal vaccine coverage.'

The theme of the four-day annual BFA conference is: 'A World in Change: Join Hands to Strengthen Global Governance and Advance Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) Cooperation.'

The conference started in Boao, a coastal resort in South China's Hainan province.
Source: The Daily Star

22 April, 2021

Annual Target to Fight climate Change

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has put forward four suggestions at the Leaders Summit on Climate, including cutting global emission, transferring technology and ensuring attainment of the annual target of mobilising \$100 billion as committed by developed countries.

The developed countries had made the commitment to mobilise \$100 billion, Green Climate Fund, per year by 2020 for climate actions in the developing countries, but only \$30 billion could be mobilised so far. Stressing the need for the fund, the PM said it should be balanced 50:50 between adaptation and mitigation with special attention to vulnerable communities.

Presently, a major portion of the \$30 billion is spent on mitigation projects, whereas the developing countries need adaptation more than mitigation as they contribute to carbon emissions the least but are affected more. 'Major economies, international financial institutions and private sectors should come forward for concessional climate financing as well as innovation,' the PM said on the first day of the two-day summit hosted virtually by US President Joe Biden. Forty world



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina gives a recorded speech aired in the plenary of a conference of the Boao Forum for Asia (BFA) on 20 April

leaders, including those from major carbon emitting countries like the USA, China, Russia, India, Japan, the UK, and Canada, as well as leaders from climate vulnerable nations and those who demonstrated innovations and leadership in tackling climate change are attending the summit.

Sheikh Hasina, president of Climate Vulnerable Forum, a grouping of 48 climate vulnerable countries, thanked Biden for convening the Summit and inviting her to speak to this august gathering.

The PM also suggested pursuing Loss and Damage, a process that refers to the harms caused

by anthropogenic climate change within the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). *Source: The Daily Star*

25 April, 2021

12m families to get Tk 5.74b from govt

A total of over 12 million families would be benefited from the government's financial allocation of over Tk 5.74 billion during the Covid-19 pandemic, said the State Minister for Disaster Management and Relief, Dr Md Enamur Rahman on 25th April at a press briefing held at the ministry. He also said the government allocated food assistance to the jobless people at the grassroots level during the pandemic last year.

And this year too upon the directives of the prime minister, the government has allocated over Tk 5.74 billion as a humanitarian gesture to the people who became jobless due to the pandemic, he added. *Source: The Financial Express*

26 April, 2021

Covid Pandemic: PM for stronger role of developed nations

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina sought a stronger role of the developed world and the development partners in attaining quick recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Delivering her recorded statement aired in the 77th Session of the UN-ESCAP, she placed a four-point proposal in this regard.

The premier called for inclusive development approach, efficient policies and strategies on universal public health system from the Asia-Pacific region.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addresses the opening session of the two-day 'Leaders' Summit on Climate' hosted by US President Joe Biden on 22 April

The three-day session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) began virtually yesterday under the theme -- "Building back better from crises through regional cooperation in Asia and the Pacific."

Sheikh Hasina urged the international community to remain focused on sustainable repatriation of the 1.1 million forcibly displaced Rohingyas.

Presidents of Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Indonesia, Kiribati, Kyrgyz Republic, Marshall Islands, Mongolia, and Tajikistan, and the prime minister of Tuvalu virtually spoke at the function.

Earlier, UN Secretary-General António Guterres, among others, made opening remarks. Prime ministers of Bhutan, Cambodia, Fiji, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Uzbekistan also addressed the session virtually.

Source: The Daily Star



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina delivering her recorded statement aired in the 77th Session of the UN-ESCAP on 26 April

28 April, 2021

Govt releases Tk 13b cash incentive fund

The government on 28th April released Tk 13 billion to pay cash incentives on the export earnings. It is the 4th installment of cash incentives for payment during the April-June period of the current fiscal year (FY2020-21).

The export-oriented sectors including readymade garment (RMG), frozen shrimp and other fish, leather items, jute and jute products enjoy the incentives, according to a circular of the finance division. Of the amount, Tk 3.0 billion will be distributed for the jute sector while Tk 10 billion for other sectors, it said. A special 1.0 percent cash incentive for the RMG industry is also included in the installment. The government provides cash incentive to exporters for more than 35 categories of products. *Source: The Financial Express*

29 April, 2021

Drug-Resistant Diseases: PM suggests five actions to fight those

Speaks at dialogue at UN HQ via video conference

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 29 April stressed on the importance of five actions to fight against antimicrobial resistance (AMR) as it is crucial for preventing future pandemics.

The Prime Minister put forward the actions at the high-level Interactive Dialogue on AMR through her pre-recorded statement played at the opening segment of the dialogue at the United Nations Headquarters in New York.

The actions include an integrated multisectoral action plan on AMR, including a collective action plan by the international community at both regional and global levels with a special focus on low- and middle-income countries; and good manufacturing, laboratory practices, and surveillance framework. *Source: The Daily Star*

2 May, 2021

July-April exports rise 8.74pc to \$32b

The country's overall earnings from exporting goods stood at US\$32.07 billion during the first ten months of the current fiscal year (FY), 2020-21, marking an 8.74 percent growth compared to that of the corresponding period of last fiscal. Bangladesh fetched \$29.49 billion during July-April period of 2019-20 fiscal. *Source: The Financial Express*



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Speaking virtually at the High-Level Interactive Dialogue on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) at United Nations Headquarters in New York, as co-chair of the Global Leaders Group on 29 April

Vaccines will be bought at any cost : PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 02 May reaffirmed that the government would procure vaccines at any cost to protect the people from coronavirus , 'We're bringing more vaccines; no matter how much money is required, we'll bring more vaccines,' she said.

The prime minister said this while providing cash support of Tk 2,500 to each of 36.5 lakh low-income families engaged in different occupations so that they can



Prime Minister launching cash distribution programme for giving financial assistance among low-income families thru mobile banking from Ganobhaban through videoconference on 2 May

survive amid the pandemic.

She virtually inaugurated the disbursement of financial assistance for marginalized families from her official residence the Ganobhaban .

Each family Will directly receive Tk 2,500 as G2P (Government-to-Person) transaction through mobile financial services (MFS) – Nagad, bKash, Rocket, and SureCash.

Stressing that the government will put its all-out efforts, Sheikh Hasina said, ‘We’re procuring each dose of the vaccine spending money, but providing it free so that people can stay safe.’ She urged all to strictly follow health guidelines for themselves and others, regardless of whether they have taken the vaccine or not.

Source: The Daily Star

3 May, 2021

Forex reserve crosses record \$45b mark

Bangladesh’s foreign exchange (forex) reserve crossed US\$45 billion-mark for the first time on May 3, following lower import payment obligations and higher growth of inward remittance, officials said. The forex reserve rose to \$45.01 billion on the day, setting a new record, from \$44.90 billion of the previous working day, according to the central bank’s latest data. *Source: The Financial Express*

6 May 2021

Celebrate Eid where you are now

PM urges all to help curb spread of virus

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 6 June asked Muslims to celebrate the upcoming



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the distribution of houses, constructed under a rehabilitation project in Payra Port among the families affected by land acquisition virtually from Ganobhaban on 6 may

Eid-ul-Fitr in their present locations to help check the spread of novel coronavirus in the country. ‘We shouldn’t travel risking our lives on the occasion of Eid. Celebrate Eid where you are now,’ she said.

The PM was addressing a programme marking the inauguration of a good number of infrastructures and water vessels of different agencies under the shipping ministry through a videoconference from the Ganobhaban.

Besides, PM inaugurated the distribution of 500 pucca houses, constructed under a rehabilitation project at Payra Port, among the families affected by land acquisition. *Source: The Daily Star*

8 May, 2021

ADB to provide \$500m to support social resilience, economic recovery

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) is going to provide US\$500 million in loans for strengthening Bangladesh's social resilience and economic recovery programmes amid Covid-19 pandemic.

Of the total, the Manila-based lender has already completed negotiations with the Bangladesh government for providing \$250 million in loans in the first phase to improve social protections and health service delivery system, they said.

ADB will provide the \$250 million loan to Bangladesh under the 'Strengthening social resilience programme'.

Another \$250 million is expected to be provided shortly after the successful implementation of the first phase of the programme, said a senior Economic Relation Division (ERD) official. *Source: The Financial Express*

9 May, 2021

0.2m more farmers to get incentives worth Tk 2.92b

The government will provide incentives worth Tk 2.92 billion to 0.2 million more farmers of fisheries and livestock sector to help them offset their financial losses caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

'We (the government) will provide Tk 2.92 billion more as an incentive to the fisheries and livestock farmers to overcome their corona induced financial losses. The process for giving incentives to them is now on,' Fisheries and Livestock Minister SM Rezaul Karim told the media at his secretariat office on 9 May.

He said that his ministry had earlier disbursed Tk 5.54 billion from its two projects to 0.4 million farmers of the fisheries and livestock sector to help them withstand the losses caused by the pandemic. In addition, 0.2 million farmers will get over Tk 2.92 billion to overcome the Covid induced financial losses, he said.

Source: The Financial Express

Plot allotment letters distributed to the people affected by Purbachal Project

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 9 May urged the countrymen not to put their near and dear ones' lives under threat by rushing to village homes to celebrate Eid-ul-Fitr. She simultaneously called for taking precautionary measures to be



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina virtually attends a programme marking the distribution of plot allotment letters to main inhabitants and general people affected by the Purbachal New Town Project held at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre on 9 May

protected from the variant found in a neighbouring country that claims lives frequently.

The prime minister was addressing a function to distribute plot allotment letters to 1,440 remaining main inhabitants and general people affected by the Purbachal New Town Project held at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre (BICC) in the capital. *Source: The Daily Star*



Country's first Metro Rail completes its maiden test run at the metro rail depot at the capital on 11 May

11 May, 2021

First performance test of Metro Rail starts on MRT-6

Bangladesh's first ever electricity train was rolled out on the tracks on a test run on 11 May, signaling that the country is now one step closer to fulfil its dream of having its own metro rail.

The test run started after leaving a workshop inside the metro rail depot in the capital's Diabari. Following the test run, the country entered a new era of electricity- powered trains. *Source: The Daily Star*

16 May, 2021

Record \$2.9b pledged in 2020 pvt investment: WB

Bangladesh last year witnessed a record \$2.9 billion investment commitment for its infrastructure development from private sector sponsors, according to a latest report published by the World Bank.

'The country's (Bangladesh) 2020 investment amounted to US\$2.9 billion, a 190 percent increase from 2019 levels, and increased investment as a share of GDP from 0.34 percent to 0.97 percent' said the report titled 'Private participation in infrastructure 2020: Annual report' released on 16 May.

Bangladesh received South Asia region's second highest private participation in infrastructure (PPI) investment, said the WB. The investment commitment across seven projects was the highest in Bangladesh's history, placing it among the top five countries for the first time, added the WB.

Bangladesh is a new entrant to the top five countries and the first International Development Association (IDA) country to enter the list. The other four top countries are Brazil, China, India and Mexico. Bangladesh led 2020's investment commitments in IDA countries. *Source: The Financial Express*

20 May 2021

PM happy as new generation interested in country's history

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 20 May appreciated the willingness of the new generation to know the history of the country.

'If this trend continues, Bangladesh must be a developed and prosperous Golden



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina along with the 'Swadhinata Puraskar (Independence Award)' winners at the Ganobhaban on 20 May

Bangladesh in the world and we'll be able to fulfil the dream of the Father of the Nation' she said.

The premier was addressing a programme at the Ganobhaban, marking the handover of Independence Award-2021 to nine individuals and one institution in recognition of their outstanding contributions to the country.

Sheikh Hasina said the ideals based on which Bangladesh got its independence were lost after 1975. 'We have been able to bring back those ideals.' Congratulating the award winners, PM said their works will encourage the future generation to follow their footsteps to do something for the country and its people utilising their merits and creativity. She said the government always wants to ensure a decent life for the people of the country.

Earlier, the PM handed over the highest civilian award among the winners of *Swadhinata Puraskar* and their representatives.

Bangladesh Agricultural Research Council won the award in the research and training category.

Bangladesh has been recognizing individuals and institutions with the award every year since 1977. *Source: The Daily Star*

22 May 2021

Take up fish farming

Hasina urges the youth

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 22 May urged the young people to take up fish farming as profession.

'There is a huge opportunity of employment in the sector and this should be utilised,' she said in a pre-recorded video message making the 18th founding anniversary of Awami Matsyajibi League.

The PM said the government has taken measures to improve fish production through expansion of pisciculture and research.

Reiterating her government's goal of making Bangladesh economically self-sufficient,

Hasina said the country will move forward following the ideals and principles of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. 'On the 50th anniversary of our independence and birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, our pledge will be to make the country developed and prosperous.

The government is setting up 100 economic zones where food processing industries can be set up to create opportunities for marketing, she added. Sheikh Hasina said to increase fish production further, which is now around 5 million tonnes a year, the government is renovating ponds, and excavating canals, lakes and rivers.

She also said the government has taken special measures to improve hilsa production in which Bangladesh is number one now. *Source: The Daily Star*



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressing the inauguration and foundation stone-laying ceremony of 215 cyclone and flood shelter centers along with other infrastructures in the city's Osmani Memorial Auditorium, joining virtually from Ganobhaban on 23 May

23 May, 2021

Prime Minister inaugurates 215 Cyclone centres

The government is taking adequate precautionary measures to weather Cyclone Yaas, which is approaching the Southwest region near the Indian border and will likely make landfall on 23 May afternoon.

'InshAllah, we will remain alert and be able to minimise this hazard,' said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 23 May at the inauguration of 215 cyclone and flood shelter centres along with other infrastructure in the city's Osmani Memorial Auditorium.

She went on to urge people to stay alert to reduce the damages.

'Now, we can know about the cyclones beforehand with the help of technology. Be cautious and aware to reduce the risks in any disaster,' she added. *Source: The Daily Star*

24 May 2021

Hasina seeks Commonwealth's attention

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 24 May urged the Commonwealth to play its

crucial role in eradicating poverty and minimizing climate vulnerabilities of the underprivileged people.

'I strongly believe that the Commonwealth can play a pivotal role towards sustainable and nature-based solutions for a prosperous future,' she said while addressing a virtual roundtable of the Asia Regional Commonwealth heads of government.

Prince of Wales Charles Philip Arthur George, the eldest son of Queen Elizabeth II, convened the roundtable. Sheikh Hasina, chair of the Climate Vulnerable Forum (CVF), suggested three measures ahead of COP26. The measures include promotion of green and sustainable economic growth worldwide and investing in a circular economy for building back better.

The two other measures are: putting emphasis on carbon neutral technologies with a provision of knowledge and technology transfer among Commonwealth members with particular attention to the vulnerable countries; and supporting the climate vulnerable countries to get access to climate finance for adaptation measures.

The PM also urged everyone to focus on providing shelter to the homeless which is the best strategy to eradicate poverty and minimise climate vulnerability of the underprivileged people.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina extended her sincere thanks to the Royal Highness for convening the roundtable with 'mother nature' at the heart of the dialogue.

Source: The Daily Star

25 May, 2021

Stepping up in Sri Lanka's hour of need

- * Bangladesh offers Sri Lanka \$500m in foreign reserves
- * Sri Lanka's Central Bank is expected to return the amount in 3 months
- * Sri Lanka's foreign exchange reserves stood at only about \$4 billion
- * Bangladesh's reserves crossed \$45 billion-mark in April

In a first for Bangladesh, the country has extended a lifeline of sorts to the beleaguered Sri Lankan economy, offering to top up the island nation's depleting foreign reserves by as much as \$500 million.

The global coronavirus pandemic has deprived Sri Lanka which has \$3.7 billion of foreign debt maturing this year, of important sources of foreign currency such as tourism and exports.

Its \$4.5 billion tourism industry, which was already reeling from the 2019 Easter Sunday bombings that killed 279 people, was hit particularly hard, while its exports were down about 17 percent in 2020. *Source: The Daily Star*

27 May 2021

Dhaka-Chapainawabganj

PM flags off 'spl mango train'

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 27 May inaugurated a 'special mango train' on Chapainawabganj-Dhaka route via Rajshahi in order to transport mangoes at lower cost.

She opened the train service virtually from the Ganobhaban.

The West Zone of Bangladesh Railway has taken the initiative to transport mangoes at lower cost for the welfare of

mango farmers and traders amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

The train, having a capacity of carrying 150 tonnes in its five wagons, will run on the route every day. The transport cost is up to Tk 1.3 per kg and Tk 1,300 per tonne of mango.

Besides, the rail connectivity with neighboring India on different routes, which remained suspended after the 1965 war, is now being restored and the connectivity on some routes has already been resumed, she said.

Sheikh Hasina said there is a plan to extend the railway connectivity to Siliguri, India. *Source: The Daily Star*

29 May 2021

Will maintain friendship with all to move forward : PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said Bangladesh has to maintain friendship with all as the government wants to turn the country into a developed and prosperous one.

'We want to build Bangladesh as a developed and prosperous country. I think Bangladesh has to move forward maintaining friendship with all to this end,' she said.

The premier was addressing a function at Shenakunja at Dhaka Cantonment on the occasion of the International Day of UN Peacekeepers on 29 May. She joined the event from Ganobhaban through videoconferencing.

Sheikh Hasina said the prime task of the government is to improve the economic condition of the people of the country, remove poverty, and ensure education, healthcare and employment for the future generations.

The theme of this year's International Day of UN Peacekeepers is: 'The road to a lasting peace: Leveraging the power of youth for peace and security.'

Sheikh Hasina said Bangladesh always stands ready to establish peace at any corner in the world under the UN Security Council.

She asked peacekeepers of Bangladesh Army, Navy, Air Force and Police to accomplish their responsibilities with professionalism, honesty, integrity and sincerity. *Source: The Daily Star*



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurated the 'Special mango train' to transport mangoes cheaply to the capital from Chapainawabganj on 27 May via video conference

30 May 2021

PM for P4G's collective efforts to build greener future

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 30 May called for collective efforts and action-oriented approach for building greener future for the next generation as she placed three suggestions at P4G Summit.

'We, the participating leaders in the P4G Summit, need to work more closely towards a greener future for our next generation,' she said.

In her recorded speech broadcast in the leader's session of the two-day Second Partnering for Green Growth and Global Goals-P4G Summit held at Seoul, Seoul-T'Ukpyolsi, Republic of Korea from 30 May.

As the chair of the Climate Vulnerable Forum and the host to the South Asian office of Global Centre on Adaptation, Sheikh Hasina said that Bangladesh's key focus was to uphold the interests of the climate vulnerable countries and promote locally-led adaptation solutions.

The 2021 P4G Seoul Summit is being held on the theme: Inclusive Green Recovery towards Carbon Neutrality with participation of 60 leaders of the member states and numerous international organisations.

The summit aims to position P4G (Partnering for Green Growth and the Global Goals 2030) as a delivery mechanism to build back better and greener in this decade of actions and will be a stepping-stone to UNFCCC COP 26 and set the pace for the decade of action.

Source: The New Age

3 June, 2021

Budget 2021-22 announced

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal on 03 June placed in parliament yet another national budget--country's 50th since independence-- amidst pandemic-induced constraints.

The budget for the next financial year (2021-22) that has been crafted on the traditional framework has accommodated some concerns that have emerged given the devastating impact of the pandemic. It however, bypassed a few.

The government has a big expenditure plan. But it lacks clarity in the matters of some pressing problems, including the economic hard-ship being faced by the poor and low-income people because of the Covid-19.

The budget expenditure-Tk 6.03 trillion



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina entering Parliament with Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal before unveiling the National Budget for the FY 2021-22 on 3 June

- is 12 percent higher than the revised budget for the outgoing fiscal (2020-21).

The budget formulators, for the first time in many years, have not set a bloated tax revenue target. They, seemingly, have taken into cognizance the ground realities. The NBR has set the tax revenue target at Tk 3.46 trillion for FY'22, which is equivalent to the original target for the outgoing fiscal. Yet reaching this target might prove difficult since the NBR is unlikely to achieve even the revised target - TK 3.01 trillion - set for the FY 2020-21. If the Covid restrictions persist for some more months, the overall revenue receipt in the next fiscal would suffer.

Source: The Financial Express

5 June, 2021

Plant more trees, take care to get financial benefits : PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 5 June called upon the country people to plant more trees and take care of those to become beneficiary financially and avoid the adverse impact of climate change.

'Today I planted saplings and urged all of you to plant trees wherever you have the land available. It would be best if there is a possibility to plant three saplings- one timber, one fruit bearing and one herbal, otherwise at least one sapling' she said.

The Premier made this call while inaugurating the 'National Tree Plantation Campaign-2021' at her official residence Ganobhaban here, as World Environment Day was being observed on the day in the country along with across the globe. On this occasion, she also requested people to plant trees to promote green-ery to guard the country from the adverse impacts of the climate changes.

This year, the National Tree Plantation Campaign is being celebrated with the theme "Mujibborshe Angikar Kori, Sonar Bangla Sobuj Kori", aiming to inspire people from all walks of life to fill Bangladesh with greenery in the 'Mujib Year.'

However, the World Environment Day is being observed across the world this year' with the theme "Ecosystem Restoration" adopted by the United Nations

**E N V I R O N M E N T
P r o g r a m m e (U N E P)**

Source: The Financial Express

7 June, 2021

Liberation came riding on six-point demand: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 7 June said the country's independence was achieved on the basis of the six-point formula, the 'Charter of Freedom' for Bangalees, and reiterated her pledge to build Bangladesh as a developed and prosperous country.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina inaugurating the National Tree Plantation Campaign - 2021 by planting a sapling at her official residence Ganobhaban on 5 June



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addresses a special discussion titled 'Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Charter of Freedom for Bangalees', virtually to mark the historic Six-Point Demand Day on 7 June

'He [Bangabandhu] would always tell us that six points were basically one point that means independence.

Now, we are an independent nation,' she said. The prime minister said this in a prerecorded special discussion titled 'Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the Charter of Freedom for Bangalees' held virtually, marking the

historic Six-Point Demand Day, as the nation celebrates it every year on June 7.

Organised by Father of the Nation 'Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Birth Centenary Celebration National Implementation Committee, the meeting was broadcast on Bangladesh Television, private television channels, online and social networking sites.

Sheikh Hasina, also president of the ruling Awami League, said June 7 (1966) is very significant for the Bangalee nation and the day was inscribed as a red letter one as 11 people including labour leader Monu Mia sacrificed their lives in the hands of Pakistani forces while enforcing a nationwide hartal for the six-point formula and release of Bangabandhu.

The Prime Minister said the six-point demand was the outcome of Bangabandhu's thoughts over establishing the rights of the East Pakistani people as there were huge discriminations among the East and West Pakistani people in every sector, particularly in civil and military jobs.

She also recalled the contribution of her mother in making the nationwide 7th June hartal a success to press home the six-point demand by organizing the party activists in the absence of Bangabandhu as he was in jail at that time.

The Prime Minister said the Father of the Nation placed the six-point formula (on February 5, 1966) before a meeting of all the opposition parties in Lahore, adding that the meeting did not endorse it and even ignored listing it in the agenda; some Bangladeshi politicians too did not support it. *Source: The Daily Star*

8 June, 2021

Bangladesh GDP growth 2nd-best in South Asia

The World Bank on 8 June upgraded Bangladesh's GDP growth forecast for this fiscal year by 2 percentage points to 3.6 percent, making it the second best-performing economy in South Asia behind the Maldives.

In fiscal 2020-21, neighbouring India's economy is forecasted to contract by 7.3 percent, while Pakistan will register a GDP growth of 1.3 percent, according to the

latest version of the Washington-based multilateral lender's flagship publication 'Global Economic Prospects,' which was released on 08 June.

In fiscal 2022-23, Bangladesh's GDP is forecasted to grow at 6.2 percent, behind India and the Maldives in South Asia. Per capita income losses will not be unwound by 2022 for about two-thirds of emerging market and developing economies. Among low-income economies, where vaccination has lagged, the effects of the pandemic have reversed poverty reduction gains and aggravated insecurity and other long-standing challenges. 'While there are welcome signs of global recovery, the pandemic continues to inflict poverty and inequality on people in developing countries around the world,' said David Malpass, the WB Group president. *Source: The Daily Star*

10 June, 2021

Model mosques to help spread essence of Islam

PM says as she inaugurates 50 govt-built mosques

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina virtually inaugurated 50 such model mosques across the country on 10 June from the Ganobhaban, marking the Mujib Borsho. She hoped these mosques would help spread the essence of Islam.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina virtually inaugurated 50 such model mosques across the country from Ganobhaban on 10 June

'Through these model mosques, the culture and messages of Islam will draw the attention of all. The people of the country, irrespective of their religions and castes, will be able to comprehend the essence of Islam,' she said.

The PM made the remarks while addressing the inaugural function of 50 luminous model mosques newly constructed across the country, fulfilling one of her election pledges.

She opened the 50 model mosques virtually from the Ganobhaban on the occasion of the Mujib Borsho.

The mosques have been built as part of the government's move to set up 560 such mosques/centres of excellence at district and upazila levels, aiming to spread Islamic fraternity, real Islamic values and practices, conduct research, create strong infrastructures for prayers for both men and women, provide religious teaching and training and enhance public awareness against social diseases. *Source: The Daily Star*

20 June, 2021

Distant dream becomes reality

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina handed over 53,340 semi-pucca homes along with



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina attending a virtual programme from the Gonobhaban to hand over houses to landless, homeless people on 20 June. Under the second phase of the Ashrayan-2 project, she handed over 53,340 homes to landless and homeless families

land ownership documents to homeless and landless families across the country under the second phase of the Ashrayan-2 project.

The PM attended the programme virtually from the Gonobhaban.

'With our limited resources, we're trying to reach people at grassroots level for improving their lives and livelihoods. That's our aim,' she said.

The highest 12,436 houses were given in Rangpur division, while 10,547 in Chattogram, 7,630 in Dhaka, 7,172 in Rajshahi, 7,153 in Barishal, 911 in Khulna, 2,512 in Mymensingh and 1,979 in Sylhet divisions. *Source: The Daily Star*

22 June, 2021

Qatar Economic Forum: Hasina places six points for global recovery

Putting forward six suggestions to consider in framing post-Covid-19 economic recovery plan, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 22 June underscored the need for taking immediate collective action to help mitigate the impacts of the pandemic.

'As we're witnessing the challenges, we need to take immediate collective and concerted action to help mitigate the impacts of the pandemic through expanding trade, business and investment for our common prosperity,' she said in a pre-recorded message played in the three-day Qatar Economic Forum Virtual.

The six suggestions the PM put forward in the Forum include taking ambitious climate action to meet the goal of the Paris Agreement, leveraging science, technology, and innovation for closing the digital divide; and having targeted international support to revitalise global trade and export earnings.

SDG Index

Bangladesh in top form due to proper planning: PM

Bangladesh has been one of the top three performers on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Index due to the government's prudent planning with specific directions, said Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 22 June.

'We've taken proper planning with specific directions, and we're moving ahead in a planned way for implementing the SDGs and included those in the 8th Five Year

Plan,' the premier said this when Planning Minister MA Mannan, in the beginning of the weekly ECNEC meeting, informed her about Bangladesh's success in remaining in the top three positions in SDGs' implementation.

She added Bangladesh was in an advanced position in implementing the Million Development Goals (MDGs). 'We're approaching the SDGs the same way.'

Source: The Daily Star

23 June, 2021

Ensure dignified repatriation of Rohingyas: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 23 June renewed her call to the global community to ensure the dignified repatriation of Rohingyas as they are posing a big security threat to Bangladesh as well as the region.

'We've sheltered them on humanitarian grounds but such a huge population can't be lodged for an indefinite period... I request the world community to assist us in dignified and peaceful repatriation of the Rohingyas,' she said.

The premier made the call in her pre-recorded speech at the three-day 'IX Moscow Conference on International Security'.

She said Bangladesh has been hosting more than a 1.1 million forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals- Rohingyas for about four years. 'They're posing a huge security threat to Bangladesh as well as the region,' she added. *Source: The Daily Star*

PM releases posters of film 'Chironjib Mujib'

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 23 June released the posters of a feature film titled 'Chironjib Mujib' based upon the 'Ausamapta Atmajiboni' (The Unfinished Memoirs), an autobiography of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The Premier released three posters of the film through signing from her official Ganobhaban residence in the capital on 23 June morning.

The film, dedicated by Bangabandhu's daughters Sheikh Hasina and Sheikh Rehana, made under the banner of Haider Enterprise will be released in August next. *Source: The Financial Express*



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina releasing by signing three posters of the film 'Chironjib Mujib' from her official residence Ganobhaban in the city on 23 June

Taking effective steps to ensure vaccine for all

Taking a swipe at those criticising the government over its Covid vaccine management, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 23 June urged them to have patience and see what the government can do to ensure vaccines for all.

Speaking at a virtual discussion marking the 72nd foundation anniversary of Awami League, the PM said the government would ensure vaccines for all.

Sheikh Hasina, also the AL president, joined the event from the Ganobhaban, while other party leaders from its Bangabandhu Avenue central office.

The PM said, 'We're taking effective measures so that everyone gets vaccines. We'll do that.' She said the government started contacting every country where vaccine development was at the research level. 'Many countries in the world could not go for vaccination yet, but Bangladesh started the inoculation drive after collecting vaccines.' *Source: The Daily Star*

25 June, 2021

Water security

PM places 5-point proposal at UN Special Session

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on 25 June put forward a five-point proposal to the international community to raise global awareness for a resilient and sustainable post-Covid-19 world by combating water and disaster challenges.

The Prime Minister made the proposals in her pre-recorded speech in the Fifth UN Special Thematic Session on Water and Disasters in 'Building Back Better towards a More Resilient and Sustainable Post-COVID-19 World.'

'We need to take a comprehensive, result-oriented, focused and adaptive global approach for water security; and it is important to raise political awareness, and share good practices, knowledge and experiences,' she said.

Three other proposals are: Synergies on water management and water policies and its use by nations of the upper and lower basins; focus by the world community on the implementation of the Sendai Framework, the SDGs and the Paris Agreement; and mobilizing financial resources for vulnerable countries to ensure their adequate access to water. *Source: The Financial Express*

28 June, 2021

Tk 230m allocated for ultra poor, unemployed during lockdown

The Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief (MoDMR) allocated on 28 June Tk 230 million for ultra poor and unemployed groups to facilitate them to sustain during the ongoing lockdown due to coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

The money will be spent for those people in 64 districts.

A high official of the MoDMR told the FE that they had allocated the money to the deputy commissioners (DCs) of all districts.

The allocated money will be spent for providing rice, lentil, salt and potato etc. to the deserving ultra poor, unemployed and insolvent persons. *Source: The Financial Express*

Report Compilation: Mazharul Hoque, Md. Mamun Hossain, Umma Halima



Kadam (Neolamarckia cadamba) is common in Bangladesh in the rainy season



Department of Films and Publications

Ministry of Information and Broadcasting

Bangladesh