

Bangladesh

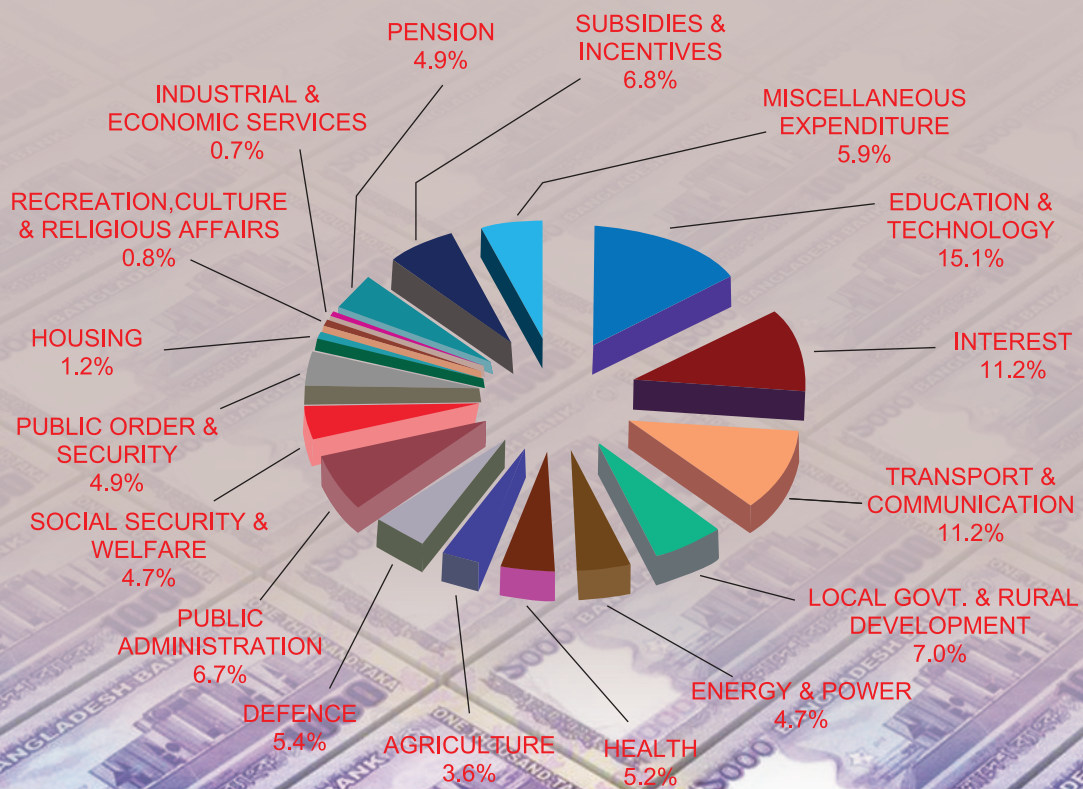
April-June 2020

Quarterly

**Budget 2020-21: A Pathway to Progress
Overcoming the Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic**

Significance of Ramadan and Eid-ul-fitr

Economic Empowerment of Women in Bangladesh



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Editorial

The outbreak of Covid-19 pandemic has crippled the normal life of the people of the world. In the wake of the pandemic, the Parliament passed the national budget of Tk 5.68 trillion for the fiscal year 2020-21 on 11 June 2020. The total allocation for operating and other expenditures is estimated at Tk 3.63 trillion while the allocation for the annual development programme is Tk 2.05 trillion. Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal placed the budget to overcome the impacts of the COVID-19 in the economy.

Ramadan is considered as the most sacred month to the Muslims and God-fearing Muslims all over the world observe fasting throughout the month of Ramadan, and commemorate the first revelation of the holy Quran to Prophet Hazrat Muhammad (SM). After the end of Ramadan on the first day of the Shawal moon, the Muslims celebrate Eid-ul-fitr. This is one of the biggest festivals for the Muslims and it is observed with befitting manner and religious fervor in the country.

Bangladesh has achieved commendable success in numerous dimensions of gender parity over the years, thereby widening the economic opportunities for women in many areas of life. The recently released Human Capital Index of the World Bank shows that girls today have better prospect than boys in Bangladesh to complete schooling and live up to the age of 60 years. The women of Bangladesh are now working in various prestigious positions like police, military and also in different decision making levels. Besides, a large number of women have been elected directly in the country's last parliamentary elections.

Including the articles on the above subjects some other write-ups on good governance, globalization of human life, Australia-Bangladesh collaborative agricultural research, online education and wildlife have been accommodated in this issue.

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Budget 2020-21: A Pathway to Progress Overcoming the Impacts of COVID-19 Pandemic

Munshi Jalal Uddin

While concluding his budget speech, the finance minister said, at this critical juncture in the wake of the outbreak of covid-19 pandemic, our topmost priority is to save people from being infected by the virus. At the same time, it is incumbent on us to maintain the momentum of the economy to ensure the provision of food and clothing for the people.

The finance minister said, although the GDP grew consistently at an increasing rate in the last decade, the GDP growth rate of the current (2019-20) fiscal year has been revised downward at 5.2 percent due to the fall in exports and lower than expected growth in remittances as a result of long and sustained worldwide lockdowns arising from the impact of covid-19. However, in view of the post-covid recovery, the growth rate is projected at 8.2 percent for FY 2020-21 in line with the long-term plans. He expected that inflation will be 5.4 percent during this period.

Revenue Target: Bearing in mind the realities at hand and planned reforms in revenue management, the government set the target of total revenue income in the fiscal year 2020-21 at Tk. 3.78 trillion. Out of this, Tk. 3.30 trillion will be collected through the National Board of Revenue (NBR). Tax revenue from

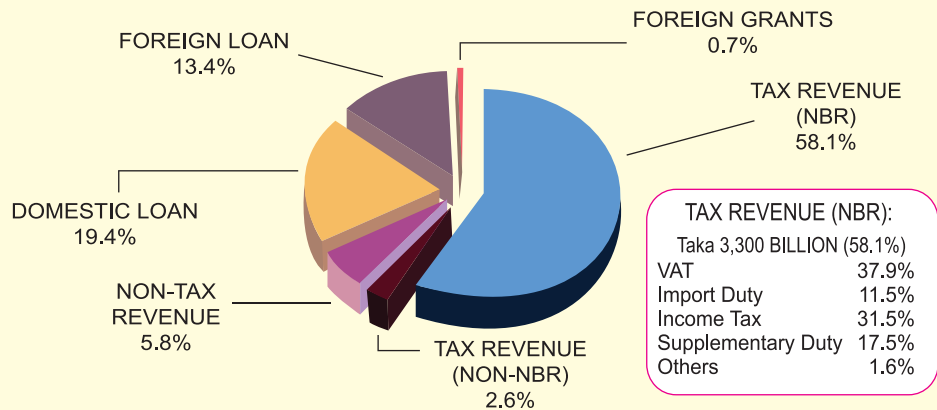
The government placed a Tk. 5.68 trillion national budget for fiscal year 2020-21 with a target of attaining 8.2 percent GDP growth. The government plans to continue the momentum of the economy with all required economic activities simultaneously tackling the impacts of the covid-19 pandemic.

The finance minister AHM Mustafa Kamal delivered a 130-page speech at the Jatiya Sangsad (National Parliament) on 11 June 2020 to present the proposed budget. The proposed budget is 17.9% of GDP. Out of total allocation of Tk. 5.68 trillion the allocation for operating and other expenditures is estimated at Tk 3.63 trillion while the allocation for the annual development program (ADP) is Tk. 2.05 trillion. The finance minister dubbed the proposed budget as 'Economic Transition and Pathway to Progress.'

OPERATING & DEVELOPMENT BUDGET: 2020-21

(Taka 5,680 Billion)

RESOURCES COMING FROM



non-NBR sources has been estimated at Tk. 150 billion, while the non-tax revenue is estimated to be Tk. 330 billion.

Overall Deficit: The overall budget deficit is estimated at Tk. 1.90 trillion, which is 6.0 percent of GDP. It was 5.0 percent in the last fiscal year. Out of the total deficit, Tk. 800 billion will be financed from external sources, while Tk. 1.10 trillion from domestic sources of which Tk. 850 billion will come from the banking system and Tk. 250 billion from savings certificates and other non-bank sources.

Major Allocations: The finance minister in his budget speech said, allocation proposed for the social infrastructure sector in the proposed budget is Tk. 1.56 trillion, which is 27.38% of total allocation, in which allocation for human resource sector (education, health and other related sectors) will be Tk. 1.40 trillion. Besides, allocation proposed for the physical infrastructure sector will be Tk. 1.67 trillion or 29.40%, in which Tk. 696 billion will go to overall agricultural and rural development, Tk. 614 billion to overall communications, and Tk. 267 billion to power and energy. A total Tk. 1.40 trillion has been proposed for general services, which is 24.69% of the total allocation.

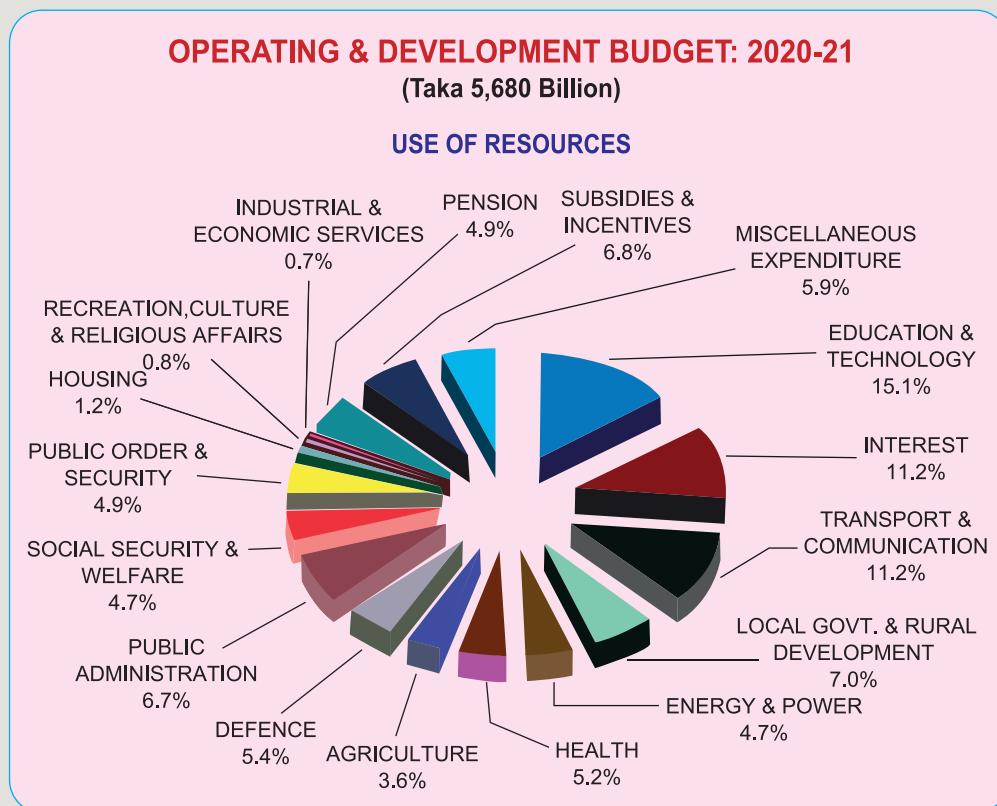
PPP and Assistance-Subsidies for Investment : The finance minister proposed an amount of Tk. 366 billion for public-private partnerships (PPP), financial assistance to different industries, subsidies and equity investments in nationalized corporations, banks, and financial institutions, which is 6.45 percent of the total allocation.

Health Sector: Highlighting the importance of the health sector in the budget, the Finance Minister said, we have taken all out measures to improve the health sector. The government will do whatever is required to be done to address the pandemic. The proposed amount for the health sector is over Tk. 410 billion, while of the figure taka one billion was earmarked for research, the first such sanction ever for integrated health science research. Budget proposed for health sector is 7.2 percent of total budget allocations and 1.3 percent of GDP. Of the amount, Tk.

100 billion is meant for fighting the corona virus or to fulfill the emergency requirements to combat the covid-19 pandemic. The amount of Tk. 410 billion is meant to be spent under different projects of the health and 12 other related ministries and divisions. The health and family welfare ministry alone is to get Tk. 292 billion of the amount while the related other ministries and divisions will draw the rest.

The finance minister expressed, amidst this unprecedented global crisis of covid-19, Prime Minister has announced a number of stimulus packages totaling over taka one trillion to stand by the poor and helpless people, keep the momentum in economic activities, and bring back the trend in growth and development. The fiscal and financial packages announced by the Prime Minister are equivalent to 3.7 percent of GDP, which is the largest in the South Asia region, he said. Most of the programmes scheduled to celebrate the Mujib-Borsho have been rearranged to avoid mass gathering during this covid-19 pandemic and instead being organised through digital means, he also added.

Social Safety Net: The budget expands social safety net in pandemic. Highlighting the features of the social safety net programmes, Finance Minister said, government has allocated Tk 956 billion in the social safety net programmes, which is 16.83 percent of total budget and 3.01 percent of GDP in FY 2020-21. In last year's revised budget, the allocation was Tk. 819 billion. 'We have been increasing the allocation in the social security sector every year to improve the lives of the poor. By now, about one-fourth of families in the country have been





President Md. Abdul Hamid signing the budget bill of 2020-2021 FY at his office of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhavan on June 11

brought under the social security programme,’ the minister said in his budget speech.

He said, all poor senior citizens in 100 upazilas, most prone to poverty due to the corona virus outbreak, will be brought under the old age allowance as per the existing policy. This will add 500 thousand new beneficiaries, and an additional allocation of Tk. 3 billion will be provided to this programme. Besides, all widows and women deserted by their husbands in 100 upazilas will be brought under the coverage of the allowance programme as per the existing policy. This will add 350 thousand new beneficiaries, and an additional allocation of Tk. 2.10 billion will be provided to this programme. He also said, adding that the number of beneficiaries of the allowance for insolvent persons with disabilities will be increased to 1.80 million following the latest disability identification survey and this will add 255 thousand new beneficiaries, and an additional allocation of Tk. 2.30 billion will be required for this purpose.

Other Allocations: Other major allocations go for Tk. 396 billion for Local Government and Rural Development, Tk. 294 billion to the Road Transport and Highways Division, Tk. 249 billion to the Power Division, Tk. 154 billion to the Ministry of Agriculture, Tk. 331 billion to Secondary and Higher Education Division, Tk. 249 billion to the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, Tk. 348 billion to the Ministry of Defence, Tk. 268 billion proposed for uninterrupted, quality power supply and Tk. 98 billion for disaster management. Government proposed Tk. 13 billion for Environment Ministry and Tk. 14 billion proposed for ICT Division.

Annual Development Programme: The government proposed Tk. 2.05 trillion as the annual development programme (ADP). Health, agriculture and employment creation have been given priority while allocating resources for the ADP. Out of the total ADP outlay, Tk. 1.35 trillion will come from the local sources while Tk. 705 billion from the foreign sources.

Besides, Tk. 95 billion was allocated against 89 projects of the autonomous bodies and corporations. Incorporating the funding of the autonomous bodies and corporations, the size of the overall ADP for the next fiscal year totaled Tk. 2.15 trillion.

In the new ADP, the transport sector got the highest allocation with 25.43 percent or Tk. 522 billion followed by the 2nd highest physical planning, water supply and housing sector with Tk. 258 billion (12.57% of ADP allocation), the 3rd highest power sector with Tk. 248 billion (12.09% of ADP allocation) while the education and religion sector got the 4th highest allocation with Tk. 234 billion (11.40% of ADP allocation).

Besides, in the proposed ADP, the Science and ICT Sector got an allocation of Tk. 184 billion (8.99% of ADP allocation) followed by Tk. 156 billion (7.58% of ADP allocation) to the rural development and rural institutions sector, Tk. 130 billion (6.35 % of ADP allocation) to the health, population and family welfare sector, Tk. 84 billion (4.09% of ADP allocation) to the agriculture sector, Tk. 55 billion (2.69% of ADP allocation) to the water resources sector, Tk. 40 billion (1.97% of ADP allocation) to the public administration sector.

Among the Ministries and Divisions, the Local Government Division got the highest ADP allocation of Tk. 311 billion followed by the Road Transport and Highways Division with Tk. 248 billion, Power Division with Tk. 248 billion, Ministry of Science and Technology with Tk. 174 billion, Ministry of Railways with Tk. 125 billion, Health Services Division with Tk. 100 billion, Secondary and



Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal along with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina enters the Assembly Hall of Sangsad Bhaban



Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal presenting the budget of FY 2020-21 in the Parliament

Higher Education Division with Tk. 99 billion, Ministry of Primary and Mass Education with Tk. 94 billion, Bridges Division with Tk. 80 billion and the Ministry of Water Resources with Tk. 63 billion.

Allocations for Mega Projects: Among the allocations for the mega projects, the RoopPur Nuclear Power Plant Project got the highest allocation with Tk. 157 billion. Besides, the single line dual gauge track construction from Dohazari to Cox's Bazar via Ramu then Ghumdum near Myanmar witnessed an allocation of Tk. 15 billion followed by Tk. 50 billion to the Padma Multipurpose Bridge Project, Tk. 44 billion to the Metro Rail (MRT Line 6) Project, Tk. 37 billion to the Padma Bridge Rail Link Project, Tk. 37 billion to Matarbari Ultra Super Critical Coal-fired Power Plant Project.

The new ADP for FY 21 witnessed a record Tk. 59 billion block allocation to spend that amount in case of any natural disaster or in any national need.

Apart from this, a total of 61 projects have been included in the list of Public Private Partnership (PPP) initiative in the new ADP.

Taxation and Relaxations: Considering the financial ability of the taxpayers under the current scenario of covid-19, and also as a gift of the 'Mujib Borsho', the finance minister proposed to increase the tax-free income threshold and reduce the tax rate applicable for the taxpayers other than companies and local authorities, especially the individual taxpayers. He proposed to increase the tax-free income threshold of male taxpayers from Tk. 250 thousand to Tk. 300

thousand and that of female taxpayers and taxpayers above 65 years of age from Tk. 300 thousand to Tk. 350 thousand respectively. At the same time, he proposed to reduce the minimum tax rate for individuals from 10 percent to 5 percent, and the maximum tax rate for individuals from 30 percent to 25 percent.

Finance Minister said, the government has taken six short and long-term measures to rejuvenate the stock market and bring dynamism into the sector. Those include – enhancing participation of banks and non-bank financial institutions in the capital market, ensuring easy credit facility for merchant bankers and institutional investors, boosting investment capacity of state-owned Investment Corporation of Bangladesh and taking steps to bring confidence in the stock market.

The Finance Minister expected that the readymade garment (RMG) industry will see a rebound with the support from the stimulus package being offered by the government to counter the covid-19 pandemic, and that export will return to the desired positive trend in FY 2020-21. For this, he proposed to continue with this additional export incentive of 1 percent in the next fiscal year in addition to the other existing incentives. RMG sector will enjoy reduced tax for another two years.

Government is formulating ‘National Financial Inclusion Strategy-Bangladesh’. Corporate tax will be cut by 2.5 percent for non-listed companies. One-person company can be registered. Besides, government proposed for withdrawal VAT on test kits, PPE, medicines for covid-19 prevention.

The government started implementing the VAT Act, 2012 and to make it a success, activities such as increasing required manpower, procuring necessary equipment, and enhancing capacity of officials will continue in the fiscal year 2020-21.

The government is introducing an incentive for investment of untaxed money to boost fund flow into the flagging capital market amidst the covid-19 crisis. Individual taxpayers can invest money in the capital market between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021 and show it in their tax returns on paying tax at a rate of 10 percent on the value of the investment subject to satisfying certain conditions including a lock-in period of three years, and no other authority including the income tax authority will raise any question in this regard. They will be allowed to disclose any type of undisclosed house property including land, building and apartment during this period on paying tax at a particular rate on per square meter of the said asset. They will also be able to make any disclosure of undisclosed cash, bank deposits, savings certificates, shares, bonds or any other securities during this period on paying taxes at a rate of 10 percent on the value of the said declaration; and no authority including the income tax authority can raise any question on such declarations.

The proposed budget has been formulated keeping in mind the targets of the 8th Five Year Plan, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Vision 2041. The budget is aimed at striking a balance between life and livelihoods triggered by the miserable consequences of the spread of covid infections and loss of life in recent days.

The author is Director, Department of Mass Communication, Ministry of Information



Good Governance and Bangladesh Constitution

Md. Quddus Khan

Pakistani rule during 1947-1971 in erstwhile East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), it is evident that the speeches, statements, writings contained concerns over and allegation against misgovernance (eg glaring economic disparity between East and West Pakistan) that is absence of good governance. Against this background the constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh was framed and introduced in 1972. Therefore our constitution has well taken care of this issue of good governance in it and provided enough provisions to ensure and establish good governance in Bangladesh state. Our constitution provides 'all powers in the Republic belong to the people' [article 7 (1)]. It (constitution) is 'solemn expression of the will of the people, the supreme law of the Republic' [article 7 (2)]. The constitution provided for a democratic polity for Bangladesh- democratically elected parliament, executive accountable to parliament and law and independent judiciary. The constitution also provided fundamental rights (part III) for the people and fundamental principles of state policy (part II) which 'shall form the basis of the work of the state and of its citizens' (article- 8) and also for running of the state by whatever Government comes to power.

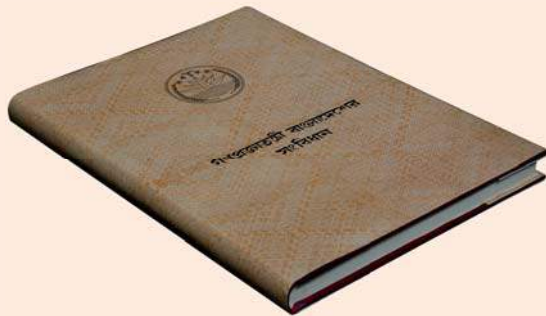
The purpose of this article is to identify and discuss the provisions of the constitution, which are relevant and useful for establishing good governance in Bangladesh.

Governance and Good governance

Governance means the process of decision making and the process by which decisions are implemented (or not implemented)- source: UN-ESCAP). Governance can be used in several contexts- corporate, international, national and local. Both formal and informal structures are used to make and implement

In recent days good governance is a much talked about issue in corporate, local, national or international arena. Good governance means the process and the institutions that produce results to meet the needs of society while making the best use of resources at their disposal. Absence of good governance may cause failure of a government. It is more relevant in our state system. State was basically created for 2 reasons- 1) providing security to the people and 2) providing service to the people for sustainable development- both human and material. Governance is vital in providing both security and service to a satisfactory level.

If we go through speeches, statements and writings of our Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman during



Constitution of Bangladesh

governance is directed to preferred ways and goals. It has eight major characteristics or elements viz participatory, consensus oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law.

Characteristics of Good governance (UN-ESCAP)

In fact, if we want to establish good governance in any context be it corporate, international, national, or local we must ensure participation of the governed, early responsiveness of the serving institutions, making the best use of available resources to serve best interest of the whole community, and inspiring a sense of belonging to the organisations by all concerned. In addition accountability of the organisation to whom they serve and establishing rule of law by protecting human rights, especially those of minorities through independent judiciary and an impartial, incorruptible police force is essential. Finally, transparency in decision making and implementation by state actors are also essential for good governance.

Good governance and our constitution

We have already discussed the characteristics/elements of good governance. If we look into our constitution we can discover many of these elements in it. Provisions of the constitution relating to good governance may be categorized as follows:

- A. Provisions relating to the aims, objectives, target and goal of good governance i.e substantive scope of good governance.
- B. Provisions relating to the organs and the public institutions created under the constitution to conduct public affairs and manage public resources including administration of laws and justice, human and natural energy.
- C. Provisions relating to ensuring accountability of the organs and institutions to make them responsive to the people.
- D. Provisions relating to ensuring rule of law essential to establish good governance.

Category A

Fundamental principle of state policy (Article 8-25) and fundamental rights (Article 26-47) enshrined in the constitution contain many provisions which satisfy many essential objectives, targets, goals, and scope of good governance. For example few provisions are mentioned below (article numbers are mentioned to the right side).

decisions. In our present discussion, formal government structures created under the constitution will be taken into consideration.

Good governance is a way of measuring how public institution conducts public affairs and manage public resources in a preferred way- (source UN ESCAP). Here preferred way needs to be explained. Though governance is a process but good

- ❑ Equality of opportunities to all citizens. -19 (1))
- ❑ Equality of opportunity and participation of women in all spheres of national life. -19 (3)
- ❑ Emancipation of toiling masses, the peasants, and workers and backwards section of people from all sorts of exploitation. -14
- ❑ Remove social and economic inequality between man and man and ensure the equitable distribution of wealth among citizens in order to attain a uniform level of economic development throughout the Republic. -19 (2)
- ❑ Secure to its citizens the provision of basic necessities of life including food, clothing, shelter, education and medicare. -15 (a).
- ❑ Right to social security i.e. public assistance in cases of undeserved want arising from unemployment (eg present crisis originated due to Covid-19 pandemic). -15 (d)
- ❑ Free and compulsory universal primary education for all children. -17 (a)
- ❑ Citizens to observe the constitution and laws, perform public duties and protect public property. -21(1)
- ❑ No discrimination on grounds only of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. -28 (1)
- ❑ All citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law. -27
- ❑ Equality of opportunity for all citizens in respect of employment or office in the service of the republic. -29 (1)
- ❑ Freedom of thoughts and conscience. -39 (1)
- ❑ Right to life, personal liberty -3 and property. -42
- ❑ Freedom of religion. -41
- ❑ Freedom of press. -39 (1.b)
- ❑ Safeguard against arrest and detention. -33 (1.2)
- ❑ Every person in the service of the republic has a duty to strive at all times to serve the people -21 (2)
- ❑ The republic shall be a democracy in which fundamental human rights and freedoms and respect for the dignity and worth of the human person shall be guaranteed. -11
- ❑ A socialist economic system shall be established with a view to ensuring the attainment of a just and egalitarian society, free from exploitation of man by man. -10
- ❑ Improvement of public health and morality. -18
- ❑ Adopting effective measures for rural development and agricultural revolution. -16
- ❑ The State shall endeavor to protect and improve the environment and preserve and safeguard the natural resources, biodiversity, wetlands, forests and wildlife for the present and future citizens. -18 (A)

Category B & C

Our constitution has created various organs, organisations and institutions to ensure security, protect human rights, to make the best use of available resources of the country for development and provide various other services to the people.

The organs are Executive, (Art. 48-64), Legislature (Art. 65-93) and Judiciary (Art. 94-117).

The constitutional organisations and institutions are: Election Commission (Art. 118), Public Service Commission (Art. 137), Comptroller and Auditor General (Art. 127), Defence services (Art. 61), services of Bangladesh including Civil Service (Art. 133), Local Government (Art. 59), Public Accounts Committee [Art 76 (1.a)] and Ombudsman (Art. 77).

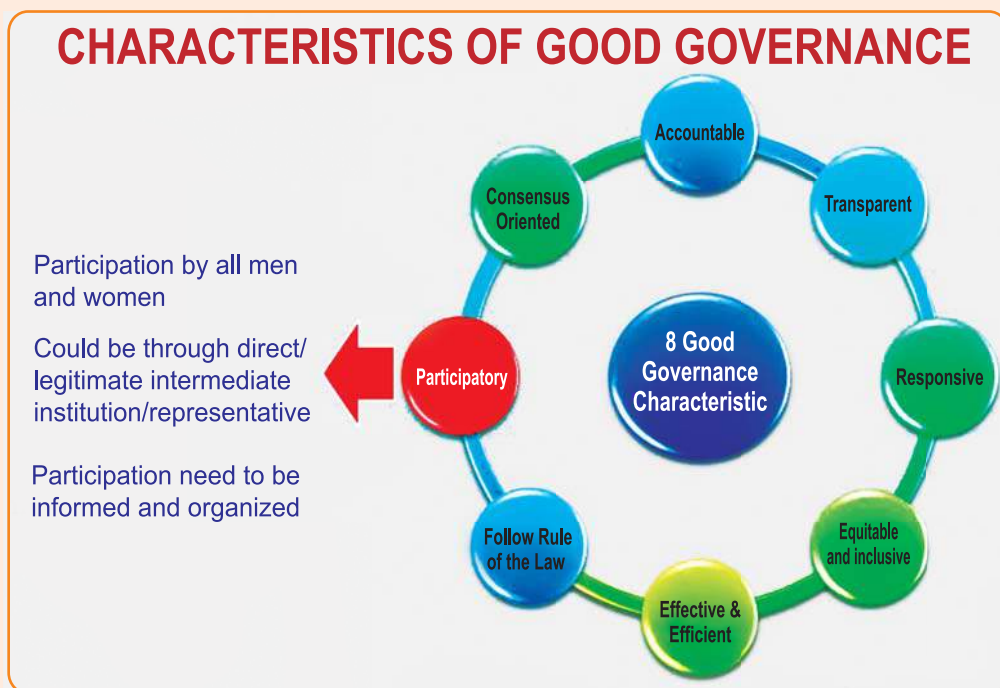
The constitution has ensured independence of Judiciary [Art. (116 (a))], independence of Election Commission [Art. 118 (4)], independence of Comptroller and Auditor general [Art. 128 (4)] and office bearers of these 3 institutions and Public Service commission, shall not be removed from office except in like manner and on like grounds, as a judge of the (Supreme court.) i.e special procedures to be followed to remove them from office making it very difficult for the executive to remove them at whim and caprice.

Executive rules the country, legislature makes law, passes budget, and elects high officials including the President of the Republic. Judiciary dispenses justice and makes executive accountable to law. In the constitution, there is a provision for establishment of the office of Ombudsman to ‘investigate any action taken by ministry, a public officer, or a statutory public authority [Art. 77 (2)]. But unfortunately no office of the ombudsman has been created since our constitution came into force in 1972.

Category D

Provisions relating to ensuring rule of law essential to establish good governance

Rule of law requires equality before law. Constitution provides, ‘all citizens are equal before law and are entitled to equal protection of law (Art. 27)’. Rule of law



demands safeguard as to arrest and detention. Our constitution provides, 'every person who is arrested and detained in custody shall be produced before the nearest magistrate within a period of 24 hours of such arrest, excluding a time necessary for the journey from the place of arrest to the court of the magistrate and no such person shall be detained in custody beyond the said period without the authority of a magistrate [Art. 33 (2)]. The rule of law also requires an independent judiciary and impartial and incorruptible police force. Our constitution has provided for an independent judiciary, but for ensuring impartial performance of police force there is need for reforms in law and morality, which needs to be addressed.

Findings

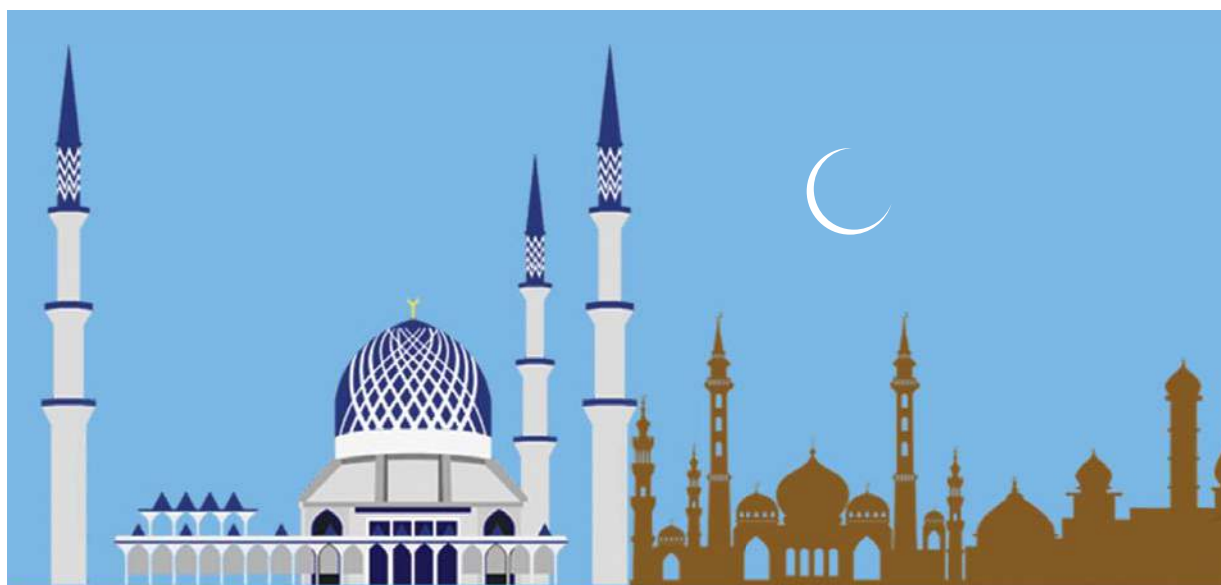
Our Constitution is one of the finest in the world. As evident from our preceding paragraph, our constitution has provided fundamental framework for good governance'. However, framework mentioned in our constitution might have specifically emphasized timelines which is vital for good governance.

Enough goals of good governance have been provided in our constitution. But organs and institutions created for conduct of public affairs and managing public resources (eg. EC, PSC etc) to achieve those goals appears considerably weak: both in institutional capacity and human resource. There is dearth of enough qualified manpower. Allegation of corruption and delay in implementation are also there. Constitution has also created some institutions and given them independence so that they can uphold the rights of the people from undue influence of politically influential people. But unfortunately, the office bearers of some of these independent institutions, in some cases, could not show transparency and live up to the expectations of people. It is definitely, not the failure of the constitution, rather failures of the office bearers of these institutions. However, in upholding independence of judiciary our highest judiciary has shown more courage and success than other independent constitutional institutions. It also can be remarked that frame work is there but conditions (corruption free society, time conscious people etc.) and human resource necessary for good governance are wanting in many respect, especially we need more qualified, dedicated and morally strong office bearers.

Conclusion

We have recent examples of good governance according to our constitution. Our constitution provides, 'the right to social security that is to say, public assistance in cases of undeserved want arising from unemployment' [Art. 15 (D)]. The public friendly government of Sheikh Hasina has already sanctioned enough cash and kind for five million families suffering unemployment due to covid-19 pandemic. From this example, and many others we can say, the prospect of establishing good governance in Bangladesh is very promising, as our constitution has laid down the basic foundations of it. Equality before law (Art. 27) is the basis of rule of law and good governance. Therefore, all of us need to practice good governance in increased degree to achieve our cherished goal of Sonar Bangla.

The Writer is a retired Additional Secretary to the Government of Bangladesh and ex Assistant Professor of Department of Politics, Chattogram University, Bangladesh



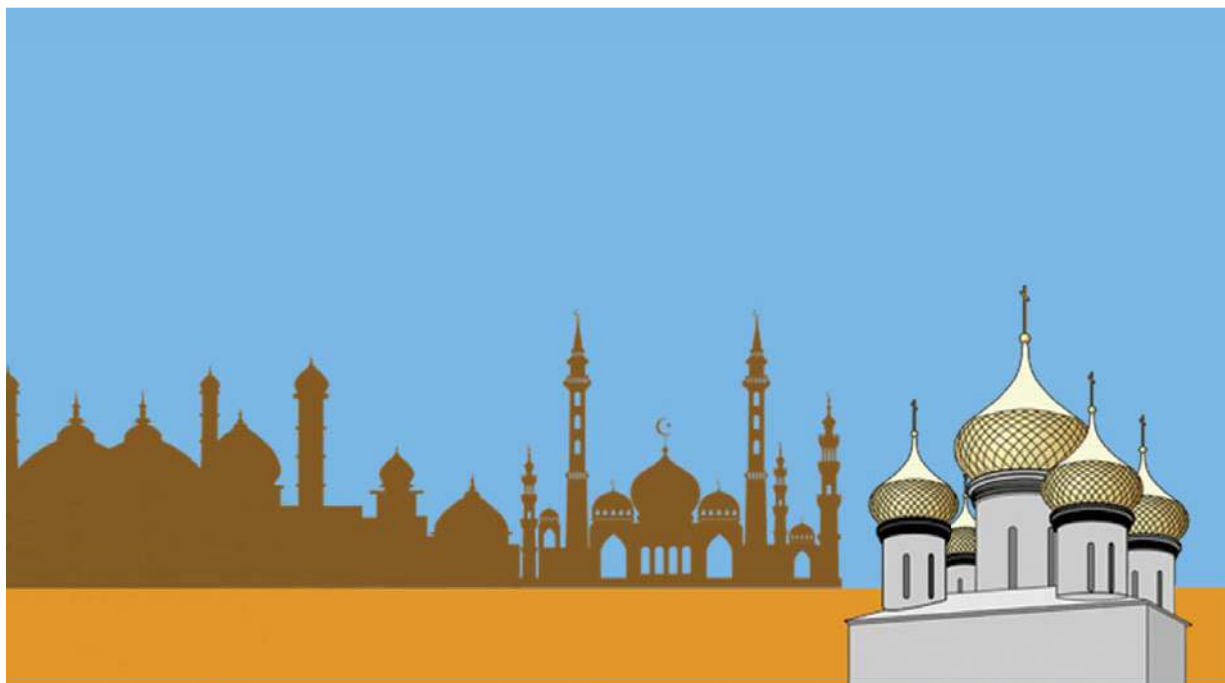
Significance of Ramadan and Eid-ul-fitr

Dr. Md. Matiur Rahman Khan

Ramadan is the ninth month in Arabic lunar calendar. It is considered as the most sacred month to the Muslims. God-fearing able-bodied Muslims all over the world observe fasting from dawn to dusk throughout the month of Ramadan and commemorate the first revelation of the holy Quran to Hazrat Muhammad (SM). Muslims engage themselves in prayer, meditation, devotion and worship for Allah. They abstain from eating and drinking by day, refrain from sinful and harmful acts throughout this holy month. They practice austerities to improve self-discipline, self-control, self-restraint, self-sacrifice, self-renunciation, empathy and sympathy. The name of this month occurs in the holy Quran: sura 2, verse 185. This Quranic verse prescribed fasting as compulsory for the able-bodied Muslims more than 1400 years ago. This month is very significant and important from different Islamic points of view. Many historic, religious and significant events took place and still take place in this month. In brief some of the historic, religious and significant events are given below:

Message of the Prophet (SM) about significance of Ramadan

According to Hazrat Muhammad (SM), the gates of heaven and the skies open on the first night of Ramadan and the gates are not shut down until Ramadan ends. Similarly the gates of hell are shut down and never open until the end of the month of Ramadan. With the advent of Ramadan heavens are adorned and decorated afresh, and gentle breeze starts blowing underneath the Aros (all pervading seat of Allah). The virgins of paradise are beautified in the night of Ramadan. Almighty Allah commands the angel Ridwan (AS), who guards the gates of heaven, to keep the gates of heaven open during this month. Allah orders Maalik (AS), an angel who is in charge of the gates of the hell, to close the gates of hell. Then at the behest of Almighty Allah, Jibril (AS)/Gabriel comes to the earth and keeps Iblis/Satan (devil) in chains for the whole Ramadan.



Our Prophet (SM) said, ‘Any of my followers who observes fasting only for Allah in Ramadan with devoted and pure mind, it is tantamount to that he emancipated 600 slaves, sacrificed 600 camels, and possessed virtue for prayer and worshipping of Allah for more than 6000 years.’

In another hadith, Prophet (SM) said, there are eight doors of heaven. One of the doors named Raiyan. No one can enter through that door except the fasting person (Bukhari and Muslim). It is also stated in a hadith that Prophet (SM) said, ‘Allah says, every act of Adam's child except fasting is for himself. But fasting is for me. I will reward myself.’

Revelation of divine/ heavenly books

According to the Quran and the Hadith, all the heavenly/divine books were sent down to different Prophets on different dates in Ramadan. Some of them are briefly mentioned below:

1. The Sahifah (Scripture) was sent down to Hazrat Ibrahim (AS)/Abraham during the first night of Ramadan.
2. The Taurat (Torah) was sent down to Hazrat Musa (AS)/Moses during the sixth night of Ramadan.
3. The Zabur (Psalms) was sent down to Dawud (AS.)/David during the 12th Ramadan
4. The Injeel (Gospel) was sent down to Isa (AS.) during the 13th Ramadan
5. The verse of the Holy Quran was sent down to Hazrat Muhammad (SM) during the night of the Lailatul Qadr. The revelation continued for 23 years.

Revelation of the Quran during the night of Lailatul Qadr in Ramadan

The message of the holy Quran is always absolutely and definitely true and is



Eid congregation at Baitul Mukarram National Mosque

beyond doubt. Therefore, Almighty Allah in the verse 2 of the sura Al Baqarah has said, ‘This is the Scripture whereof there is no doubt, guidance to those who are Al Muttaqiin (who fear Allah).’

Almighty Allah as to the revelation of the holy Quran in verses 1 and 3 of the sura Qadr has very clearly said, ‘Verily, We revealed this (heavenly message) in the night of Al-Qadr (Decree).’ (97:1). ‘The night of Al-Qadr (Decree) is better than a thousand months (i.e. worshipping Allah in that night is better than worshipping Him a thousand months i.e. 83 years and 4 months).’ (97:3).

Revelation of the holy Quran to Hazrat Muhammad (SM) began in 610 AD. Some opine that the verse of the holy Quran came to Hazrat Muhammad (SM) in any uneven night during the last 10 days of Ramadan. While some others opine that the verse of the holy Quran came to the Prophet Muhammad (SM) on the night following the 27th day of Ramadan. Then verse after verse revealed and it took 23 years for revelation of the whole Quran.

The holy Quran revealed in two phases

In the first phase, the whole Quran from the Laohe Mahfuz situated in the all pervading seat (throne) of Almighty Allah and from where the entire Quran was revealed on the 24th Ramadan to a place Baitul Uzzat in the first sky nearest to the earth. It is also called the Baitul Mamur which is located in the upper sky just straight over the Kaba. In that upper sky, angels remain devoted to Almighty Allah. Then in the second phase, the verse of the holy Quran on the night of 27th Ramadan was revealed to Hazrat Muhammad (SM).

The process of revelation of the holy Quran

According to the opinion of the annotators and historians, in 610 AD when Prophet Muhammad (SM) was forty, once he was in deep meditation for Almighty Allah in the cave of the Hera Mountain in the night of Lailatul Qadr in Ramadan, the first divine message was revealed. Jibril (AS) came when Hazrat Muhammad

(SM) was in meditation and said, (Oh, Muhammad (SM), ‘Read in the name of your Lord Who has created (all that exists) man from a clinging substance. Read and your Lord is the most Generous and Bountiful Who taught man that which he knew not (sura: Alaq, verses 1-5)’. The Prophet (SM) replied, ‘I do not know.’ Jibril (AS.) placed the chest of Muhammad (SM) against the chest of Jibril (AS) and embraced him strongly. This process of embracing and conversation continued thrice, and then the repertory of knowledge became open to the Prophet (SM). Then he began to read. This time 5 verses of sura Alaq were revealed.

Some pious persons were born and some died in Ramadan

According to Al Biruni (Abu Rayhan Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Al-Biruni, a famous Arabian educationist and researcher of Middle Ages), martyred Hussain, son of Hazrat Ali (R) was born on the 6th Ramadan. On the 10th Ramadan Khadija Bint Khuwaylid aka Khadija Al-Kubra (R) who embraced Islam first and who was the first wife of Hazrat Muhammad (SM) died. On the 17th Ramadan the Battle of Badr took place between the Muslims and the Quraysh. This battle brought decisive victory to the Muslims. 19th Ramadan was the victory day of Mecca (Makkah). On the 21st Ramadan Hazrat Ali (R), son-in-law of Hazrat Muhammad (SM.) died. The 22nd Ramadan was the birth day of Hazrat Ali (R). The following night of the 27th Ramadan is mostly regarded as Lailatul Qadr. By the order of Allah, angels from heavenly realms descend on earth on that night and stay until the eastern sky becomes aglow by the ruddy glares from the sun. Most importantly, the holy Quran began revealing from this night (44:3) and the revelation became complete within 23 years. At the end of the month, with the sighting of the moon we enjoy and celebrate the Eid ul fitr on the following day.

After every 33 years Ramadan comes back to the same date it started from

It may be mentioned here for its clarification that Ramadan is observed in accordance with the lunar month but not in accordance with Bengali or English calendar month.



Various iftar itmes are sold throughout the month of Ramadan

When Ramadan begins from a particular date of Bengali or English calendar of a particular year, in that case, Ramadan will fall 11 days behind every year from that particular date of Bengali or English year. Thus, Ramadan comes back to its Bengali or English same date after 33 years.

Fasting and its importance

The word ‘Roja’ is a



Family members offering prayer before breaking fast (Iftar)

Persian word, it is called ‘Sawm’ in Arabic and its plural form is ‘Siam’. Fasting means to refrain from food and drink, wantonness, immoral acts, sensuality, licentiousness from Subhe Sadiq (the last part of the night) till the sun sets in order to carry out the order of Allah and to gain His satisfaction.

Fasting is an important and momentous religious prayer. Fasting was first introduced to the first man and first Prophet Hazrat Adam (AS). There were scriptural prescripts to observe fasting in the periods of all Prophets (SM) for their own health. Almighty Allah has mentioned it in the holy Quran, ‘...Fasting is prescribed to you as it was prescribed to those before you that you may learn self-restraint (Al-Baqarah, 183)’.

Main pillar of Islam: Fasting is one of the important five pillars of Islam. It is compulsory to observe fasting for each adult and sound Muslim man and woman. But those who are on travel during Ramadan and cannot observe fasting; they must observe fasting for that number of days they failed to observe fasting during the month of Ramadan. Those who were ill during Ramadan and could not observe fasting must observe fasting for that number of days they could not observe fasting during the month of Ramadan. Fasting controls cardinal passions such as, anger, greed, lust, infatuation, vanity and envy, and widens the way of prayer to Allah.

Fasting acts as a shield

As man protects him from an attack with shields, likewise he protects him by his prayers to Allah from his brutal nature, evil intention, sexuality, sinful act etc. Fasting acts as a shield to control and restrain human lust or sensuality. It is said



Country's largest Eid congregation at Sholakia Eidgah Maidan (field) in Kishoreganj

that Almighty Allah of His own accord separated 'Lust' from 'Self' and had some conversation between 'Lust' and 'Self'. First Allah put a question to 'Lust' as, 'Who am I?' and 'Who are you?' Lust answered to the question very impudently, saying, 'You are you' and 'I am me.' On hearing this rude answer, Allah became displeased with 'Lust' and burnt it in fire for 70 thousand years. Then Allah said to Lust, 'Who are your?' This time 'Lust' answered too in the same way 'I am me?'. In order to punish Lust again, Allah put Lust into ice for 70 thousand years. Thereafter, Allah put the same question to Lust, Lust made the same reply as it made before. This time Allah became extremely angry with Lust and kept it in starvation for 70 thousand years. As a result of long starvation, Lust became very weak. This time the Almighty put the same question to Lust, Lust became very submissive and surrendered to Allah and very meekly and politely said, 'You are my Lord and I am your obedient slave.' Since starvation removed self-will of Lust and compelled Lust to surrender to Almighty Allah, so in order to control Lust in human beings, Almighty Allah made fasting compulsory for the followers of every Prophet. In a hadith fasting is described as shield to escape the torment of hell.

Benefits of fasting in view of medical science

Fasting is such a religious practice that is conducive to all rich, poor, young, old, healthy and unhealthy people. There is no such valid argument in favour of the deterioration of disease because of observing fasting. Some people may think that fasting worsens gastritis, heartburn, peptic ulcer, stomach ache or ailment etc. This is a lame excuse. But medical research shows the benefit of fasting. Medical science says that the number of parietal cells in stomach is about 10 crore. These cells continuously cause secretion of hydrochloric acid. Excessive secretion of hydrochloric acid causes duodenal ulcer and gastritis in the stomach. But this acid

secretion occurs usually after taking meal. On the other hand, if the stomach remains empty, acid secretion will become less.

In this context we may mention a book titled ‘The secrets of successful fasting’ written by German physician professor Dr. Hellmut Lutzner, which was published in 1984. In this book, it is stated that by fasting for one month during Ramadan the cholesterol that silted up in the blood vessels (total length is about 60 thousand miles or 96 thousand km) is burnt into ashes.

Human studies of intermittent fasting (16 hours in a day) found that it improved such disease indicators as insulin resistance, blood fat abnormalities, high blood pressure and inflammation, even independently of weight loss.

Modern studies show that fasting brings many benefits to human health such as it helps weight loss, improves insulin sensitivity, speeds up the metabolism,



Children embracing each other after Eid prayer

promotes longevity, improves hunger, improves brain function, improves immune system, help clear the skin & prevent acne, and also fasting may aid in cancer prevention and increase the effectiveness of chemotherapy.

In recent days many physicians in the western countries suggest going on fasting for 3days/6days/9days as a part of the treatment as per the nature of the illness of the patient.

All living beings must die: In the words of the poet, Janmile morite hobe, amor ke kotha robe (We are born to die. None is ever immortal anywhere). The holy Quran says, ‘Every soul shall have a taste of death and only the Day of Judgment, shall you be paid your full recompense (sura: Al-Imran, verse 185)’. The holy Quran reminds us of our death and the life after death. Therefore, every Muslim should carry out all religious practices including observing of fasting so that they can escape hell fire, but can enjoy eternal and perpetual heavenly bliss and peace after death.

Eid ul fitr

Muslims observe fasting for the satisfaction of Allah. And after the end of Ramadan, the fasting comes to an end. Then the Muslims on the first day of the Shawal moon celebrate Eid-ul-fitr.

The word Eid literally means joy, pleasure or a festival. Celebration of Eid occurs in the holy Quran. Isa (Jesus) son of Maryam (Mary) says, ‘O Allah, our Lord send us from heaven a table spread (with food) that there may be for us –for the first and the last of us-- a festival and a sign from you; and provide us with sustenance, for you are the Best of Sustainers (5: 114).’

For the Muslims there are two major religious festivals – one is Eid-ul-fitr which is observed at the end of Ramadan, and the other is Eid-ul-Adha which is observed on the 10th Jilhaj (lunar moth). Emphasis has been laid to express joy and cheerfulness on the day of Eid. That is why fasting on those days are prohibited.

Muslims should pay off zakat and fitr before Eid day. If zakat and fitr are given before Eid, the poor get the opportunity to attend the Eid congregation with new clothes on and can share joy.

Sunnah (traditions of Prophet) on Eid Day

As described by our Prophet (SM) from early morning on the day of Eid-ul-Fitr some preparations are taken by the Muslims. Taking bath, use of perfume, wearing new or clean clothes, and before attending prayers having some sweetmeat (but on the day of Eid-ul-Adha it is sunnah not taking any food before Eid prayers) are some traditions of the Prophet (SM).

Muslims say their Eid prayers in order to satisfy Allah and to gain His blessings. Eid prayers consist of two rakat (part of the prayer which includes standing, bending and two prostrations) and the prayer is offered in additional six takbirs (the shout of ‘Allahu Akbar’ meaning Allah is the Greatest). The Eid prayers do not require any Azan (Muazzin’s call to congregational prayers), after prayer the Imam (leader of the religious congregation) utters Khutba from the holy Quran. Eid prayers are wajib (bounden/obligatory). This prayer congregation is preferably held in the open field. This prayer is performed in between sunrise and until the sun comes in the mid sky. Allah takes special care of his Baanda (obedient and devoted servant) and feels proud before his angels. Then Allah declares pardon for His obedient persons.

In conclusion it may be said that Ramadan month is full of historically and religiously important events. It is the best month for the Muslims for religious practices. Verses from the holy Quran and divine books were revealed in this month. Heaven remains open and hell remains closed and Satan is kept in chains in this month. On the other hand, Eid plays an important part to meet near and far relatives, near and dear ones. This occasion forms a good bond of tie among the Muslims and brings the opportunity to exchange good wishes to one another. Moreover, during the Eid the rich come forward to help the poor, as a result a balance in social and economic condition is maintained. May Allah enable all Muslims to observe fasting and celebrate Eid.

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Economic Empowerment of Women in Bangladesh

Dr. Helal Uddin Ahmed

extent to which these changes have translated into greater voice and decision-making power for Bangladeshi women, their experiences during the previous decade, and ways and means of building on past progress to improve economic empowerment of the country's womenfolk. The report is a follow-up to the publication 'Whispers to Voices: Gender and Social Transformation in Bangladesh' published by the World Bank in 2008.

Bangladesh has achieved commendable success in numerous dimensions of gender parity over the years, thereby widening the economic opportunities for women in many areas of life. The fertility rate has been drastically reduced, gender parity has been attained in schooling, and millions of female workers have been absorbed in the country's garments sector. The recently released Human Capital Index of the World Bank shows that girls today have better prospect than boys in Bangladesh to complete schooling and live up to the age of 60 years. A recent publication of the World Bank (December 2019) titled 'Voices to Choices: Bangladesh's Journey in Women's Economic Empowerment' has examined the



Female students celebrate after S.S.C. result at their school campus



Bangladesh parliament has a record number of 22 directly-elected women MPs

The present volume has examined various characteristics of both women's engagement and economic empowerment in Bangladesh. The former refers to the extent to which women participate or are represented in the economic sphere. The latter relate to four domains, viz. labour force participation and other labour market outcomes; women's ownership and control of household assets; their use and control of financial assets; and their opportunities for entrepreneurship. The findings show that Bangladesh's female labour force participation rate has risen substantially – a full 10 percent from 2003 to 2016. But despite this progress, female participation is still merely 44 percent of males. The persistence of child marriage continues to be a significant barrier although married women are now employed in the labour market of Bangladesh at much higher rates compared to a decade ago.

Although many industries have witnessed a decline in sex aggregation, women still appear to have very limited choices with regard to work options across broad sectors. Data from the Labour Force Survey of BBS show that the share of women in industries with balanced proportions of males and females have quadrupled between 2003 and 2016, while women's share in female-dominated industries diminished by over two-thirds. Interestingly, the raw gender wage gap has decreased dramatically in



A large number of women are working in the Police service



Tamanna-E-Lufty (left) and Nayma Haque (right), the country's first ever military pilots who joined the Congo UN peacekeeping mission

Bangladesh as a result of which the country has the smallest gender wage gap among the regional countries; but gender norms and biases increasingly explain the remaining differential, especially on the demand side of labour. Female workers earned roughly 76 percent of what men did in 2016, which was a significant improvement from the 43 percent gap in 2003. Despite these advances, the fact remains that over one-third of women in the labour force of Bangladesh are unpaid helpers informally contributing to the family.

In the area of ownership and control of productive assets, one of the most valuable household assets viz. land ownership by women is much lower in rural Bangladesh compared to men. Only 12 percent among rural women solely or



Rural women are now financially solvent through livestock farming

jointly own agricultural land, the percentage for non-agricultural land being 7 percent. Research indicates that rural women inherit land much less frequently (around 20 percent) compared to those living in the urban areas, and agricultural land ownership is not

positively correlated with greater empowerment of women. However, many women exert more economic control over the productive assets like agricultural land, cattle, house and non-agricultural land than ownership patterns suggest. Marked improvement has also been observed over the years in societal attitude towards asset ownership by women. The assets that females are more likely to own compared to males include poultry, livestock and small consumer durables.

In the domain of ownership and control of financial assets, women's share is gradually rising over time, but gender gaps still persist in Bangladesh. The country has fared better compared to lower middle-income group of nations with regard to borrowing by women from financial institutions. But Bangladeshi women appear to be less diverse than men with regard to their source of saving and borrowing money, and the financial products they typically use. For example, three quarters of rural women borrow from or save with NGOs, but the sources of borrowings and savings for rural men are much more diverse. Besides, loans to women



Artisans are working in a textile production company owned by a woman

continue to be of lower value and shorter duration alongside stricter terms compared to men. The squeezed nature of women's credit is historically related to their dearth of collateral and low financial literacy, as well as gender norms that view men as more responsible and better suited in controlling finances. There is mixed evidence on whether micro-credit empowers women economically in Bangladesh, as loans often end up under the control of husbands or other male household members. It has been found that only 12 to 16 percent of women are sole decision-makers on household financial issues and use of financial services.

In the field of entrepreneurship, Bangladesh has among the smallest shares of female-majority ownership of enterprises globally despite laudable government efforts to promote female entrepreneurship. In terms of percentages, it is only 1.7 percent as against the South Asian and global averages of 9.6 percent and 14.5 percent respectively. Although female entrepreneurs' access to credit has increased over time, the total credit disbursed annually among them from 2010 to 2017 was merely 3 percent of credit disbursed among male entrepreneurs. But this gap in disbursement does not explain the differences between female and male entrepreneurs' demand for credit and aspirations to expand businesses. Barriers to flourishing of female entrepreneurship include patriarchal norms that limit women's mobility and hinder access to market networks and financial institutions.



More than two thirds workers are women in the garments sector

The World Bank report has also made a number of recommendations to enhance the economic empowerment of women in Bangladesh. The recommendations for improving labour force participation and other labour market outcomes include: further lowering of child marriage rate and addressing other barriers to girls' education beyond class ten; improving women's opportunities for technical education and skills in order to groom them for higher paying industrial and technical jobs; addressing the high rates of sexual harassment in workplaces and transports, and improving working conditions for women – especially in the private sector. The recommendations for improving the ownership and control of financial assets include: tackling the patriarchal norms that hinder women's ability to use and control financial services; raising the financial literacy rates of women; increasing the flexibility and expanding the types of financial services available for women; easing documentation and removing procedural barriers; addressing high financial and transaction costs, and enhancing the use of mobile and digital technologies for access to finance by womenfolk.

Recommendations for improving the entrepreneurship status of Bangladeshi women include: enforcing policies and schemes that support female entrepreneurship; maximising the success of business development training; addressing constraints emanating from patriarchal norms; ensuring adequate supply of credit for female entrepreneurs; and addressing poor access to networks and markets faced by women entrepreneurs. Besides, a set of policies should be developed for protection and economic empowerment of women belonging to the ethnic and religious minority communities.

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Dr. Eric delivering speech in the function

season and received a very good yield. But now-a-days, being failure to gain optimum yield again and again due to increased salinity and severe scarce of salt-free water for irrigation, they left cultivation in dry season. As a result, thousands hectares of land are now remained fallow in dry season in the coastal area of Bangladesh.

In this context Australia is extending its cooperation to Bangladesh since 2017 under a collaborative research programme to greening the fallow land of coastal area during dry season. ACIAR (Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research), an Australian government statutory authority, has been utilizing Australian aid to assist their technical know-how for the benefit of agro-based developing countries like Bangladesh. Australia has a strong capacity in agriculture research and development and possessing large agricultural areas in the tropics and sub-tropics.

ACIAR along with KGF (Krishi Gobeshona Foundation) of Bangladesh are implementing projects under a partnership mode since 2017 where Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute (BARI), Bangladesh Wheat and Maize Research Institute (BWMRI), Bangladesh Agricultural University, Agrarian Research Foundation including Australian research partners like University of Western Australia and Australian national research organization – CSIRO are involved.

The main objective of this programme is to develop the salt tolerant as well as stress tolerant crops like wheat, mungbean, grasspea, cowpea, forages, etc. and its production technology in saline soil, so that farm families of coastal area may able to cultivate crops in their salty land during dry season. Bangladesh researchers, especially BARI, BWMRI under technical assistance of Australian institutes are breeding salinity tolerant cultivars, and developing new technologies.

Right now, after harvesting of aman rice, farmers are cultivating mungbean during January-February in 175 thousand hectares of land at Patuakhali, Barguna, Bhola, Pirojpur, and Barishal districts where they are not getting expected yield. In the

research findings, it is observed that farmers can reduce one-third cultivation cost by using BARI developed seeder machine and may ensure 30-40% more yield. By seeder machine, farmers may be able to plowing and laddering the land and in same time seeding the seeds in line in optimum depth and covering the seeds by soil properly.

Cowpea (Felon) is one of the most popular pulse crops for the coastal farm families which one is also very nutritious. Considering the potentiality of cultivating this pulse crops in saline prone and fallow coastal area, with the help of IITA – an international research organisation, it was tested at BARI Barishal research station and also in other areas for the last three years and found some of the varieties are heat and drought resistant, assuming that some varieties are salt tolerant as well.

Breeding of salinity tolerant wheat is another major activity of wheat improvement programmes for coastal area under this project. Bangladesh Wheat and Maize Research Institute (BWMRI) and Australian national research institute – CSIRO are playing the key role to breeding salinity tolerant cultivars, and trying to develop new varieties and technologies since 2017. During 2017-18, 24 wheat genotypes from home and abroad were tested for salinity tolerance in coastal Bangladesh. Scientists from Australia and Bangladesh identified three most potential genotypes as salinity and stress tolerant.

Observing the outstanding performance in the first year experiment, scientists from Australia and Bangladesh have shown their interest to consider more salinity prone area for screening 24 wheat genotypes to find out its salinity tolerance capacity in their second year programme. The project included Koyra and Dacope as the most salinity prone area of Bangladesh.

After establishing research trials at Koyra and Dacope, scientists from Australia



Agriculture Minister Dr. Md. Abdur Razzaque observing the sunflower cultivation field at Dacope upazila in Khulna district

and Bangladesh jointly visited those areas on 6 and 7 March 2019 respectively and again they identified same three varieties as most potential genotypes in terms of salinity tolerance and yield performance. The project again decided and established similar trials in 2019-20 at different salty fields in same locations.

This year, the scientists of both countries again visited Koyra and Dacope on 11 and 12 March 2020 respectively. During their visit, the concerned scientists of Australia and Bangladesh discussed with the local farm families as well as discussed with the local leaders and officials of Agricultural Extension Department for next steps of the project. Based on performance of last couple of years, the BWMRI submitted their recommendations to the National Seed Board for releasing the line BAW 1147 as newly salt tolerant and high yielding wheat variety. This variety may also be appropriate to cultivate in high saline area like Koyra, Dacope, Satkhira, Patuakhali and Barguna.

In coastal area, where there is lack of suitable water for irrigation, farmers can make a small pond measuring 5 feet long, width and in depth and use a thick polythene sheet at the bottom and surroundings of the pond to store rainwater which is enough to cultivate Rabi crops successfully in saline soil during dry season.

Agriculture Minister of Bangladesh Dr. Md. Abdur Razzaque visited Tildanga village of Dacope on 12 March 2020 to see the research outcomes of Australia-Bangladesh collaborative research programmes, where none of any crops was grown during dry season due to increased salinity. During his visit, the minister observed successful potato cultivation in saline soil under zero tillage cultivation technology with straw mulching system, which was a low input production cost technology, supported by ACIAR and KGF and the wheat research trial, established by BWMRI and OFRD Khulna under technical assistance of CSIRO-Australia, and expressed his great satisfaction.

The minister also visited other ACIAR-KGF supported project activities and was excited to see the performance of sunflower and maize in saline soil which was very attractive and unbelievable production in such saline soil. He was astonished when he saw the beautiful green spinach in saltyland.

‘Salt and waterlogged tolerant variety of different crops and its farmers friendly low-cost appropriate technology under a mechanized system is proved as wonderful option to greening the fallow land during dry season of coastal area of Bangladesh’ the Agriculture Minister added.

Dr. Razzaque thanked the scientists of Australia and Bangladesh and expressed his satisfaction to Dr. Eric Huttner of ACIAR and the scientists of KGF for their useful contribution to develop demand driven agro-based technologies for the farm households of coastal area.

It is hoped that the government will come forward to take special initiative about these research findings for the betterment of coastal farm families as well as to overcome food crisis after corona epidemic. The local community leaders also expect that the Ministry of Agriculture can develop a project where local agricultural authorities take the lead role to extend the technology at community level.

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Globalization of Human Life from Here to Eternity

M. Mizanur Rahman

over the world. Different languages between the people have hardly been barring towards concerned business communications and transactions.

‘At present the world is witnessing a rapid change in all fields of human civilization. The world we knew is shrinking fast paving the way for globalization. In the backdrop of powerful trade and business interests political boundaries are tumbling, geographical obstacles are being levelled down and cultural barriers are being won in a highly competitive world of today. Economic integration among regional blocks is emerging one after another; political boundaries are transcended by such collaboration and cooperation among nations, government business houses and social and political and cultural integration. The open sky invasion of the satellite channel and the cable network has brought the world much closer than before. The overall global trade is increasing phenomenally every year and after. In business the process of going global is largely marked by increasing volume of export and import and greater number by licensing, franchising, strategic alliances, joint venture and setting up of foreign subsidiaries by business house.’ Thomas Friedman while describing the trend of globalization is summed it up in one sentence the globalization is ‘farther, faster, cheaper, and deeper.’

Management is dynamic when it is proactive not reactive. A set of managers who smells changes ahead, projects its path and trajectory and stands right there to face it with preparedness of an impending disaster is the one to survive. Those who fail to do so are destined to exit from the corporate world. For today’s managers change has emerged as the only constant and the rests are variable. In the backdrop of this crazy time and crazy world as Tom Pete suggested the life cycle of many products has been reduced many fold into weeks from years. Naturally this change driven growth leaves no complacency for management to book on the sun of their

A very good time rolls on gradually all over the globe in respect of human relation resources. As a matter of fact human efforts throughout the world should be colossal to maintain peace efforts everywhere. Hence none should speak of war at all. What wilderness of beasts get in human mind that makes savagery in no time? Has the educated one put his beastly head all on a sudden into the ferocity of modern war? No. That should not be taken into consideration anyway.

Peace is prerequisite for the development of the people all



new found success as some competitor is waiting round the corner to displace their product and or their business.

Managers of today must always be on guard and ready to adopt change. Sometimes the changes are taking place from within sometimes the organizations are being swept away by changes from around and environment. Fortune smiles on the companies, which can anticipate the wind of change and place their organization and product in line with that. Those who fail to do that become a memory of the past and soon pass into oblivion.



Human Resources Management accordingly is now responsible for change management. Managing change has become an essential activity of HRM. As a matter of fact, HRM is supposed to work with the mind-set of the employees through training and development.

If we look at the mobility of the



About 300,000 Bangladeshi workers migrate to different countries every year

workforce due to globalization we find a remarkable change-taking place not only in Bangladesh but also throughout the world. Like the flight of capital labour is also flying at a slower pace. At present about 80.9 million workers are out in the foreign land. Chinese workers are working in 160 countries of the world and so are Indians, Pakistanis, and Bangladeshis. Man power export from Bangladesh is now major source of foreign export earnings. Remittance from abroad by Bangladeshi workers amounts to more than 3 billion dollar per year.

In this age of cutting edge skill, competition is the name of the game and management must be dynamic and ready to face the changes squarely. This ability to adjudge to the changing environment makes or breaks the company. Changes might creep in silently or it may come abruptly swamping the organization like an avalanche and in both cases management must not remain unprepared.

Ours in Bangladesh manpower is the rich possession which should be prepared to face the modern world of craft of technological abilities towards major source of earning to make the people and the country rich and prosperous. To this effect our benevolent democratic government does the needful through our manpower and natural resources.

With this end in view I salute the people of the world here with a few lines-

In Expectation: New Year's Day *1st January 2020

Everyone expects peace and happiness on earth
everywhere every day.
Let it start on this New Year's Day.
We may not remain on earth forever.



Bangladeshi labour force working at construction site in Dubai

So why don't we expect love and care
since birth for each other here?
Let's pledge for peace from today
and no more war.

- M. Mizanur Rahman

We are surely to make up our mind to do away with any sort of warfare henceforth for the sake of living with the sense of mutual security for peaceful life with honor and respect for each and every one of the people on earth.

We must perceive that God's creations are enormous and perennial all over the universe that can hardly be perceived by human beings. When we cannot create anything we like, naturally, we have no right to destroy anything that's created by God for the benefit of his created beings.

When we have been learning what Almighty One beyond our physical apprehension is creating on and often, we under any circumstances should destroy those beneficial creations for mankind. Hence our worldly knowledge should be applied for the benefit of mankind only as perceived by the great Creator above all of us.

Reference: The Gems in Management by Dr. M. Hafiz Ahmed

The author of this article is a poet, essayist, translator and columnist



Online Education During Corona Pandemic


Parom Guha Neogi


The world is now oppressed by the corona pandemic while corona viruses is still expanding throughout the country and infecting people every day. Except educational institutes like school-college-universities, the government of Bangladesh has opened all offices, transports, business centers, shops, mill-industries under special consideration in a limited scale since 31st March 2020.


No one knows, how long corona pandemic will continue. Most of the countries throughout the world are now observing lockdown situation which is still extending day by day, even month after month. The World Health Organization (WHO) predicted that the corona pandemic may more worsen the situation in days to come.


Being a most densely populated country in the world, Bangladesh is very risky to covid-19. Due to Corona pandemic, all educational institutions in Bangladesh including rest of the world are closed down for an indefinite period to


**PRACTICES
IN
TEACHING
ONLINE**


 Set the camera at eye-level. Use a tripod or monopod with the camera. In case of laptops, increase its height by placing it on top of a box or a high table.


 Make sure to check your microphone. Ask the students if they can hear properly at the beginning. Adjust volume as per their feedback.


 Show funny images, memes and movie characters so that students don't get distracted from the class


 Use Google Form for taking feedback


 Combine Google Classroom and a Face book group for smoother communication.


Smile, maintain eye contact and show enthusiasm 

Make sure the lessons are interactive, Use PowerPoint slides. Ask questions and award students if they answer correctly 

Use visual content and break down one lesson into smaller chunks 

Practice in front of the camera for a few minutes and watch the recording afterwards 

Utilise Google Classroom for pre-recorded videos which the students could watch anytime they want. 



Online Class



A student of Dhaka Imperial College participates online zoom class (left). A teacher delivering lecture for the online class in college campus (right)

control spreading of corona viruses. In such situation, students of the whole world are now out of their studies since March 2020 which is affecting the total education system seriously.

According to website sources, as of May 2020, more than 1.72 billion students of 186 countries are currently out of studies due to closures of their educational institutions. In Bangladesh the educational institutes have remained closed since 17th March while the Prime Minister announced that all educational institutes might remain closed till September 2020, if the Covid-19 situation remains unchanged.

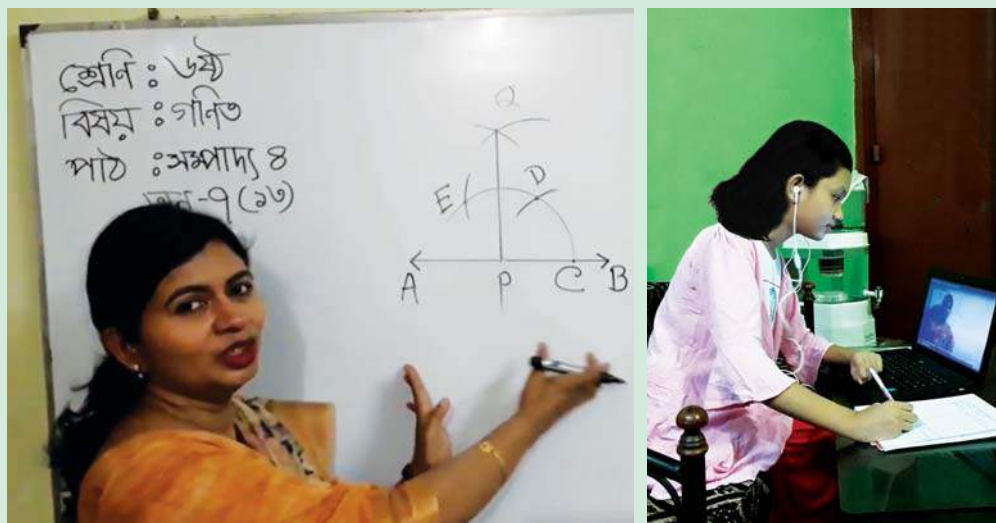
As a student, we are very much worried about our on-going studies as well as our future life and livelihoods. Most of the students do not want their semester to be extended for a long time. Following the Prime Minister's statement, a number of private education institutes launched online education to continue academic activities. The UNESCO also recommended the use of distance learning programmes while teachers can use to reach learners remotely which will limit the disruption of education.

The Ministry of Education of Bangladesh is thinking about introduce of online education system during corona pandemic. In this connection, the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education are up-loading video classes online with an objective to keeping the students engaged with online academic activities. They are developing portal 'Ghore Boshe Shikhi (Learning at home)' for the primary students, which classes will be uploaded, so that the students can check those online anywhere. A number of private universities and colleges have launched virtual classes as test case where it was found that the participation in such initiatives are getting positive feedback in favour of students to resume their study in corona pandemic under a different education management.

Meanwhile, our government has taken a great initiative to keep all the secondary level students in touch with academic activities and has decided to take all the classes online through Sangsad TV. A total of 35 recorded class lectures will be telecasted every day. The authority is expecting more than 10 million students to watch lessons.

Moreover, Education Minister Dipu Moni requested all public and private universities to continue their academic activities in online during corona pandemic. In a meeting, it was decided that the University Grants Commission (UGC) will develop a guideline on how to conduct online education system by the private universities in current situation. In order to overcome the losses of very valuable academic year, the government of Bangladesh is trying to consider another possible way to educate the students via video conferencing as online education system.

As most of the students are using smart phone and having internet facilities, they

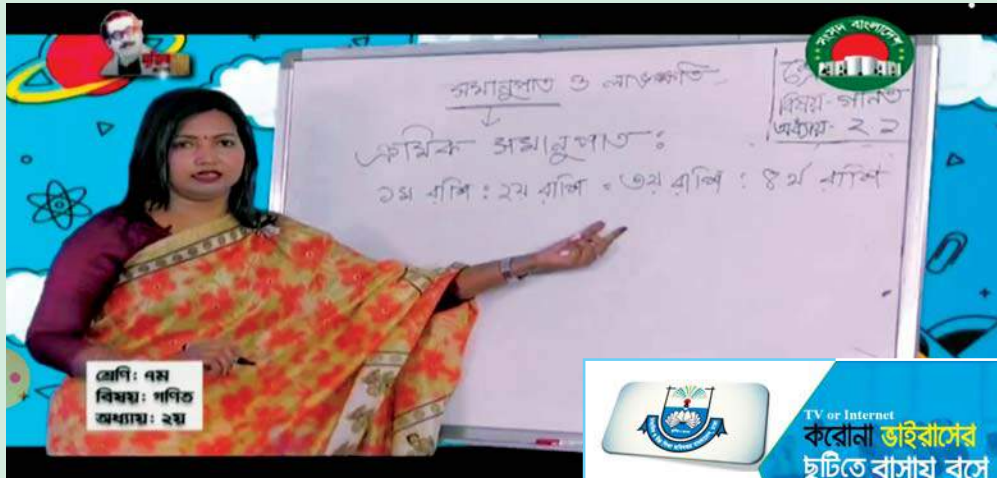


A teacher of Viqarunnisa Noon School & College conducting online class on youtube channel (left). A 6th grade student of the institution attends the class (right)

can avail of the online education system. Many students throughout the world are adopting with the online education system in lockdown situation. Bangladesh University of Professionals (BUP) is helping the students and ensuring mobile internet packages, so that the students can keep them engaged in online education system.

Right now, around 60 private universities are conducting their classes through online system. It is fact that the online classes are not perfectly fulfilling the requirements of students compared to face to face classes. It is also fact that it is not so easy to cover all 59 million students of Bangladesh in this system.

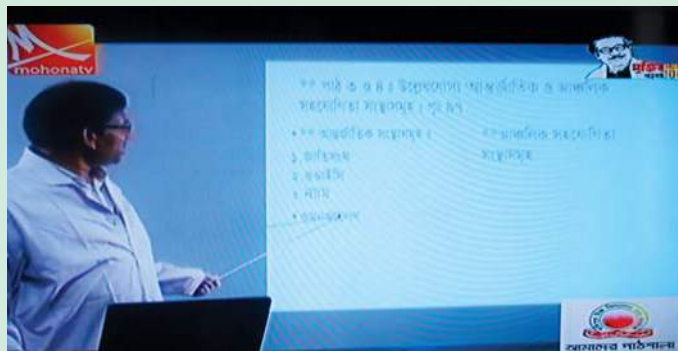
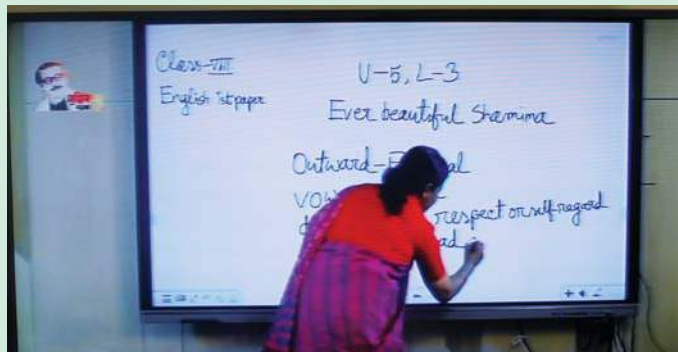
One of the most important tools of online education system is internet facilities. Lack of a stable internet connection may disrupt the online education system. Students who are practicing online classes are facing serious problems while following the lectures as the network disrupting very frequently.



Online Classes telecast on Sangsad TV



The students believe that the digitalization in education system will accelerate online education which will become an integral component of education after a while. A renowned professor of Jordan University Dr. Amjad having vast experiences on online teaching, who is using 'Lark' to teach his students, pointed



Online classes broadcast on different television channels

that the online teaching system changed the way of teaching which enables him to reach out of his students more efficiently and effectively through chat groups, video meeting, voting and also document sharing during corona pandemic. He also wish to stick to 'Lark', even after corona pandemic. He strongly believes that traditional offline learning and e-learning can go hand by hand.

Under these circumstances, it is our concern that the government of



Students attend online classes at home on regular basis during lockdown situation

Bangladesh should come-up immediately with new ideas about our on-going and future studies during corona pandemic. It is our observation in the last two months that a number of offices/companies are continuing their services effectively through internet system while the persons are staying their residence. Even, we are observing almost in every days in television, our Prime Minister is communicating with different offices in the capital and district levels through video conferences at this moment and giving necessary instructions to the concerned authorities.

In a sense, it may be pointed out that the country is now administered by the video conferences and internet system which seems very effective and useful. As a general student, we are very happy to see - how nicely our Prime Minister is communicating with the cabinet ministers, policy makers, political leaders and other administrators including civil societies, doctors, nurses, police, media personnel etc. through digital system. Being a student of computer science and engineering, it is my wider understanding that similar approach can be replicated in our educational institutions. If online learning process can play an effective role in our education system, it is incumbent upon all of us to explore its full potential.

However, the government of Bangladesh may come-up with appropriate digital equipment for the students with ensuring quality internet facilities. The online education system does not require much logistics. It is fact that the whole process will take some time to adjust the new approach. At the beginning, we may face some problems due to lack of experiences and inadequate knowledge about operating the devices and systems. After a while, when technical know-how will be improved through practicing, then students and teachers both will be adjusted and adopted the system. As such the on-going education year will not be hampered anymore during this lockdown situation.

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Super Cyclone Amphan-driven New Birds in Bangladesh

Professor Dr. A N M Aminoor Rahman



A Long-tailed Skua
Courtesy : Md. Nur Islam

Super cyclonic storm Amphan was a powerful and deadly tropical cyclone, which caused widespread damage in Bangladesh and Eastern India in May 2020. It was the strongest tropical cyclone to strike the Ganges Delta since Sidr of the 2007 and the first super cyclonic storm to occur in the Bay of Bengal since the 1999 Odisha cyclone. Amphan is also the costliest cyclone ever recorded in the North Indian Ocean, which caused over US\$ 13 billion of damage, surpassing the record held by Cyclone Nargis of 2008. The super cyclone Amphan hit the Sundarbans coast at a speed of 155-165 km per hour that carried some pelagic or oceanic birds deep into the mainland Bangladesh and West Bengal with its sheer force, some experts opined.

Pelagic birds that spend most of their life in oceans and move towards coasts only to breed have been sighted by the hundreds for the first time in the southern districts of West Bengal after cyclone Amphan battered the region on May 20 according to Hindustan times. A total of five species of pelagic birds were also sighted in mainland Bangladesh by the birdwatchers and photographers. Bird watchers and scientists said that it is rare for these oceanic birds to venture deep into the mainland. In West Bengal, among the pelagic birds sighted were different types of Frigate birds such as the Greater, Lesser and Christmas Frigate birds, Wilson's Storm Petrel, Sooty Tern, Brown Noddy and Short-tailed Shearwater. While in Bangladesh Sooty Tern, Wedge-tailed Shearwater, Wilson's Storm Petrel, Bridled Tern and Long-tailed Skua were sighted. There have been many cyclones but Amphan was a different experience as it driven a number of species of deep oceanic birds that never happened earlier.

Of these five new species of Amphan-driven pelagic birds in Bangladesh four were sighted in the Padma river of Rajshahi and one in Lalmatia of Dhaka. The

next day (21st May) after the devastating hit of the cyclone, Dr. Mainul Ahsan Shamim, a Medical Officer of the Rajshahi Diabetic Association and a bird photographer went out with two of his friends to Padma Chars (bars/small islands) for capturing some lifestyle pictures, but due to rain they were forced to move to the Jahajghat, Talaimari, Rajshahi. While in the river, suddenly his enthusiastic eyes discovered three flying black birds, which he had never seen before. At around 2:00 pm, he clicked but failed to capture any photographs as the camera's memory card was full. After they reached to the Jahajghat his friends left, but he waited alone in the river bank for the birds to reappear. After a while, he watched the pelagic Sooty Terns were flying again on the river and he succeeded in taking the photographs of a very unusual bird species for the first time in the country. While Dr. Shamim was photographing at Rajshahi, a teenager foreign birdwatcher, Seth Miller, from Lalmatia, Dhaka saw another unusual pelagic bird flying and was able to capture a photograph of Wedge-tailed Shearwater, another new bird for Bangladesh. The next day at around 1:00 pm, Dr. Shamim rushed to the Padma River with the birder boatman Nur Islam to search whether Amphan has chased any other pelagic bird species to the river. They searched here and there, and finally found another three species namely Bridled Tern, Long-tailed Skua and Wilson's Storm Petrel near the Bot-tola Ghat of the Padma River. These five new species of birds of Bangladesh are described in the present article.

Sooty Tern

The 706th bird of the National Bird List of Bangladesh is the Sooty Tern (*Onychoprion fuscatus*) of the Laridae family. It is also known as Wideawake Tern, Ewa Ewa, Kaveka, Egg-bird and Whale-bird. This tropical oceanic bird that sleeps on the wing, returning to land only for breeding-on islands throughout the equatorial zone. Because the species was never seen in the country, it has no Bangla name, therefore, I am proposing 'Kalche Gancheel'. Worldwide the



Courtesy : Md. Mainul Ahsan Shamim

A Sooty Tern flying over the Padma River at Rajshahi City

species is very common and Least Concern, but in Bangladesh it can be considered as a rare vagrant.

The Sooty Tern is a large bird measuring 33-36 centimetres (cm) and weigh 150-240 grams (g). The wings and deeply forked tail are long. Upperpart is dark black and underpart is white. Legs and bill are black. Juveniles are scaly grey above and below. The bird is darker-backed than the Bridled, and has a broader white forehead and no pale neck collar.

While most terns inhabit marshes and shores, the Sooty has the life of a true seabird. It is a shallow hunter, forages by dipping down in flight to take fish from surface of water or may take flying fish from above the surface. The bird rarely or never plunges into water for prey below surface. Voices are sharp and loud 'wideawake---' or 'kek-kek-kek---' usually heard at colonies and roosting sites.

Sooty spends most of its life at sea, coming into land for breeding. It arrive on land about two months before the eggs are laid, choosing to make its nesting colonies on coral or rock-covered islands. Nests mostly built on open sandy beaches with sparse vegetation. Courtship takes place both in the air and on the ground. One, rarely 2-3 whitish, variably marked with brown, lavender, gray, sometimes black eggs are laid and incubated by both sexes for 28-30 days. Once hatched, the parents will bring back regurgitated fish for the chick for the next two months, at which point the young will fledge. After the first flight, the juvenile stays around the colony for another 2 or 3 weeks; the colony then heads back to the sea. The juvenile become sexually mature at around 6 years. Lifespan is 11 years.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater

The Wedge-tailed Shearwater (*Ardenna pacifica*) was listed 707th bird of the country's National Bird List, which was recorded flying over Lalmatia area of Dhaka city by Seth Miller on 21 May 2020. It is a medium-large shearwater in



A Flying Wedge-tailed Shearwater

the seabird family Procellariidae which is also known as Black Burrower, Wedge-tailed Mutton-bird, Mourning-bird or wedge-tailed Mutton-bird. The bird is widely distributed throughout the tropical Pacific and Indian oceans. As the bird has no Bangla name, therefore it can be proposed as 'Kilok Panikata'.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater is the largest tropical shearwater, and occurs in two colour morphs: dark-bellied

and pale-bellied. The pale morphs predominate in the North Pacific, the dark morph elsewhere. The pale morph has grey-brown plumage on the back, head, and upper wing, and whiter plumage below. The darker morph has a small head, slender body, and long tail. The plumage is blackish-brown, with the feathers of the back and wings edged in slightly lighter brown. The chin, throat and forehead are brownish-grey, with the underpart dusky. The slender bill is dark slate grey and legs are salmon pink, with the legs set far back on the body as an adaptation for swimming. The sexes are alike.

The species is usually solitary at sea, but sometimes form small feeding flocks at sea off colonies. The bird feeds mainly on fishes, squids, insects, jellyfishes, prawns etc., and is attracted to fishing vessels. It forages by contact-dipping, surface-seizing and sometimes deep plunging, exceptionally diving up to 66 metre (m) below the surface. On breeding grounds, it makes a wailing moan 'ka-whooh-ahh---'.

Wedge-tailed Shearwater breeds on tropical or subtropical islands. Breeding birds arrive from October with mating taking place during October to November. After mating, they return to sea to feed for several weeks before egg-laying and incubation. The monogamous bird lays single large white egg in December. Nest is usually in a burrow up to 2.5 m long, but may be on the ground under an overhanging rock, in a small cave, or under vegetation. Both adults dig the burrow using their bill and feet. Incubation takes 50-54 days and shared by both adults. The chick grows much larger than adults during the nestling period. Adults typically depart on migration 1-2 weeks before the chicks fledge 90 days-old. It becomes sexually mature at around 4 years of age. Lifespan is 18-19 years.

Bridled Tern

The Bridled Tern (*Onychoprion anaethetus*) that was recorded along Padma River of Rajshahi Division by Mainul Ahsan Shamim and Nur Islam on 22 May 2020 has become the 708th member of the National Bird List. Like the Sooty it is also



Courtesy : Md. Maroof Rana

A Bridled Tern flying over the Padma River at Rajshahi City

a seabird of the same family Laridae. It is a widespread and fairly common in tropical oceans. The Atlantic subspecies breeds in Mexico, the Caribbean and West Africa; other races occur around the Arabian Peninsula and in Southeast Asia and Australasia.

Bridled Tern is elegant, heavily built medium-sized tropical terns, with long slender wings and a long, deeply forked tail. It looks similar to the Sooty but is smaller and grey above rather than pure black. Length is 30-32 cm and weigh 95-150 g. Upperpart is dark grey and underpart is white. The forehead and eyebrows are white, as is a striking collar on the hind-neck. Bill and legs are black. Juvenile is scaly grey above and pale below.

The Bridled is usually found alone, offshore, often far from land and, characteristically, may roost on floating objects from coconuts to fishing boats. This pelagic feeder of tropical waters feeds mainly in the open sea, taking small fishes, squids and crustaceans. It forages mostly by flying low, hovering, and dipping down to take prey items from surface of water and seldom plunge-dives into water. The bird is generally silent at sea, but can be noisy at breeding colonies.

The species breeds in isolated pairs or in colonies, often with other terns on rocky islands. The breeding season begins in spring, birds usually arrive at the colonies from August to November and depart after a successful season in April or early May. It nests on the ground, usually under vegetation or in rocky areas that provide shelter. Usually one (rarely 2-3) pale buff, spotted with dark brown or reddish-brown egg is laid. Incubation is done by both parents for 28-30 days. Young may leave nest after a few days and hide in nearby cover. Both parents feed young, regurgitating small fish. Age at first flight is about 55-63 days; may become independent about a month later and sexually mature at the age of four. Lifespan is more than 11 years.

Long-tailed Skua

The Long-tailed Skua (*Stercorarius longicaudus*) or Long-tailed Jaeger is an oceanic bird in the Skua family Stercoraridae. This smallest member of the family



Courtesy : Md. Nur Islam

A Long-tailed Skua

became the 109th bird of National Bird List. Two other members namely Arctic Skua and Pomarine Skua from the same family were sighted earlier in the Bay of Bengal. So, the third bird from the same family can be named as 'Lomba-leji Joldosshu Pakhi'. The resident bird of the high Arctic of Eurasia, Alaska and Canada winters in the South Atlantic and Pacific. It could be considered as a rare vagrant in Bangladesh.

The Long-tailed Skua is a small, slim, lightly-built bird with long, tern-like narrow wings and a small head and bill. It has two very long, flexible, tapering tail-streamers, hence its common name. Its length is 38-58 cm of which 29 cm can be made up by the tail including 15 cm tail streamers of the summer adult. It weighs 230-444 g. This species is unmistakable as an adult, with grey back, white belly, dark bill, yellow cheeks and nape, black primary wing feathers, black cap on head and very long streaming tail-feathers. Juvenile is difficult to separate from Parasitic Skua over the sea. The sexes are alike. Non-breeding adult either lacks or has only short, pointed tail-streamers.

It is a strong-flying piratical seabird allied to gulls, and spend almost entire life out at sea, returning to dry land only for breeding. It is more solitary than Arctic Skua, and feeds on the surface more often than it pirates food from other seabirds. Often dip to the surface like a tern. Mainly feeds on small fishes. During the breeding season, it may kills small mammals. Voices is a harsh 'kreeah---' cry at the ocean.

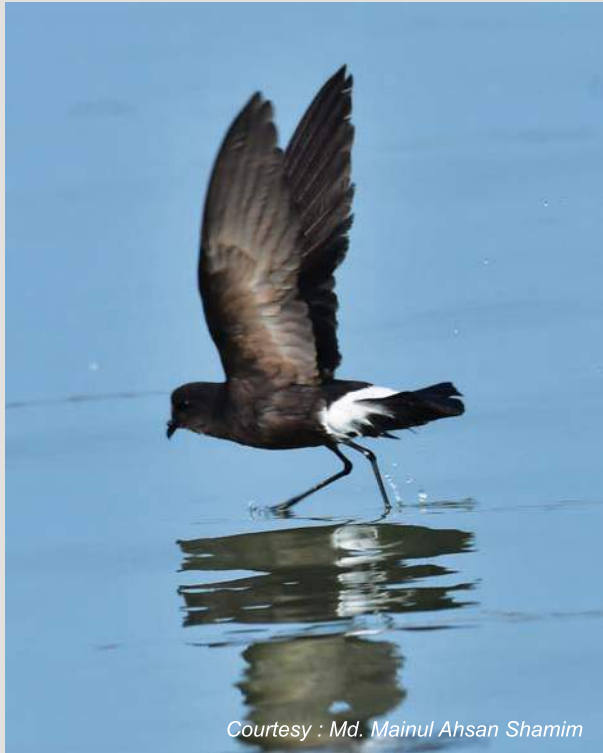
Long-tailed Skua breeds singly or in loose colonies. Breeding period is from June to August. The monogamous bird lays 1-2 eggs in a shallow plant-lined nest on the ground and incubate for 24 days and female takes part more than the male. Chick is able to leave the nest about 2 days after hatching, which allows it to run and hide in vegetation to avoid predators. Most of the rearing is done by the female while the male handle the bulk of the hunting and territory defense duties. Male usually brings and regurgitates food and female feeds the chick. The juvenile often remains with parents 1-3 weeks after fledging at 22-27 days. Lifespan is 12-13 years.

Wilson's Storm Petrel

Wilson's Storm Petrel (*Oceanites oceanicus*) or Wilson's Petrel is a small oceanic bird of the Austral Storm Petrel family Oceanitidae became the 710th bird of our National Bird List. It is one of the most abundant bird species in the world and has a circumpolar distribution mainly in the seas of the southern hemisphere but extending northwards during the summer of the northern hemisphere. It is strictly pelagic outside the breeding season and difficult to see from land. Only in severe storms might this species be pushed into headlands. Worldwide it is evaluated as Least Concern, therefore, in Bangladesh it could be considered as a rare vagrant.

Wilson's Storm Petrel is a small seabird measuring only 16.0-8.5 cm in length with a 38-42 cm wingspan and weighs only 40 g. It is mainly black with a white band across the rump and a grey bar on the inner part of the upper-wing. Bill and legs are black, with bright yellow webs between the toes.

The species fly over the water with steady wing beats and feeds in a typical Storm Petrel fashion by hovering and pattering slowly over the water picking small prey items from the surface, very rarely making shallow dives. It feeds predominantly on planktonic invertebrates close to the surface. It may, however, sometimes takes small crustaceans and fishes, small squids, marine worms and other small



Courtesy : Md. Mainul Ahsan Shamim

A Wilson's Storm Petrel pattering on the Padma River at Rajshahi City

organisms. At sea they are generally silent, but a loud wheezy or nasal grating 'aark-aark' given by birds on the ground in their nesting colonies.

Wilson's Storm Petrels breeds in colonies around Antarctica in ice-free rocky crevices and rocky scree and around southern South America. The monogamous bird's pair bonds usually retained from year to year. Nesting is generally from November to May. Male may arrive at nesting sites first, and unmated male may sit near nest entrance and call to defend site and attract female. Nest site is in crevice or hole in cliff, among rock piles, or in burrow. Nest chamber usually lined with feathers and moss. Female lays a single white egg, usually with reddish-brown dots at larger end. Incubation

is by both sexes, usually 40-50 days, sometimes 38-59. Young is fed by both parents. The chick remains at nest for about 60 days and is fed on krill, fishes and amphipods. Young is independent of parents after leaving nest and going to ocean.

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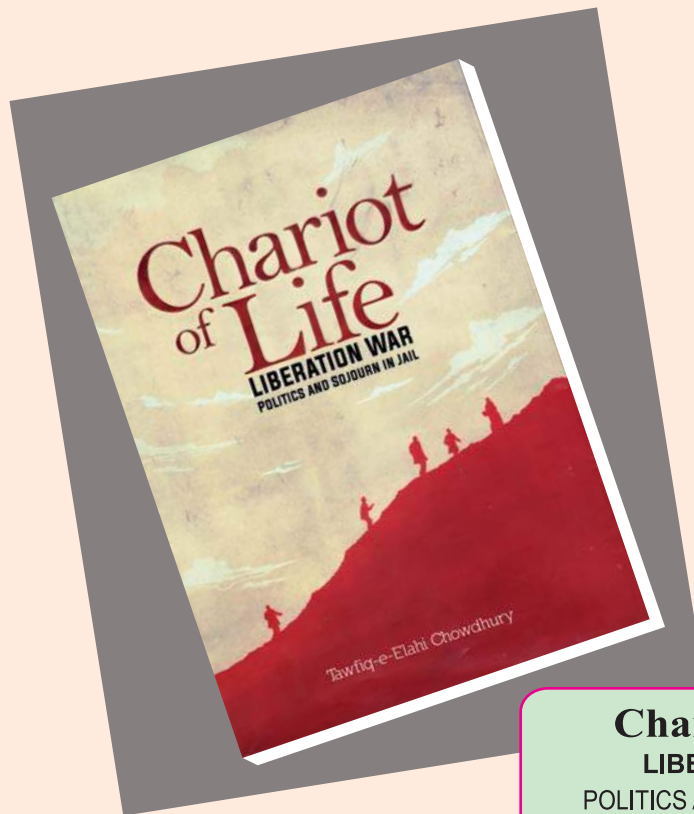
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A Magnificent Memoir with Rich Literary Flavour

Reviewed by Helal Ahmed

Dr. Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury Bir Bikram was one of the key organisers of the oath-taking ceremony of Bangladesh Government-in-Exile at Boidyanathtala (later renamed Mujibnagar) under the then Meherpur sub-division on 17 April 1971. Granted the rank of a Captain, he was later decorated with the title 'Bir Bikram' for his gallantry during the war of liberation. He also served the country's successive governments as a member of the elite civil service for over three decades and later joined the present government of



Chariot of Life:

**LIBERATION WAR,
POLITICS AND SOJOURN IN JAIL**

By Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury Bir Bikram

Publisher: Penguin Random House 2019
Shrabon Prokashani 2018



Dr. Tawfiq-e-Elahi Chowdhury Bir Bikram

Bangladesh in 2009 as Adviser to the Prime Minister on power, energy and mineral resources.

Consequently, when he writes an autobiography chronicling his involvement in the liberation war as a frontline freedom fighter and also paints the period he spent in jail during the rule of last caretaker government in 2008, then that carries lot of weight with the potential of becoming a part of Bangladesh's history. He certainly has not disappointed the readership by penning down one of the most outstanding and insightful autobiographical pieces in English by any former civil servant of Bangladesh.

What strikes the readers most while reading this book is the deftness with which the author has interwoven the

present times with the past in a single stream of variegated consciousness, thereby endowing it with an exhilarating literary flavour! There is also drama and suspense in every bend of the memoir as the author switches from one parallel stream to another, from his incarceration in Dhaka central jail to the liberation war, thereby making it taste more like a fast-paced novel instead of an autobiography.

The book opens with a prologue that provides an overall glimpse of the author's life since his birth in Sylhet in 1945, up to his retirement from civil service in 2002, and then the idyllic times he was spending during post-retirement phase till 2007. This is followed by the chapter that provides the background for his subsequent imprisonment on cooked up charges during the rule of caretaker government (CTG) in 2008, as he ignored the dictates of the military authorities to falsely testify against Sheikh Hasina. The next chapter 'Fractured existence' lands him in jail in January 2008 after being denied bail by the lower court, and the succeeding one introduces the readership to his life in the cell 'Rupsha' of central jail. The subsequent chapter 'Parallel world' concludes the first part of the book by describing the first day of court-hearing alongside Sheikh Hasina as well as some glimpses of the country's fascinating history from the bygone eras.

The second part starts with the chapter titled 'Shadows of past and footprints of liberation war' that dwells on Chowdhury's continuation of jail-life based on another cooked-up case despite the appellate division upholding the High Court verdict to grant him bail in the previous case. This is accompanied by his retracing of history including the language martyrs' day on 21 February during conversations with cell-mates. In the next chapter the author recounts the days of the liberation war as well as its background and succeeding period, which is full of valuable insights about the roles played by the then leadership including

Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Various inmates of the cell including a cat 'Skitty' – named and kept as a pet by the writer, are introduced in the last chapter of part-2 titled 'Prison life in limbo'. It also addresses some philosophical concepts like destiny and the language of animals, as well as the historical episode of the Persian beauty Meherunnesa (later Empress Noor Jahan) who briefly stayed in a Dhaka fort (later turned into jail) with her first husband Sher Afghan, but returned to Agra as a widow following the latter's death in a duel.

Comprising four chapters, the third part of the book covers the period March-April of 2008 as well as the parallel events in 1971. The first chapter 'Awakening of a nation' dwells on Chowdhury's ideological upbringing both in the family as well as during his days as a lecturer of economics at Dhaka University in the mid-1960s; justification of Bangabandhu's 6-point demands in line with the Lahore resolution of March 1940; induction of the writer into the elite Civil Service of Pakistan (CSP) after topping the list from the eastern province in 1968; training and probationary period in the civil service; posting as the Sub-Divisional Officer (SDO) of Meherpur in late 1970; the non-cooperation movement of March 1971 and he turning up as a witness to the 7 March speech of Bangabandhu; the launching of armed attack by the Pakistani military against unarmed civilians on the night of 25 March followed by Bangabandhu's declaration of independence; and Chowdhury's return to Meherpur to take up the fight against the Pakistanis.

The next chapter titled 'De facto independence unparalleled in history' describes a period of stagnation in jail-life alongside steps taken by the writer as the administrative head of Meherpur sub-division in late March 1971 to mobilise the local population, including paramilitary forces, in revolting against the Pakistanis. In the following chapter titled 'First smell of victory', the writer recounts on 25 March 2008 the episodes of late March 1971 when large swathes of territories in greater Kushtia, Pabna, Faridpur and Jashore came under the control of freedom fighters for some time. This was followed by Pakistani air attacks and an inevitable retreat in early April by the ill-equipped freedom fighters. Meanwhile, Chowdhury had established contacts with the Indian administration and this was helpful when he escorted the war-time Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmad to the Indian side of the border in early April.

Titled 'Swearing in of the government', the last chapter of part-3 switches back to the swearing-in ceremony of the Bangladesh Government-in-Exile at a bordering village of Meherpur on 17 April 1971; in parallel, news reaches the writer at the Dhaka court that he has been granted bail by the highest court on 17 April 2008. Chowdhury describes in great detail how he and the police officer Mahboob organized the whole Mujibnagar program including the presentation of guard of honour and the swearing-in-ceremony of the Bangladesh Government that included the Acting President Syed Nazrul Islam, the Prime Minister Tajuddin Ahmad and some members of the cabinet in presence of many local and foreign journalists. He fondly recollects the parting words of Tajuddin before he left Mujibnagar, 'You are not a witness, but a part of history, Tawfiq'. But the chapter ends in a disaster for Chowdhury when he steps out of jail following the arrival of his bail papers that leads to his re-arrest the moment he ventures outside jail; he is then put back in the same prison-cell after a day's outing, after the magistrate

pronounces his imprisonment again on the fictitious charge of inciting young men against the caretaker government at Dhaka's Farm Gate.

The fourth and last part of the memoir covers the period from end of April to August, both during 1971 and 2008. The first chapter dwells on the writer's war-time experience as a field-level commander as well as the depositing of truck-load of money brought from Meherpur to Kolkata in April 1971 for use by the Bangladesh Government. In parallel to that, charges are framed against him in the court on 18 May 2008 and a detailed written statement is submitted to the judge by Chowdhury defending himself with substantive arguments against the ludicrous charges brought against him. The next chapter dwells on Chowdhury's role as a sub-sector commander of Sector-8 while holding the rank of a Captain, and escorting the US Senator Edward Kennedy and a TV team of British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) to the war-zone during 1971.

The cross examinations in the court of 2008 continues alongside those episodes from the liberation war. The third chapter 'Towards deliverance' touches on the last days of Chowdhury's life in jail as well as the court proceedings, his encounter with the arrested former army chief General Mustafiz in 2008 (who was soon to die), and the GOC of the Indian army's 9 Division Major General Dalvir Singh as well as Bangali sector commander Major Manzur in 1971. The latter episode was followed by his fresh posting near Kushtia for the remainder of the liberation war, while he could finally step out of jail on bail as a free man on 21 August 2008. The epilogue of the book touches on his days since 2008, including his joining the government as an adviser in 2009 and the success stories of his two daughters in the USA.

Overall, the book is a fascinating read that switches from one theme to another in a single stream of consciousness reflecting the indomitable spirit of a freedom fighter cum scholar, who has outshone most of his contemporaries in the quest for a fuller life for himself and his nation. Having distinguished himself with a PhD from Harvard University in the past, the writer has made the memoir immensely rich through incorporating historical anecdotes, philosophical insights and socioeconomic facts – both in relation to the global and local contexts. The only mentionable demerit, if any, is some rare spelling and punctuation errors that can be easily corrected in the next edition. Besides, simpler and more lucid words could have been used at places instead of applying difficult ones.

On a personal note, the author was the external examiner of the present scribe during an advanced course on economics at the Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies back in 1992. But despite blasting the CSPs in the research paper titled 'Bureaucracy as an Agent of Underdevelopment: The Case of Bangladesh', the latter was given first-class marks by the former. That only indicates the author's openness to criticism, tolerance of dissenting views, as well as impartiality and objectivity in the judgement and evaluation of people and circumstances. The book is undoubtedly a masterpiece both as a memoir having huge bearing for retracing the nation's true history, as well as an exceptional literary work that is quite novel and unique in both its approach and content.

Helal Ahmed is a freelance columnist

DEVELOPMENT CHRONOLOGY

Major National Events

April-June

4 April, 2020

Dealing with COVID-19 emergencies

WB approves \$100m soft loan for BD

The World Bank (WB) on April 4 approved US\$100 million soft loan under a fast-track facility to help Bangladesh prevent the spread of Covid-19 pandemic while upgrading health services.

Under the Covid-19 emergency response and pandemic preparedness project, the ministry of health and family affairs will work towards tackling the spread of new coronavirus, the bank said in a statement.

The fund would be utilised for upgrading laboratories with trained staff and diagnostic equipment at the hospitals, procuring testing kits and reagents while making health facilities accessible to the wider section of the community.

The ministry would rehabilitate and upgrade public hospitals in divisions and districts, including medical colleges, the Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control and Research, or IEDCR, in Dhaka, and the Bangladesh Institute of Tropical and Infectious Diseases in Chittagong.

The WB fund would also help set up new isolation wards and ramp up intensive care units, procure personal protective equipment, medical equipment, including ventilators, and medicines.

The project will help to improve medical waste management and disposal, and water and sanitation systems in the designated health facilities, the official added.

Source: The Financial Express

5 April, 2020

PM unveils new stimulus packages of Tk 677.50b

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on April, 5 announced fourfold new stimulus



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced a work plan to overcome the economic blow from the Covid-19 pandemic at Ganobhaban on April 5

package of Tk 677.5 billion to overcome the possible economic shock from the ongoing shutdown enforced due to the deadly COVID-19 outbreak.

With the previously announced Tk 50 billion stimulus package, the amount of the whole package now stands at Tk 727.50 billion.

The announcement came from a press conference held by the Prime Minister at her official residence Ganobhaban.

It was arranged to brief journalists about the possible impacts of the coronavirus outbreak on the national economy and the ways devised to face the challenges in the coming days.

The government will increase public expenditure to keep up growth momentum and will discourage officials' foreign visits to cut costs, she said.

Fiscal packages and low-cost loans for businesses, including small and medium enterprises, will be prioritised in an effort to limit the economic fallout from the outbreak.

Social safety net programmes will be enacted to ensure the basic needs of people living below the poverty line, said Prime Minister. These programmes will include the sale of rice at Tk 10 per kg and the distribution of free food and cash among affected groups. *Source: The Financial Express*



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a video conference with the officials of Chattogram and Sylhet divisions to coordinate the ongoing activities to prevent the spread of Covid-19 on April 6

6 April, 2020

PM's perks for doctors, nurses

The government has decided to give incentives for doctors, nurses, health workers and other employees of the Republic who engaged themselves with bravery in the war against COVID-19, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced on April 6.

'I want to reward those who have been involved directly in the fight against COVID-19 since March', she said.

The Prime Minister said this while delivering her introductory speech in a video conference with the public representatives and public officials from 15 districts of Chattogram and Sylhet divisions from her official residence Ganobhaban.

She criticised a section of doctors for not providing treatment to patients on the pretext of keeping themselves safe from COVID-19.

"This incentive is not for those who fled for their own safety and left patients going from door to door for treatment," she said.

The Prime Minister said that if doctors, nurses and health workers want to get incentive they have to work first. *Source: The Financial Express*

12 April, 2020

PM's Tk 50b stimulus package for farmers

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on April 12 announced a new stimulus package of Tk 50 billion to provide financial assistance for small and medium farmers in rural areas to boost agricultural production in order to offset the impact of Covid-19.

'Bangladesh Bank will formulate a new refinancing scheme of Tk 50 billion to pump running capital into the agricultural sector. We'll create this stimulus package only for the agricultural sector. We'll disburse money from this fund to farmers at only 5.0 per cent interest'. The Prime Minister said this while delivering her introductory speech in a videoconference from her official residence Ganobhaban with government officials from 16 districts under Khulna and Barishal divisions.

The money from this fund will be disbursed among small and medium farmers, including that of poultry and dairy sector in rural areas, she said.

Besides, the existing disbursement of loans with 4.0 per cent interest rate for spice items will continue, the Prime Minister added.

Sheikh Hasina simultaneously announced allocation of an increased amount of Tk 90 billion as a subsidy in fertiliser in the next budget as part of government strategy to minimise the impact of the deadly virus on economy by enhancing yield.

The Prime Minister also declared an allocation of Tk 2.0 billion for harvesting and mechanisation of agriculture and Tk 1.50 billion for seeds and seedlings distribution. *Source: The Financial Express*



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina holds a video conference with the officials Barishal and Khulna divisions on Covid-19 issue on April 12



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressing the nation on the eve of Pahela Boishakh broadcast on TV and Radio channels on April 13

13 April, 2020

PM unveils four programmes

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on April 13 announced her government's four strategic programmes to be implemented in three phases until 2023-24 fiscal year to overcome the possible adverse impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the national economy.

The four strategic programmes include increasing public expenditure, introducing fiscal packages, expanding social safety net programmes and increasing money supply, she said.

The Prime Minister said the first phase (immediate phase) programmes will be implemented over the next three months of the current fiscal year (2019-20), while the short phase in the next fiscal year (2020-21) and the medium phase in the 2021-22, 2022-23 and 2023-24 fiscal years.

'The shock of the world economic recession has become a cause of concern for our economy. We don't know how long this crisis will persist and how it'll affect our economy. But we're working to face the possible economic adverse impact', she said while addressing the nation on the eve of the Pahela Baishakh.

State-owned Bangladesh Betar and Bangladesh Television simultaneously broadcast the Prime Minister's address. Private television channels and radio stations also aired the speech.

In her around 16-minute speech, Sheikh Hasina said the government has already announced various stimulus packages worth Tk 956.19 billion, which is 3.3 per cent of the GDP.

She said the government has taken various programmes to protect the marginal people. *Source: The Financial Express*

16 April, 2020

5.0m more people to get ration cards for subsidised rice: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on April, 16 said another 5.0 million people to be enlisted for providing them with ration cards so that they could get rice at a subsidised rate of Tk 10 per kg.

'Presently, 5.0 million people have ration cards to receive rice at Tk 10 per kg. We've decided to prepare ration cards for another 5.0 million people,' she said, adding that the government provides assistance to the people of all classes and professions.

The Prime Minister said this while talking to government officials and public representatives of nine districts under Dhaka division through a videoconference from her official residence Ganobhaban in the city.

The nine districts are Dhaka, Narayanganj, Munshiganj, Narsingdi, Faridpur, Rajbari, Shariatpur, Madaripur and Gopalganj.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a video conference with the officials of Dhaka division to coordinate some activities to prevent spread of Covid-19 on April 16

Sheikh Hasina, also the President of Awami League, asked her party leaders and activists to form separate relief distribution committees at every ward, union, upazila and district levels to assist the administration in distributing relief materials among the needy people.

'Our administration and police are there to enlist names. You prepare the lists and assist them (administration and police) so that no-one is left out and the relief and assistance reach the right people', she said.

The Prime Minister also said her government is considering engaging retired physicians and nurses to ensure treatment of all Covid-19 patients.

The country has more shortage of nurses than that of physicians, she added.

Against this backdrop, engaging the retired nurses would be the best possible option to meet the current demand for nurses to ensure medicare services for all Covid-19 patients, she observed. *Source: The Financial Express*



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina holds a video conference with the officials of 4 districts of Dhaka Division and other 4 districts of Mymensingh Division on Covid-19 issue on April 20

20 April, 2020

Coronavirus to create food shortage, global famine: PM

Some export-oriented industries can reopen on condition

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on April 20 urged all concerned to produce and preserve food grains in the country, mentioning that the world might face famine in the coming days as coronavirus will create a shortage of food.

'There'll be a food recession due to coronavirus. In the future, there might be a global famine', she said.

The Prime Minister said this in her introductory speech while holding a videoconference with the public representatives and officials of eight districts of Dhaka and Mymensingh divisions on the coronavirus situation in Bangladesh from her official residence Ganobhaban.

The districts are Manikganj, Gazipur, Tangail and Kishoreganj under Dhaka division and Jamalpur, Sherpur, Netrakona and Mymensingh under Mymensingh division.

Sheikh Hasina put emphasis on producing and preserving food to face the possible food crisis in the post-coronavirus regime.

Referring to steps taken to harvest paddy, Hasina asked the law enforcement agencies to cooperate in this regard as food is a very important issue at this moment.

Earlier, the Prime Minister exchanged views with the public representatives and officials of 43 districts of Dhaka, Chattogram, Khulna, Sylhet and Barishal divisions in four phases. *Source: The Financial Express*

23 April, 2020

PM calls for forging global partnership on COVID-19

Five proposals placed

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on April, 23 called for forging a collective global

partnership and greater unity to fight the coronavirus pandemic as she placed a five-point proposal that includes devising meaningful strategies.

'The world is perhaps facing the biggest crisis in the last 100 years. So, we need to face the crisis together ... we need an approach of collective responsibility and partnership from every society,' she told a virtual regional conference on COVID-19.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presiding over a regional conference arranged by the World Economic Forum (WEF) on April 23

The World Economic Forum (WEF) organised the conference titled 'Enhancing regional cooperation in South Asia to combat COVID-19-related impact on its economics'.

While delivering her statement on 'Bangladesh-Building Regional Resilience to fight COVID-19' in the conference from her official Ganobhaban residence in the evening, the prime minister spelt out her government's initiatives. *Source: The Financial Express*

26 April, 2020

PM for 'global coordination' to fight future catastrophe

She thanks WHO for immediate pro-active actions

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has called for 'global coordination' as well as 'putting more policy and financial focus' to effectively fight any future world catastrophe like the present coronavirus pandemic.

'I will urge everyone to consider this crisis as a wakeup call for global coordination to effectively deal with any future world catastrophe and for putting more policy and financial focus on health issues like capacity building and achievement of health security for all', she said in a letter to World Health Organization (WHO) Director General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus on April, 26. *Source: The Financial Express*

27 April, 2020

PM advises businesses not to worry about loan interest

Educational institutions to remain closed until Sept if corona situation continues, she says

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on April, 27 said the businesspeople, who took loans for operating their business entities, do not need to be worried about their loan interest.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a video conference with the public representatives and officials of Rajshahi division to coordinate the ongoing activities over Covid-19 issue on April 27

'You were doing your business taking loans, but your loans have piled up for the shutdown in these months due to the coronavirus...so, don't think about that (loan interest),' she said.

The Prime Minister said this while holding a videoconference with the public representatives and officials of districts under Rajshahi division over COVID-19 from her official residence Ganobhaban.

The districts are Bogura, Chapainawabganj, Joypurhat, Naogaon, Natore, Pabna, Rajshahi and Sirajganj.

Sheikh Hasina mentioned that the lending organisations were not supposed to take those interests right now.

'After this meeting (videoconference), I'll sit with the finance minister...we'll consider to suspend the interest (against the loans), we'll consider how much we can waive the interest and how much you can repay those regularly. You do not need to be gripped by anxiety,' she said.

Keeping people alive maintaining the ways of lives and livelihood is the major thing right now, she added.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said the educational institutions in the country will remain closed till September next if there is no improvement in the prevailing situation triggered by COVID-19.

If the coronavirus effect continues, she said, the educational institutions will remain closed. 'We'll reopen those when it (coronavirus) will stop,' she said. *Source: The Financial Express*

30 April, 2020

Information Minister Hasan urges coverage of inspirational news

Information Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud on April, 30 urged the newspapers'



Information Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud speaking at a view-exchange meeting with the representatives of Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (NOAB) in the ministry on April 30

authorities to publish positive and inspirational news items to help people keep their morale strong during the ongoing coronavirus crisis.

'Expectance drives people to move towards the future and helps them remain strong in their struggle for life. That's why I will request the newspapers to publish such news items, which keep people's hopes alive and will inform them that a sunny day is coming after the darkness,' he said.

Dr. Hasan Mahmud, also AL joint general secretary, was speaking at a view-exchange meeting with the representatives of Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh (NOAB) at the meeting room of the Information Ministry in the city, a ministry press release said.

Information Secretary Kamrun Nahar, NOAB president AK Azad and its members Matiur Rahman, Mahfuz Anam, Tarik Sujat, Shah Hossain Imam, Naem Nizam, Altamash Kabir Mishu and Saiful Alam were present.

NOAB president AK Azad requested the Information Ministry to pay soon the bills of government supplements and advertisements published in different newspapers on different occasions.

He also sought bank loans for the newspapers and stimulus for newspaper hawkers, workers and agents.

About the proposals of NOAB, Information Minister said the Cabinet Division has already sent letters to different ministries, asking to pay the advertisement bills of different government departments and agencies.

Later, the information minister held a meeting with the representatives of Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU). *Source: The Financial Express*



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina holds a video conference with the public representatives and officials of the districts in Rangpur division over Covid-19 issue on May 4

4 May, 2020

Cash aid for jobless before Eid: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced on May 4 that the government will provide cash assistance before Eid to mitigate the suffering of those rendered jobless in the wake of the coronavirus outbreak.

'We want to give cash assistance ahead of Eid to those who have lost their jobs due to the nationwide shutdown over the coronavirus pandemic to

minimise their plight ... we'll do it to ensure their food security', she said.

The Prime Minister made the announcement while exchanging views with the public representatives and officials of eight districts.

The Prime Minister reiterated that there might be famine around the world due to economic stagnation cause by the COVID-19 outbreak.

'To overcome this fear, we have to protect our country... we'll also help other countries, too,' she said.

The Prime Minister once again asked all concerned to make sure that not a single inch of land across the country remains fallow to effectively fight the possible famine. *Source: The Financial Express*

7 May, 2020

Cabinet clears law to hold court trials digitally

The cabinet on May 7 cleared the draft of an ordinance to pave the way for courts to run trial proceedings through videoconferences and other digital means.

It also gave final approval to 'The Value Added Tax and Supplementary Duty (Amendment) Act, 2020' and 'The Income-tax Amendment Ordinance, 2020'.

The approval came from a cabinet meeting held at Ganobhaban with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

'The law ministry placed a draft on the use of information technology by court ordinance 2020 (Adalat Kartik Tathiya Projukti Bebohar Oidhyadesh 2020) before the cabinet after the Supreme Court requested for enacting such a law, Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam told a press briefing.

According to the existing law, the trial proceedings are run in the physical presence of judges, counsels and witnesses in the court.

But now, he said, it cannot continue the trial proceedings ensuring the physical presence of lawyers and witnesses in the court amid the high risk of coronavirus infections.

The cabinet secretary said that if the ordinance is effective (after promulgation by the President), it will be possible for the judges to run the trial proceedings of the cases through videoconferences and other digital means keeping the accused in jails, the lawyers in their residences and the witnesses in other places during the coronavirus crisis.

The law ministry brought an ordinance instead of a bill as parliament is not in session now. When parliament will go in its next session, the ordinance will be placed in the House for approval. *Source: The Financial Express*

14 May, 2020

PM launches cash aid disbursement for 5.0m families

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on May 14 launched the disbursement of Tk 12.50 billion cash assistance among 5.0 million poor families hit hard by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, saying that removing the ordeals of the people of every area is her only goal.

'My only goal is to remove the plight of the people of every area and I want to



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina launching the disbursement of tk 12.50 billion cash assistance among 5 million poor families hit hard by the ongoing Covid-19 lockdown

achieve that aim,' she said while formally inaugurating the programme through a videoconference from her official Ganobhaban residence in the morning.

Sheikh Hasina opened the distribution of Tk 2,500 to each of the 5.0 million destitute families affected badly due to the COVID-19 outbreak, through mobile financial services (MFSs).

The prime minister also kicked off the distribution of stipend and tuition fees from her education assistance trust fund among the students of bachelor degree and its equivalent level of 2019 academic year through mobile/online banking. *Source: The Financial Express*

17 May, 2020

Sheikh Hasina's Homecoming Day observed

The 40th Homecoming Day of Awami League President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was observed on May, 17.

On this day in 1981, Sheikh Hasina returned home from India after nearly six

years in exile following the assassination of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and most of his family members by a cabal of army officers on August 15, 1975.

Sheikh Hasina and her sister Sheikh Rehana were spared as they were in Germany at the time.

Sheikh Hasina was elected president of Awami League in her absence in the party's national council held on February 14-16, 1981.

Marking the day, the ruling party organised a milad and doa mahfil at the AL president's political office in the city's Dhanmondi area after Asr prayers.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has ordered her party to avoid political programmes this year, according to a post on Awami League's website.

In a statement, Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader asked the party's activists and leaders to stay home and pray for Sheikh Hasina. *Source: The Financial Express*

19 May, 2020

NEC approves Tk 2.05 trillion ADP

The government on May 19 approved a Tk 2.05 trillion annual development programme or ADP for the next fiscal year 2020-21.

The allocation is 1.0 per cent higher than the original Tk 2.027 trillion ADP of the outgoing fiscal and 4.7 per cent higher than Tk 1.93 trillion outlays in the revised ADP.

Presided over by the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the National Economic Council or NEC approved the ADP. The PM joined the meeting online from the Ganobhaban.

After the meeting, planning minister MA Mannan told reporters that the government would provide Tk 1.346 trillion funds from its internal resources and Tk 705.02 billion from the external resources as project aid to bankroll the ADP.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina delivering speech through video message for the 76th session of the UNESCAP on May 21

A total of 1,584 development projects were incorporated into the ADP, he added.

The NEC approved another Tk 94.66 billion worth of development programme.

Source: The Financial Express

21 May, 2020

Change of global climate efforts

Virus shows silver linings, says PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on May 21 said that although COVID-19 pandemic has severely affected economy along with the health issues, it is also showing some silver

linings on the change of global efforts to deal with the climate change and growing competition for natural resources.

'The world is facing unprecedented challenges of the century due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Along with the health issues this virus has severely affected our economy. However, the pandemic is also showing some silver linings on the change of global efforts to deal with the climate change and growing competition for natural resources. We need to tackle this pandemic together,' she said.

The Prime Minister said this while delivering her speech through video message in the 76th Commission Session of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP).

With a view to strengthening economic cooperation among member countries of the ESCAP, she placed three fundamental ocean issues through ESCAP.

These are: Firstly, enhanced support for capacity building through sharing of knowledge, expertise and transfer of technology from advanced countries on Blue Economy;

Secondly, Need joint research on fisheries development with a view to increasing regional fish production and establishing common platform network in deterring, combating and eliminating Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated fishing.

Lastly, Initiate mapping and management of resource identification and critical coastal habitat and biodiversity protection.

Sheikh Hasina said, 'The oceans and seas constitute a last resource frontier of the world contributing to our sustenance, help alleviate poverty and offer employment opportunities'. *Source: The Financial Express*

30 May, 2020

Engage local public reps in Covid-19 fight: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on May 30 asked the authorities concerned to engage local public representatives in a greater way in containing the novel coronavirus in the country.

The Prime Minister issued the directives while addressing a meeting of the National Technical Advisory Committee formed to fight Covid-19 in the country.

The meeting was held at the PM's official residence Ganobhaban in the city.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presiding over a meeting of National Technical Advisory Committee on Covid-19 at Ganobhaban on May 30

The three-hour meeting discussed different measures taken by the committee to check the spread of the deadly virus and provide healthcare services to the infected people.

Committee president Prof Dr Mohammad Shahidullah, PM's Principal Secretary Dr Ahmad Kaikaus, PMO Secretary Tofazzal Hossain Miah, PM's Private Physician Prof Dr ABM Abdullah, Health Services Secretary Ashadul Islam and other members of the committee were present at the meeting.

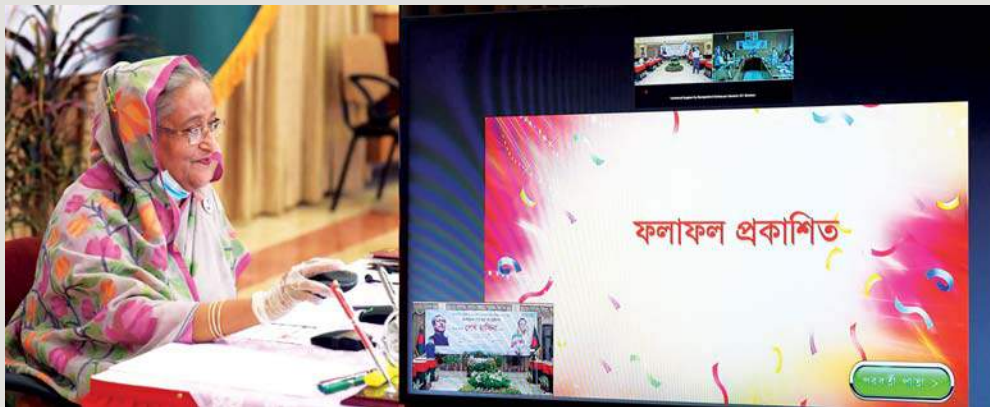
On April 19, the government formed the 17-member National Technical Advisory Committee with a view to containing the spread of Covid-19 in the country. *Source: The Financial Express*

31 May, 2020

Tk 20b interest gets waived

PM announces stimulus for Covid-hit businesses

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on May 31 announced a new stimulus package to waive Tk 20 billion (2000 crore) bank interest of the people affected badly by the nationwide shutdown enforced to contain the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina speaking while launching the SSC and other equivalent exam results through a video conference on May 31

Sheikh Hasina added: 'The government will provide the interest amounting to Tk 20 billion to the banks as a subsidy and it will directly benefit nearly 13.8 million loan recipients.'

The premier made the announcement while formally publishing the SSC and other equivalent exam results through a videoconference from her official Ganobhaban residence in the city.

She said the government earlier suspended the payment of interest of the loans for two months which the people took from the (commercial) banks for business purpose.

'The total amount of that interest now stands at Tk 165.49 billion and of the money, the government will give Tk 20 billion to the (commercial) banks as a subsidy and the borrowers don't need pay it ... we're freeing them from it (interest),' she said. *Source: The Financial Express*

4 June 2020

PM calls for rapid invention of vaccines

Speaks at virtual Global Vaccine Summit

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on June 4 called for ‘rapid invention’ of newer vaccines to protect mankind from the pandemics like novel coronavirus, saying that vaccination has proved to be one of the most important means to combat contagious diseases.

‘The Covid-19 pandemic proved how really powerless we are in the face of any global calamity. It also reminded us of the old saying that prevention is always better than cure,’ she told the virtual Global Vaccine Summit 2020 being held in the UK.

Citing the United Nations, Hasina said one new infectious disease emerges in humans every four months and the Global Virome Project estimated that there are about 700,000 which are capable of causing pandemics.

In this connection, the PM sought assistance from the GAVI Alliance, formerly known as Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation.

The UK is hosting the Global Vaccine Summit, bringing together leaders from governments, foundations, the private sector and civil society and it marks 20 years since the GAVI was founded.

Hasina said since its inception in 2000, GAVI has helped immunise over 760 million people against deadly diseases, saving more than 13 million lives worldwide.

Our simple wish can ensure that GAVI is fully funded to strengthen immunisation infrastructure; help immunise 300 million additional children and save up to 8 million lives in GAVI-supported countries, She added.

The premier said there could not have been a better time than today to meet to support the causes of vaccination when the world is frantically searching for an effective vaccine to fight Covid-19.

The PM said in this journey, GAVI has been a "time-tested partner"



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina addressing the virtual Global Vaccine Summit 2020 held in the United Nations on June 4

for Bangladesh towards achieving universal health coverage and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The PM said the government was studying establishment of a unique digital identity for health services in partnership with ID2020, GAVI and the a2i programme.

About hosting 1.1 million Rohingyas, Hasina said Bangladesh said the country was sheltering the "forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals" at a great financial, social and environmental cost.

US President Donald Trump, Burkina Faso President Roch Marc Christian Kabore, Ethiopian President Sahle-Work Zewde, UN Secretary-General António Guterres, WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and leaders and representatives of different countries and international organisations also spoke at the event.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and the co-chair of Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Bill Gates, delivered the keynote speeches, while Chair of GAVI Board Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala gave the closing address.

The summit aims to raise at least \$7.4 billion for the GAVI for 2021-2025 to protect a further 300 million children against infectious diseases like measles, typhoid and polio. *Source : The Daily Star*

7 June, 2020

6-pt demand turned demand for freedom: PM

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina on June, 7 said the historic six-point demand



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presiding over a prerecorded discussion marking the historic 'Six -Point Day' on June 7

declared by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman was blossomed before the Bengalis as their demand of freedom at that time.

‘The people had taken the six-point demand in such a way that I don’t know whether such a demand did get so much popularity and at so much speed in any country of the world,’ she said.

The Prime Minister said this while presiding over a pre-recorded discussion marking the historic ‘Six-Point Day’.

The Prime Minister joined the discussion titled ‘Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Six-point Demand: Charter for Freedom of Bengalis’ from her official Ganobhaban residence.

‘There was a background of the six-point demand. It was seen during the 1965 Pakistan-India war that the people of Purba Banga meaning East Pakistan was completely unprotected,’ she said.

Sheikh Hasina mentioned that the then Pakistani rulers did not take any step to save Purba Banga which was their province. ‘After remaining unprotected at that time, it seemed we lived on the kindness of India,’ she said.

‘At the meeting, Bangabandhu placed the six-point demand and its main message was to protect the people of our country, make them self-reliant and develop the region socioeconomically,’ she said.

The conference was held on June 5 and 6 and Sheikh Mujib placed the six-point demand on June 6. ‘In the conference he raised the demand of autonomy of all provinces of Pakistan, saying it’s not only a demand of ours, every province will get this scope,’ she said. *Source: The New Age*

8 June, 2020

Cabinet okays draft law to scrap BB governor's age limit

The cabinet approved in principle on June 8 the draft of 'The Bangladesh Bank (Amendment) Act, 2020' by abolishing the 'proviso' of the 65-year age limit for the governor of the central bank.



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presiding over the cabinet meeting at Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban on June 8

The approval came at the regular cabinet meeting held at the cabinet room of the Jatiya Sangsad Bhaban with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair, Cabinet Secretary Khandaker Anwarul Islam told a press briefing after the meeting at Bangladesh Secretariat.

He said according to the provision of clause (5) of the Article 10 of The Bangladesh Bank Order, 1972 (President's Order No. 127 of 1972) the tenure of the central bank governor is four years and he/ she could be given reappointment.

'But the 'proviso' of that clause mentioned that no person can hold the post of the governor after completion of 65 years of his/her age,' Islam said.

The cabinet secretary said an experienced person is appointed in the financial sector as the governor. 'But it's not possible to appoint an efficient and experienced person in the financial sector after his/her 65 years of age as the current law has fixed the highest age limit at 65 years,' he added. *Source: The Financial Express*

10 June, 2020

ADB okays \$17.7m loan for SSPL

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) confirmed US\$17.7 million worth of loan for a Bangladeshi private sector company on June 10 for setting up a 35-megawatt (mw) solar power plant.

The fund will be provided to Spectra Solar Park Limited (SSPL), an independent power producer, where some other multilateral institutions will also take part as co-financers.

Director of Infrastructure Finance - South Asia, Central Asia, and West Asia at the ADB's Private Sector Operations Department Shantanu Chakraborty and SSPL Managing Director Khan Md. Aftabuddin signed the agreement.

The DEG (Deutsche Investitions- und Entwicklungsgesellschaft mbH) is co-financing the project with the ADB. Green Delta Capital served as lead arranger for the project.

'This project strongly demonstrates that solar energy sector in Bangladesh is an attractive destination for private sector engagement,' said Mr. Chakraborty.

The financing comprises a loan from the ADB and a loan from the ADB-administered Canadian Climate Fund for the Private Sector in Asia (CFPS) II.

The project aligns with the government's aim to reduce the country's dependence on fossil fuels through renewable energy use as per Vision 2021. *Source: The Financial Express*

14 June, 2020

Worst-hit areas will go into lockdown: PM

Prime Minister and Leader of the House Sheikh Hasina on June 14 told the parliament that her government would put the worst hit areas by COVID-19 under lockdown to stop further spread of the lethal virus alongside taking effective

measures to run the wheels of economy as none could die from starvation.

‘We have decided to bring worst-hit areas by coronavirus under lockdown aimed at checking its further spread,’ she said while paying glowing tributes to deceased lawmaker Mohammed Nasim and state minister for religious affairs Sheikh Md Abdullah taking part in a discussion on the obituary references at the death of two Awami League’s veteran leaders.

Mentioning that the fear arising out of the COVID-19 pandemic has reached terrible height, she said, ‘We couldn’t allow death of people in starvation due to the panic... We have to take measures as their lives and livelihoods can continue.’

Keeping the reality in mind, the premier said the convenient measures have been taken as the economic activities of the country keep continuing for which she said they have been able to place a budget.

She said that her government has been trying its best to make people understand the urgency of maintaining health codes in a proper manner to stem further spread of COVID-19 aimed at protecting them from the highly contagious virus.

Noting that the deaths and infections by COVID-19 have come to an end after a stage in the developed and western countries including the USA, the premier said its wave has now reached the South Asia. *Source: The New Age*

17 June, 2020

Govt will take action against immoral web contents: Information Minister

Information Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud said on June 17 the government is going to take action against all 'illegal and immoral' web contents.



Information Minister Dr. Hasan Mahmud talking to journalists on contemporary situation at his secretariat office in the city on June 17 while State Minister for Information Dr. Murad Hasan (right) and Information Secretary Kamrun Nahar (left) were also present

He made the remarks while talking to reporters at the secretariat over a report regarding 'objectionable scenes in some local web series'.

'Such objectionable and pornographic contents should not be uploaded at any cost and it's a punishable offence under the Pornography Control Act,' he said.

People behind the content can face arrest and they may serve jail up to 10 years, the minister said.

'We informed Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission that the contents were uploaded by two subsidiary companies of GP and Robi,' Mahmud said.

The government is looking into whether they have legal permission to upload such content, he said adding that the contents will be pulled down if they don't have legal permission.

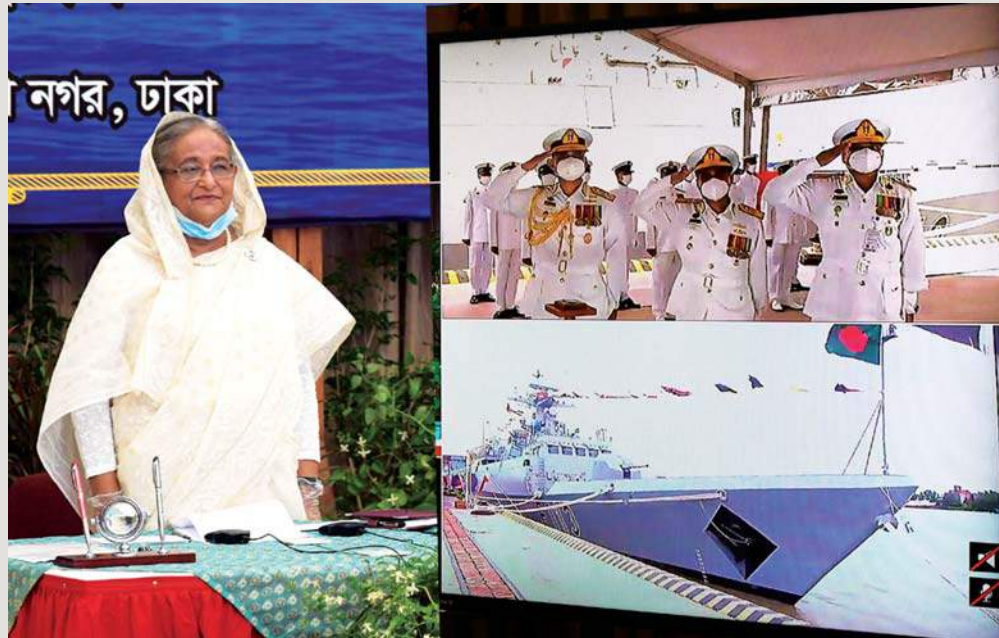
Talking about zone based lockdown in country, the minister said the work to spot high, medium and low affected areas is underway and so far only East Rajabazar area was brought under experimental lockdown. *Source: The Financial Express*

18 June, 2020

PM for strengthening Navy to protect, utilise sea resources in economy

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina stressed on June, 18 the need for strengthening Bangladesh Navy further in a bid to protect the country's vast maritime area.

'It is essential to make our Navy stronger further to protect this sea area,' she said



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina takes the salute from Bangladesh Navy personnel during the commissioning of the ship 'BNS Sangram' through video conferencing from Ganobhaban on June 18

while commissioning the BNS Sangram through videoconference from her official residence Ganobhaban.

The PM said that her government has attached priority on protecting the sea areas and utilising its huge resources in Bangladesh's economy.

Mentioning that Bangladesh doesn't want war as it prefers peace, she said, 'It is true that we want peace but at the same time we have to remain well prepared to face any attack.'

She also said her Government has already formulated a perspective plan called 'Forces Goal 2030' in light with the 'Defence Policy' adopted by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman in 1974 and started faster implementation accordingly to make the armed forces time worthy.

'We have already purchased many modern equipment including frigate and ships for Bangladesh Navy'.

The PM said Bangladesh Navy has been transformed into a full-fledged three-dimensional force with inclusion two submarines in the force.

After assuming office in 1996 after 21 years, the Awami League government collected necessary data and information regarding the matter and took measures after coming to power for second time. *Source: The Financial Express*

21 June, 2020

WB to provide \$1.05b to help BD accelerate economic recovery

The World Bank (WB) will provide US\$1.05 billion worth of support for three projects to help Bangladesh create quality jobs and accelerate economic recovery from the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic as well as build resilience to future crises.

The Washington-based global lender gave approval to the fund on June 19.

The project is to establish Dhaka's first digital entrepreneurship hub also in the Janata Software Technology Park and turn it into a green building, it said.

By attracting domestic and foreign private investment, including in the IT and ITES sectors, the project will help the economy to rebound from the impacts of COVID-19, it mentioned.

The \$295 million Enhancing Digital Government and Economy (EDGE) project aims to establish an integrated, cloud-computing digital platform for all government agencies and improve cyber-security, which will result in savings of \$200 million in the public sector's IT investments, according to the WB release.

Source: The Financial Express

Rural MPs to get Tk 64.77b for dev of their areas

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (ECNEC) on June 21 approved 10 projects involving Tk 94.60 billion, including Tk 64.77 billion to be spent by rural MPs for the infrastructure development of their respective areas.

The approval came at the 24th ECNEC meeting of the outgoing fiscal year (2019-20) held at the NEC conference room in the city with ECNEC Chairperson



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina presided over the ECNEC meeting at NEC Conference Room through video conference on June 21

and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

The Prime Minister and Planning Minister MA Mannan joined the meeting from Ganobhaban through a videoconference.

'ECNEC meeting approved 10 projects and the total estimated cost of the projects is Tk 94.6 billion (9,460.09 crore). The entire money will come from government funds,' said the Planning Minister at a press briefing after the meeting.

Of the total 10 projects, six are new while the rest four are revised ones. Talking about 'Development of Palli Infrastructures Phase-III Project involving Tk 64.77 billion, he said an allocation of Tk 200 million will given to each MP elected from rural areas, not urban ones, to improve only rural infrastructures like roads, bridges and culverts.

MA Mannan said the project will be implemented by June 2024. 'I think it will be very useful for the welfare of people.'

According to the project factsheet, all the parliamentary constituencies of the country, except the city corporations, are the project areas. *Source: The Financial Express*

22 June, 2020

Govt to appoint more physicians, medical technologists

Health Minister Zahid Maleque on June, 22 said if the number of COVID-19 patients continues to soar, the government will take steps to appoint additional 2000 physicians to contain the situation.

'The government will take steps seeing the situation. It will appoint additional 2000 physicians if the coronavirus situation remains changed. Besides, the process to appoint medical technologists is going on,' he said at a press briefing at the VIP lounge of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport when he went there to see off the Chinese expert team.

Talking about the increasing number of coronavirus cases, the minister said ‘If people do not become aware of the highly contagious virus, then all the hospitals of the country will be full of COVID-19 patients. People should be more aware of the virus.’

He also emphasised more budget allocation in the health sector to fight coronavirus.

Besides, the minister also said that China is working to develop coronavirus vaccine and the Chinese government has said Bangladesh will get priority in terms of cooperation and support if they can successfully develop vaccine for the coronavirus. *Source: The New Age*

23 June, 2020

AL to complete Mujib’s unfinished tasks: PM

Prime minister and leader of the house Sheikh Hasina on June 23 said that the Awami League was committed to the completion of the unfinished tasks of the country’s founding president Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

‘Our only job is to complete the unfinished tasks of Bangabandhu to ensure overall development of the country,’ she said while joining an unscheduled discussion in parliament marking the 71st founding anniversary of the Awami League.

Sheikh Hasina, also the president of AL, simultaneously said, ‘On this day (the day of forming AL), we are taking pledge that we would materialise the dream of the Father of the Nation by making the country a ‘Sonar Bangla’ free from poverty and hunger.’

The Prime Minister said that the day was very important for them as the sun of independence, which was set off through the defeat of the Siraj-ud-Daulah at Palashi Mango Orchard, once again rose by the formation of the Awami League (on June 23 in 1949 at ‘Rose Garden’ on KM Das Lane in Dhaka) as the country’s independence had been achieved under the leadership of the party.

In this context, she said the first independent government was formed on April 10 in 1971 with making Sheikh Mujibur Rahman as its maiden president, Syed Nazrul Islam as first vice-president and Tajuddin Ahmed as the first prime minister of the country while the government took oath on April 17 the same year at Mujibnagar in Meherpur, a part of the Palashi Mango Orchard. *Source: The New Age*

24 June, 2020

UN Public Service Award: Cabinet resolution congratulates PM

The cabinet has adopted a resolution congratulating Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, as Bangladesh won the prestigious (UNSPA) 2020 in ‘Developing Transparent and Accountable Public Institutions’.

The felicitation resolution was adopted at a cabinet meeting on June 8, while the Cabinet Division issued a gazette notification to this end on June 15, a handout said on June 24.

Bangladesh won the award for successfully implementing the land ministry’s e-mutation programme.

On June 1, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Liu Zhenmin informed Bangladesh Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Rabab Fatima about winning the award.

Zhenmin said implementation of the e-mutation programme is a remarkable achievement for Bangladesh, and it will play a significant role in development of the country's public administration.

Bangladesh, for the first time, received the prestigious UN award.

The e-mutation programme aims to streamline management of land records with the help of technology. It will play an important role in building a digital Bangladesh by ensuring transparency and accountability in land services, according to authorities.

E-mutation is being implemented all over the country except three hill districts. The a2i project of the ICT Division is providing technical support to this end.

It is being implemented through the assistant commissioner (land) under management of Land Reform Board. *Source : The Daily Star*

29 June 2020

Finance Bill passed

Provision to legalise untaxed money, higher tax on mobile phone uses remain



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina delivers concluding speech at the discussion session on the proposed Budget for the FY 2020-21 in the Parliament on June 29

The Finance Bill 2020 was passed at the Jatiya Sangsad on June 29 without major changes despite widespread demand for scrapping the unethical provision for legalising the untaxed money in the new fiscal year.

Moreover, the rule for legalising the money has been further relaxed by reducing the lock-in period for the income from the investments of untaxed money in stocks to one year from the originally-proposed three years.

Besides, the tax-free benefit has been reintroduced for the income from investment in zero-coupon bonds against the demand by the businessmen.

The businessmen have also been allowed to file cases over VAT-related disputes by paying the highest 30 per cent fees instead of the overall 50 per cent.

A five per cent higher tax on mobile phone talk-time, internet and other services was proposed by finance minister AHM Mustafa Kamal while announcing the national budget on June 11.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who took part in the general discussion on the fiscal measures, said that they placed the budget with the anticipation that the coronavirus vaccine would arrive by November and the economic situation would be revived worldwide by that time. *Source: The New Age*

30 June 2020

JS passes budget for FY 20-21

Jatiya Sangsad passed on June 30 the Appropriation Bill, allowing the government to spend Tk. 7.6 trillion from the consolidated fund for meeting development and other expenditures for fiscal year 2021.

With the passage of the bill by voice vote, the Tk 5.68-trillion annual budget finally got approval from parliament to spend from the fund created as per the Constitution of Bangladesh.

Finance minister AHM Mustafa Kamal moved the bill, seeking a total of Tk 7.6 trillion from the fund, maintained by the central bank on behalf of the government.

The Ministries and Divisions placed 59 demands for grants.

Opposition lawmakers moved 421 cut-motions against the demands, but were rejected by voice vote.

Speaker Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury presided over the session that began from 10 in the morning.

On June 11, Mr Kamal placed the budget for FY 2020-21 amounting to Tk. 5.68 trillion that requires to be passed by lawmakers.

The slogan of the budget is 'Economic Transition and Pathway to Progress'.

The budget has projected that the gross domestic product will grow by 8.2 per cent during the new fiscal year, boosting the size of the economy to Tk. 31.7 trillion.

The total allocation for operating and other expenditures is estimated at Tk 3.63

trillion while that for the annual development programme or ADP is Tk 2.05 trillion.

The total budget size of FY 2020 was earlier estimated at Tk. 5.23 trillion. In the revised budget, the expenditure was reduced to Tk 5.02 trillion. The government set the target of total revenue income in the new fiscal at Tk. 3.8 trillion.

Of the total, Tk. 3.3 trillion will come from the National Board of Revenue sources.

Income from the non-NBR sources has been estimated at Tk. 150 billion, while the non-tax revenue at Tk. 330 billion.

The budget has allocated Tk. 100 billion to meet the emergency needs of COVID-19 containment measures.

Considering the adverse impact of coronavirus pandemic, the government has allocated Tk 955.7 billion for the social safety net programmes.

The deficit of the next budget has been estimated 5.8 per cent.

On June, 29 parliament passed the Finance Bill 2020 with no major changes.

Source: The Financial Express

Govt signs \$142m loan agreements with ADB

The Asian Development Bank would finance \$142 million to expand rural road networks and to promote multimodal transport in Bangladesh.

The Economic Relation Division on June 30 signed two separate agreements with the multilateral lender for the concessional loan.

ERD secretary Fatima Yasmin and ADB country director Manmohan Parkash signed the loan agreements on behalf of Bangladesh and the ADB respectively.

A \$100 million loan agreement was signed to expand the coverage of an ongoing rural road network improvement project, connecting the rural population to agricultural lands, markets and services while another agreement for \$42 million was signed to prepare road and railway sector projects to promote multimodal transport and connectivity in Bangladesh.

The ADB country director said inadequate rural transport and poor market infrastructure are critical challenges to Bangladesh's rural development.

'In addition to generating 1.73 million person-days of employment through infrastructure spending, the additional financing will also widen the opportunities for women and children to have easier and safer access to education, emergency health services, and other essential social services in any weather condition,' he said.

This financing would scale up the current road network development, under the Rural Connectivity Improvement Project, from 1,700 kilometres to 2,630 km of rural roads, the ADB country director said. *Source: The New Age*

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

PM'S 31-POINT DIRECTIVES OVER CORONA VIRUS BATTLE

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has given the 31-point instruction in the wake of the novel coronavirus (Covid-19) situation in the country.

Following are the directives of the premier.

1. Coronavirus-related treatment measures will have to be taken, and awareness programmes on the issue will have to be implemented.
2. There is no need for concealment of the disease rather go to physicians if symptoms of coronavirus surface.
3. No need for using PPE generally by all, rather it needs to ensure PPE for all concerned with the treatment process and adopt cautionary measures to keep all treatment equipment including PPE and masks free from virus and in case of their disposal as well.
4. Special priority will have to be given to all doctors, nurses, lab technicians, cleaners, ambulance drivers who are involved in the treatment of Covid-19 disease.
5. Those who are in the home quarantine or isolation should be treated humanely.
6. Regularly follow the health code including washing hands, using masks and maintaining social distancing.
7. Naval ambulances should be provided in the riverbank districts.
8. Proper health checkups and medical care for other patients should be continued.
9. Ensure cleanliness, and all the city corporations, municipalities and upazila councils across the country will have to strengthen their cleanliness activities.
10. Attention should be given to law and order, and all the government officials including that of the Health Services Division, the administration, the law enforcement agencies, the Armed Forces Division will have to continue their work maintaining proper coordination in this national disaster.
11. No corruption will be tolerated in the relief activities.
12. Assistance will have to be given to day labourers, workers and peasants so that they don't remain unfed, and a separate list of poor working people will have to be prepared.
13. Social safety activities will continue.
14. Proper attention will have to be paid so that economic activities don't get stagnate.
15. Food production system will have to continue, and more varieties of crops will have to be produced. Whatever needs for food security will have to be done and no land should be kept uncultivated.

16. Supply system should be maintained.
17. General activities will continue and the prices of essentials will have to be kept under control.
18. All celebration programmes of the Bangla New Year should be suspended to avoid public gatherings. The celebration should be done through digital system staying at home.
19. Local public representatives, political leaders, people of all stages of the society will have to work together. The administration will have to work engaging all the people.
20. Alongside the government, the affluent persons and institutions of the society will carry out their relief and healthcare activities maintaining coordination with the Deputy Commissioners and Upazila Nirbahi Officers.
21. The public representatives and upazila administration will distribute foods among the distressed people by preparing a ward-based list.
22. Special attention will have to be given to the most disadvantaged people like agriculture workers, day-labourers, rickshaw and van-puller, transport workers, beggars, street children, the women abandoned by husband, widows and 'hijra' community and relief to them will have to be ensured.
23. Necessary arrangements will have to be made for senior citizens and children.
24. All government employees and volunteer organisations will have to follow the standing orders (SOD) regarding the disasters.
25. Necessary arrangements will have to be made for monitoring production, supply and regular marketing of the essential goods.
26. Don't buy excessive products after being panicked as there is adequate stock of all necessary goods including food grains.
27. The farmers will continue cultivation regularly, and in this case government incentives will go on.
28. All industry owners, business people and individuals will keep their own industries, business establishments and houses clean.
29. The owners of industries will continue production through discussion with the workers and ensuring their health safety.
30. The media people are playing a proper role in creating mass awareness and in this case, a sharp eye will have to be kept so that none can mislead the people by spreading various rumours and false information.
31. Spreading rumours will have to be stopped. Various rumours are being spread. Don't pay heed to rumours and don't worry about it.

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Jack fruit, the national fruit of Bangladesh, grows abundantly in the months of April-May



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