

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR
LATE S. M. ALI

DHAKA SATURDAY FEBRUARY 1, 2020, MAGH 18, 1426 BS

Can we have free, fair and credible elections?

Time for the EC to deliver on its promise

TODAY, Dhaka dwellers will turn out in droves to vote for the candidate(s) of their choice. Or so we hope, despite the fact that in the Dhaka North City Corporation mayoral election held last year, the turnout was extraordinarily low, signifying the general apathy that has developed in people regarding the electoral process. We call upon the people to exercise their right to franchise and demand a free and fair election from the Election Commission, which is their right as citizens of a democratic country.

Today, we hope voters will not be harassed on their way to the polls, polling agents of all candidates will be allowed to carry out their duties without fear and coercion, and no voter will be intimidated or tricked into voting for a candidate s/he did not choose. We hope so, despite the allegations of such untoward incidents having happened during the 2018 national elections. Unfortunately, the EC did little to address the allegations of harassment of opposition candidates and their supporters, absence of opposition party polling agents, stuffing of ballots, orchestrated lines at polling centers, voter intimidation and so on. We pray that this time the EC will do their due diligence and ensure safety and security of the polling agents as well as that of the voters, and that they would take immediate and exemplary action against miscreants when they receive any complaint. We hope the law enforcement agencies will provide protection to those they are supposed to protect—the public—and not any one party.

We hope there will be no irregularities in the first-ever major EVM polls in the country, and no voter shall feel their vote was “stolen” from them. We hope so, despite the hurried and undemocratic way in which EVMs were instituted, and despite fears that election officers can override a certain number of votes in the absence of Voter Verifiable Paper Trial (VVPAT)—a printed receipt of sorts which shows voters that their votes have been cast and for whom. We call upon the EC, as we have in the past, to ensure that concerns of the opposition parties and the public are quelled regarding the (mis)use of EVMs.

Today, we hope the EC will rise to the occasion and fulfill its obligation to the people by ensuring a free, fair and peaceful election and put to rest all concerns regarding their unsatisfactory performance in ensuring a level playing field in the months and days leading to the polls.

Finally, we hope whoever is elected today will fulfill the promises they made in their election manifestos (even if they were published too late) and make Dhaka into a city that its inhabitants are proud to call home.

Justice for Renu

Delay in filing charge sheet unacceptable

JUSTICE for a victim of “mob justice” may sound like an oxymoron for those uninitiated in the fundamental principles of law, but it is not—and for Taslima Begum Renu, the struggle for justice remains as real as the day she died, six months ago, in the hands of a bloodthirsty mob. Renu remains a painful reminder of what happens when individuals take it upon themselves to mete out “justice” or when the existing legal system fails to protect the innocents. According to a report by this daily, the 40-year-old had gone to Badda last July to inquire about the admission process of a local school when a crowd apparently suspected her of being a child-lifter. So they beat her mercilessly until she was dead. The incident caused quite a stir then, especially after videos of the grisly attack went viral on social media. Six months on, however, initial probe into the matter seems to have hit a roadblock. No charge sheet has been filed either.

We are at a loss to describe the trauma and sufferings that Renu’s family has gone through since. Renu’s two children now live with their aunt, while her former husband occasionally visits them. The youngest of the two, barely four years old, doesn’t even know her mother is dead. As the investigation drags on, and the case risks being tossed around among different departments of the law enforcement, the family also risks being twice victimised: first Renu’s murder, now a long shadow over their life cast by the uncertain legal journey.

Unfortunately, Bangladesh’s brush with such violence is neither new nor infrequent, although cases of mob beatings seldom, if ever, end in conviction. According to Ain o Salish Kendra, between 2011 and June of 2019, some 826 people were killed in mob beatings across the country. During this period, the highest number of killings was recorded in 2015 (135), while Dhaka was witness to the highest number of deaths (350). The number of people killed in 2019 was 65, according to another ASK report. Experts have often cited lack of faith in the criminal justice system and lack of its conviction rates as potential reasons for such incidents. But as stories of victims like Renu show, the tragedy doesn’t end with their deaths. It goes on to scar their loved ones too, possibly for the rest of their life. It is the state’s responsibility to end this disturbing cycle and compensate the victim’s family for the losses suffered. We also urge the authorities to ensure swift trial of the Renu case so that the family is spared the additional pain of a costly, protracted legal battle and the culprits are brought to justice. This will also send a message to all that mob justice can’t—and won’t—go unpunished.

LETTERS
TO THE EDITOR

letters@thedailystar.net

We salute the martyrs of the Language Movement

February is a month very close to the hearts of Bangladeshis all across the globe. Unprecedented history was made on February 21, 1952 when the sons of this land laid their lives for their mother tongue. It is for those brave souls that we are able to speak in the Bangla language today, and are so proud of it. The day is now commemorated worldwide as International Mother Language Day as we remember the martyrs with deep gratitude and reverence.

Nur Jahan, Chattogram



SHAMSAD MORTUZA

BY the time you will be reading this piece, I “should” be on board our national carrier, Biman Bangladesh. I write “should” because nothing about Biman can be said with certainty; listen to the passenger’s mumbling at the boarding bay or lend your eyes and ears to the incidents on the aircraft itself, you are sure to get an endorsement. Our ticketing agent convinced us that with the inclusion of top-of-the-range airliners, Biman has shaped up quite significantly. And we looked forward to being proud on board our national flagbearer.

By the time this piece will be “consumed”, I “should” be landing in Dhaka, after my sojourn from the KSA, worrying about my ride home amidst the travel ban due to the city corporation elections. While some of you will be in an electoral mood, leafing through the poll features in your favourite newspapers, scrolling through their online versions or surfing through the breaking waves of news to ponder whether your act of franchise today has actually mattered or not, how much difference that the dark-marker around your thumb has made, or how much difference the city fathers will make to this unreal city—I shall be worrying about coronavirus, luggage trouble, immigration hassles and so on. Hopefully, I shall be in a mood to ruminate on the discrepancy between the service that was promised and the one that was delivered in our “home in the air”.

No matter how high you are in the sky, you must think of the ground. I guess that is why they say “grounded in reality”. At the risk of being banal, let me point out one brutal reality: Biman’s service epitomises the poor service quality that plagues our entire public system. Then why expect more? Well, Biman is an international player, and for its foreign passengers, it is potentially their first brush with our culture. Any expatriate or an NRB who has lived abroad for a considerable time gets the taste of the country’s hospitality, warmth, sophistication, cuisine, art and culture through its airlines. Say, if you are on board a Chinese plane, it will make sure that you have an understanding of its ongoing new year’s celebration. But not Biman! There is no way you can tell that Bangladesh is celebrating Mujib Year or counting days for its golden jubilee.

Biman’s in-flight entertainment system, from which you are supposed to get your infotainment, gives you the impression that it has been designed as PowerPoint

Get up, stand up: don’t give up the flight

slides by a sixth grader. Let me enlighten the doubters. The information section has the following entries: Bangladesh fact file; Biman history; Coastline of Bangladesh; Discover Bangladesh; Flowers of Bangladesh; Six seasons of Bangladesh; Green valleys of Bangladesh; and MD&CEO message. The pages are static with just one low-res image, and the scroll-down options were not functional.

The information on Bangladesh seems like a page from a BCS guide, which includes land area, current population and projected population of 20 crore by 2025. The essay on seasons must have been written by a GPA-5 SSC student. Here is an excerpt: “The country has six seasons which come in turn and in different decor and beauties. The summer

addition of Dreamliners has stirred up further expectations. Yet the condition of the plane, Arun Alo, and its interior, poor quality accessories surprised me. Five years for a plane is nothing; one expects it to be in mint condition. The seat monitor and the remote were, for lack of a better word, cheap. The buttons were not working, and the remote screamed street quality. I don’t want to believe that the quality of the products was compromised, but the proof was in the pudding. Speaking of pudding, in an entire eight-hour-long flight, only one meal was served. The served *daal-bhaji-bhaat* at our uni canteen should not have cost me more than Tk 30, and I thanked my platinum god for the pre-boarding lunch and sparing me from hunger.

Istanbul. Will our new city fathers have such a vision to merge what goes up in the sky and what comes down to earth? Say, will they consider mandatory greening of all rooftops near the airport area so that visitors land in a scenic zone, instead of the present seeming concrete jungle hit by dust storm.

It would be nice to see our city parents conceive an integrated plan. The other shot in the arm to stem the rot can be to request our Honourable Prime Minister to travel incognito in the manner of the Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid. The idea dawned on me while listening to the anecdote of Darb Zubaidah, the princess who along with her husband was known for excavating canals and installing wells for the welfare of pilgrims along the



Something is perennially wrong with Biman Bangladesh Airlines.

PHOTO: BIMAN

comes with the scorching heats and presents the sunny days. The excessive heat sucks up all the water and leaves the mud dry. The farmer yearns for the rain, the young juveniles come out in the streets to sing the song for rain ‘*Allah megh de, pani de...*’

Other entries have a similar tone where some creative genius thought it pertinent to show off their textbook memory. You may wonder why I even bothered reading all these. Well, my seat audio socket for the headphone was missing. I did not mind it—after all, I was on an Umrah flight, where looking for the popular cultural material would have been inappropriate anyway. I still remember the hyped-up inclusion of the five 777-300 ER Boeing planes to the Biman Bangladesh fleet under our PM’s initiative about five years ago. The

To make matters worse, the plane started an hour late, which, according to the steward, was for technical trouble while the captain claimed it to be a maintenance issue. I took it as a sign that something was perennially wrong with Biman. The public perception is, Biman has been exploited as a goose that lays golden eggs (or should I say “bars”) for many for a long time. Then again, I am not in a position to comment as my knowledge is limited to the corruption or smuggling stories that surface every now and then.

As a student of culture, I can simply comment on the in-flight AV system. There was no documentary, no video, no infographic markers, no audio-visual effect. By contrast, look at Turkish Airlines that has commissioned Ridley Scott to make a movie, “The Journey”, to showcase

roads from Baghdad to Makkah. Both Princess Zubaidah and her husband Caliph Harun al-Rashid were engaged in endless philanthropic projects. Harun was particularly receptive to what he had heard while wandering through the streets at night. It would be grand to see our PM paying surprise visits to the economy coaches one of these days or taking an alley without entourage one day to see the level of compromises that are being made on the public money released from the exchequer.

The old tunes must change as we approach various national milestones.

P.S. Now you know why I have given a twist to a classic Bob Marley song.

Shamsad Mortuza is Professor of English, University of Dhaka (now on leave). Currently, he is Pro-Vice-Chancellor of ULAB. Email: shamsad71@hotmail.com

PROJECT ■ SYNDICATE

Will the coronavirus cause a major growth slowdown in China?



SHANG-JIN WEI

THE panic generated by the new coronavirus, 2019-nCov, which originated in Wuhan, one of China’s largest cities and a major domestic transport hub, reminds many of the fear and uncertainty at the peak of the 2003 SARS crisis. China’s stock market, after rising for months, has reversed itself in recent days, and global markets have followed suit, apparently reflecting concerns about the epidemic’s impact on the Chinese economy and global growth. Are these worries justified?

My baseline projection is that the coronavirus outbreak will get worse before it gets better, with infections and deaths possibly peaking in the second or third week of February. But I expect that both the Chinese authorities and the World Health Organization (WHO) will declare the epidemic to be under control by early April.

Under this baseline scenario, my best estimate is that the virus will have only a limited negative economic impact. Its effect on Chinese GDP growth rate in 2020 is likely to be small, perhaps a decline on the order of 0.1 percentage point. The effect in the first quarter of 2020 will be big, perhaps lowering growth by one percentage point on an annualised basis, but this will be substantially offset by above-trend growth during the rest of the year. The impact on world GDP growth will be even smaller.

Such a prediction recalls the experience of the 2003 SARS crisis: a big decline in China’s GDP growth in the second quarter of that year was then largely offset by higher growth in the subsequent two quarters. While the full-year growth rate in 2003 was about 10 percent, many investment banks’ economists over-predicted the epidemic’s negative impact on growth. Looking at annual real GDP

growth rates from 2000 to 2006, it is very hard to see a SARS effect in the data.

Some fear that the epidemic’s timing—at the start of the week-long Chinese New Year celebration, and in the middle of traditional school-break travels—will exacerbate the economic fallout by keeping many people away from shops, restaurants, and travel hubs. But three important factors may limit the virus’s impact.

First, in contrast to the SARS outbreak, China is now in the Internet commerce age, with consumers increasingly doing their shopping online. Much of the reduction in offline sales owing to the

year. The short-term negative impact is thus likely to be concentrated among restaurants, hotels, and airlines.

Second, all reports indicate that the Wuhan coronavirus is less deadly than SARS (although it may have a faster rate of transmission initially). Equally important, the Chinese authorities have been much swifter than they were during the SARS episode in moving from controlling information to controlling the spread of the virus. By implementing aggressive measures to isolate actual and potential patients from the rest of the population, the authorities have improved

will be even more limited. During the last half-decade, many major central banks have developed models to gauge the impact of a slowdown in China on their economies. These models were not built with the current health crisis in mind, but they do take into account trade and financial linkages between China and their respective economies.

As a rule of thumb, the negative impact of a decrease in China’s GDP growth on the US and European economies is about one-fifth as large in percentage terms. For example, if the current coronavirus epidemic lowers China’s growth rate by 0.1 percentage point, then growth in the US and Europe is likely to slow by about 0.02 percentage point. The impact on Australia’s economy may be twice as large, given its stronger commodity-trade and tourism links with China, but a 0.04-percentage-point reduction in growth is still small.

Such calculations assume that the coronavirus does not spread widely to these countries and cause direct havoc. This currently seems unlikely, given the still low number of cases outside China.

Of course, the impact on China and other economies could be more severe if the coronavirus crisis were to last much longer than this baseline scenario assumes. In that case, it is important to remember that Chinese policymakers still have room for both monetary and fiscal expansion: the banking-sector reserve ratio is relatively high, and the share of public-sector debt to GDP is still manageable compared to China’s international peers. By using this policy space when necessary, China’s authorities could limit the ultimate impact of the current health crisis.

The coronavirus outbreak is understandably causing alarm in China and elsewhere. But from an economic perspective, it is too early to panic.

Shang-Jin Wei, a former chief economist at the Asian Development Bank, is Professor of Finance and Economics at Columbia Business School and Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs. Copyright: Project Syndicate, 2020. www.project-syndicate.org (Exclusive to The Daily Star)

My baseline projection is that the coronavirus outbreak will get worse before it gets better, with infections and deaths possibly peaking in the second or third week of February. But I expect that both the Chinese authorities and the World Health Organization (WHO) will declare the epidemic to be under control by early April. Under this baseline scenario, my best estimate is that the virus will have only a limited negative economic impact.

virus will likely be offset by an increase in online purchases. And most of the vacations cancelled today will probably be replaced by future trips, because better-off households have already set aside a holiday travel budget.

Many factories have scheduled production stoppages during the Chinese New Year holidays anyway, so the timing of the epidemic may minimise the need for further shutdowns. Similarly, many government offices and schools had planned holiday closures independently of the virus outbreak. The government has just announced an extension of the holiday period, but many companies will find ways to make up the lost time later in

their chances of containing the epidemic much sooner. That, in turn, increases the likelihood that the lost economic output this quarter will be offset by increased activity in the remainder of the year.

Third, whether or not China’s trade negotiators realised the severity of the Wuhan virus when they signed the “phase one” trade deal with the United States on January 15, the timing of the agreement has turned out to be fortunate. By greatly increasing its imports of facemasks and medical supplies from the US (and elsewhere), China can simultaneously tackle the health crisis and fulfil its promise under the deal to import more goods.

The virus’s impact on other economies

Welcome, New Stewards of Dhaka

Wishing the capital's mayors every success



ASHFAQUE SWAPAN

As citizens of Dhaka vote for Dhaka's twin city corporation elections today, this is a good time to take stock of their significance. We underestimate the importance of these elections at our peril. It may well be true that city corporation elections aren't exciting. Garbage collection, traffic jams and power outages aren't the stuff of breathtaking news. But civic elections are vital for a nation's democratic sustenance.

They may lack the soaring rhetoric of lofty national aspirations, the broad historical sweep often found in the stump pitches of national candidates. Pundits, brows furrowed, don't pontificate upon the great significance of the lurch of the voting public this way or the other in city polls.

Yet city corporation elections are important for a simple reason: this is where the rubber hits the ground.

The very reasons that make these elections so boring are the ones that underlie its significance. City corporation elections, after all, are about governance in its purest form. Voters don't give a toss about bitter

polemical debates. What they care about is getting things done: they want pothole-free paved roads, uninterrupted power supply, regular garbage collection and public safety. None of this, thank goodness, lends itself to partisan demagoguery.

This is the reason a vibrant, democratically elected city government (or two—since Dhaka is split into two) has the potential to be the perfect incubator of a political process paving the way to pragmatic governance. Successful city politicians are by necessity pragmatic problem solvers.

Then there is the lopsided significance of Dhaka. Everything of political significance in Bangladesh happens in Dhaka, the city which is the political, cultural, intellectual and financial heart of the nation. A successful mayor, backed by a solid track record, not only has an excellent launching pad for a bigger, national career. He has the potential to provide the nation something in extraordinarily short supply: a politician who can get things done.

Ensuring services is only part of the story. The real secret of effective civic governance is the management of expectations. This has to be done while balancing the needs and demands of a wide variety of constituencies, sometimes at odds with each other.

Some of the greatest leaders in the history of the Bengalis honed their political skills

in city government. Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huq, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy and Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das—all served stints as mayor of Kolkata.

It is no accident that during the convulsive years of pre-Partition subcontinental politics, these were among the very few leaders best equipped to tackle the explosive Hindu-Muslim tensions that tore the subcontinent apart. They did not ultimately succeed; but most historians concede that these were the leaders most capable of reconciling the political differences between the two communities.

That's one of the most valuable lessons of city government. Getting elected is just the beginning. You want to get elected to a new term? You better perform.

City politicians tend to be a result-oriented lot. They cut deals, cajole, convince and reconcile recalcitrant interest groups, solve problems, manage crises.

One of the most unfortunate facts for Bangladesh is that for long periods of its history, the region has been deprived of the benefits of a democratically functioning city government. Although the Dhaka Municipality was established in 1864, the first elected mayor by popular vote, Mohammad Hanif, took office in 1994. Until then, all mayors were appointed by the

government.

The city administration became Dhaka Municipality Corporation in 1976. In 1990, it became Dhaka City Corporation. In 2011, the Awami League government dissolved the Dhaka City Corporation and split it into two corporations, North and South, with the southern wing holding more territory than the north.

Annisul Huq, who was elected mayor of the Dhaka North City Corporation in 2015, gave Bangladeshis a brilliant glimpse of the wondrous possibilities of a city government that works. Before his unexpected and heartbreaking demise, his dynamic leadership led to clearing of illegally occupied parking lots near bus stops in Mohammadpur, Kalyanpur and Mohakhali, cleared a decades-long illegal truck stop infested by drug peddlers. (Credit is definitely due to the national government, which gave Annisul *carte blanche*.)

Where would have Annisul gone in the future? We have no way of knowing now, but if history is any guide, he could well have followed the steps of illustrious Bengali leaders like Fazlul Huq, Suhrawardy or Bose.

What is indubitable is that dynamic, can-do leaders provide vital new energy into national politics with their first-hand skills of efficient governance. That, in a nutshell, is the promise of the elections that will bring

us two mayors of the city we so dearly love.

However, there are a few conditions to be fulfilled before that promise becomes a reality.

Elections have to be genuinely free, fair and robustly contested. Institutions have to be clean and empowered to do their job without political let or hindrance. The greater powers that be—including the national government—need to be willing to get out of the way when city governments take stern measures to fix the city ills—it will invariably have to step on some pretty influential toes.

Will these conditions be fulfilled?

Given our recent history, it's not very easy to be confident. One of the unfortunate facts of postcolonial nations all over the world is that while the outward appearances of democratic institutions have survived, in many cases they have become hollow shells which have succumbed more and more to autocratic tendencies.

Time will tell as the newly elected mayors take office. They face an exciting future as they realise that getting elected mayor is not an end in itself, but the beginning of a challenging political journey.

Here's to wishing them success!

Ashfaque Swapan is a contributing editor for Siliconeer, a digital daily for South Asians in the United States.

The People's Manifesto

As citizens of Dhaka North and Dhaka South go to the polls today to elect their mayors for the next five years, all eyes are on how judiciously they exercise their franchise. Apart from their political leanings, one thing that is likely to impact their decision is what they make of the pledges by the mayoral hopefuls, which will potentially direct their action if or when they get elected. After the release of manifestos by the four frontrunners in DNCC and DSCC, backed respectively by the ruling Awami League and the opposition BNP, we asked our readers to make their own manifesto, highlighting how they envision this city and what changes they look forward to seeing in it. Many have sent their comments. Below is a compilation of some of the comments.

The perfect manifesto for Dhaka: Population control!

To me, this old, historic city is dying. The only thing that is developing in Dhaka is its population. The ideal manifesto for this city—and the only way to make it liveable again—involves decentralisation. If decentralisation is complex to implement in the short term, at least stop new activities like the development of new industries, educational institutions and public amenities that would draw people from other districts. If we can limit the number of people in this city, we can at least work towards creating some semblance of peace here.

- Obydur Rahman Shazol

Four steps to a liveable and lovable Dhaka

I have a four-point demand for the Dhaka I want to see:

First, minimise its traffic problem as soon as possible because it is getting out of hand. Strict steps should be taken against those who violate the traffic rules.

Second, take pragmatic steps to prevent waterlogging caused by rain and other reasons. It has to be solved on a priority basis as it is a common

foremost, a major initiative to educate its residents about how to behave and live in a city in order to make it liveable, decent and smart. Citizens have to conform to an acceptable and respectable standard of behaviour that matches with the higher level of economic growth.

The City Corporations should come up with a major education programme to teach people about the fundamental social skills and norms: not to spit, stare at women, talk loudly in public places, or blow horn unnecessarily, to respect employees, traffic rules for the traffic police, how to use a public toilet and keep it clean, among various other issues. These public educating programmes should be the first entry point for making Dhaka liveable. Look at the footpaths: their condition was better during Mayor Annisul's time, but they're all in terrible condition now, even in Banani-Gulshan area.

- Chanchal Khan

Solve traffic problem

Tackle the traffic congestion in the city, please! Dhaka is a mega city and has many problems, but I think if congestion on the roads can be alleviated, we will see a positive change in all aspects of our lives. Experts say

utilised to their full extent, we may see an immediate increase in their capacity for vehicular movement and that should help ease the congestion right away.

Second, get rid of the unfit vehicles. There are thousands of vehicles in Dhaka that are not fit to be on the roads. They contribute to the congestion not only by their sheer number, but also by breaking down in the middle of the roads in busy traffic. And these unfit vehicles also contribute to the increasing environmental pollution.

Third, bar the unauthorised drivers. We should not allow illegal and unauthorised drivers to operate vehicles on our roads. There are apparently close to a million illegal drivers in the country and a good chunk of them are likely plying the roads in Dhaka. They contribute to the road accidents and create havoc by not complying with the traffic regulations. Removing these drivers from the roads will certainly help ease the congestion.

Granted, taking up these challenges would not be easy. However, we should do all we can, be it commissioning special task forces, utilising the elite law enforcement force or asking for help from other agencies to tackle these

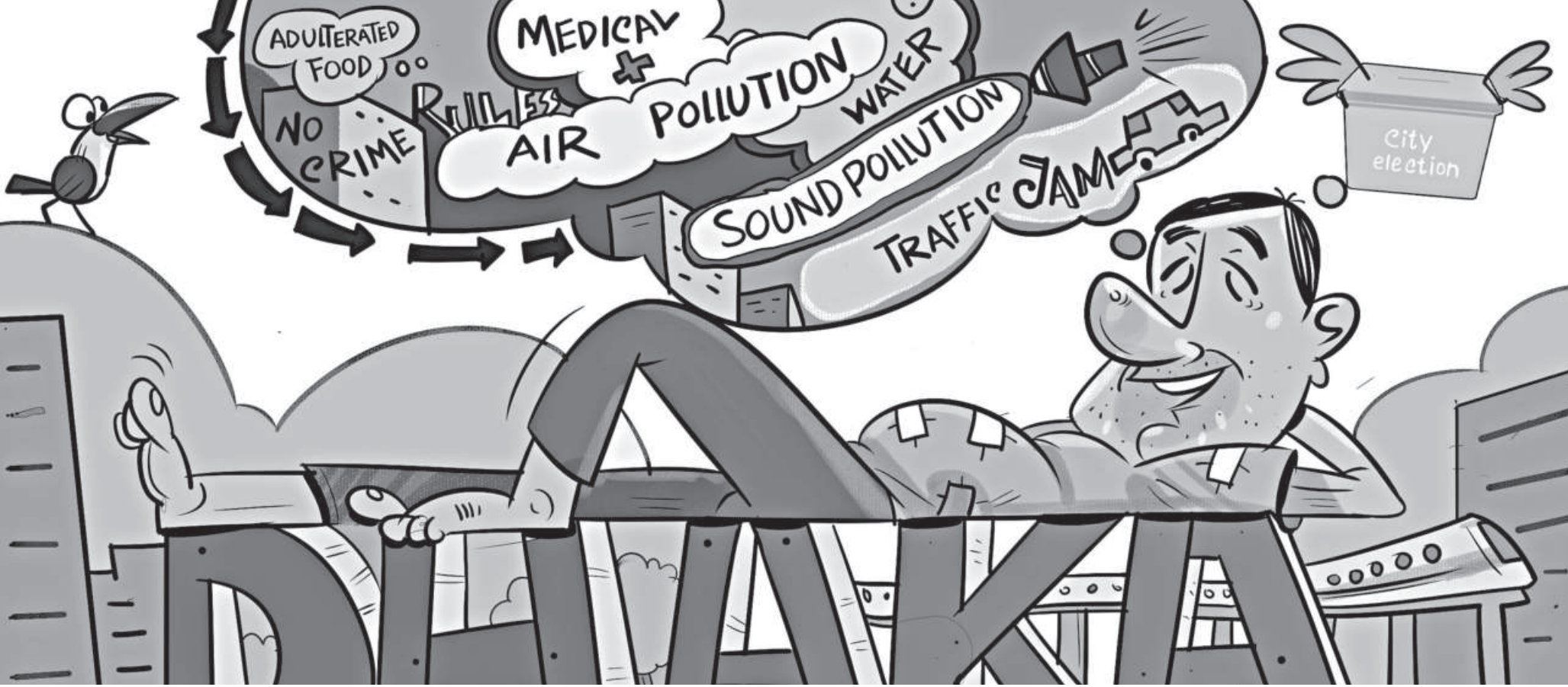
number in the workforce decreasing despite their advancements in various fields? One former Minister of State for Women and Children Affairs in Bangladesh said that many educated and capable women are unable to stay employed because they don't know where their children can stay safely when they are at work.

Since having a baby, I have been looking at my city through a new lens. Before parenthood, I could move through the city relatively freely on my own schedule. Now, like other working mothers in Dhaka, I have to juggle between work and family on a daily basis.

As a working mother in Dhaka city, ensuring quality time for my children has become one of the most challenging jobs. A few days ago, there was an event at my five-year-old son's school and he just wanted his mother to pick him up from there. Sadly, I couldn't reach on time and had asked someone else to pick up instead. I started from the High Court, 30 minutes before his school ends, but still couldn't make it due to traffic. My disappointed son thinks his mother should buy a helicopter to reach his school from work on time.

After I come back from work, it is

The immense traffic and awful road conditions need to be addressed. Though the long boulevards of Gulshan are maintained with care, the roads leading out of this area are riddled with massive potholes. In addition to this, the insane driving is a huge hazard.



problem for the people of Dhaka.

Third, put in place a proper waste management system. It is past time that the authorities do something about Dhaka's burgeoning and poorly managed waste, which causes both nuisance for the residents and environmental concerns. Bad odour is everywhere!

Fourth, the feedback of the common people needs to be heard and worked upon for a better Dhaka. Can there be a system to institutionalise this process?

- Shakil Mahamud

Need for a mass education programme

I think Dhaka needs, first and

we do not have enough road coverage. Some say there are too many cars on the streets. Both may be the case, but we should do the things we can in the short term to address the ever-increasing traffic problem that we have to endure every day.

There can be a three-pronged approach to deal with this:

First, reclaim the roads. Most of the roads in Dhaka are not utilised to their full capacity. In many cases, only the first one or two lanes are used for ongoing traffic. The left lanes are predominantly occupied by street hawkers, illegally parked vehicles, etc. If the majority of the city roads can be

issues soon if we want to restore any sense of sanity for our city dwellers when it comes to dealing with the traffic stress.

- Sajedul Huq

Make Dhaka friendly for working mothers

Dhaka is home to millions of mothers who wish to live in a family-friendly city. Today, young mothers are more likely to be in the workforce—putting in more hours outside their homes. Women now make up almost half of the labour force globally. But in Bangladesh, women's participation in the labour market is not satisfactory. The question is, why is women's

almost bed time for my kids; I want to take them out for a walk, but it's never been possible.

So my answer to what will make Dhaka a better place to live in is: make it a more mother and kid friendly city.

- Tasmiyah Nuhya Ahmed

A foreigner's take on a city of limitless potential

I see Dhaka as a city of limitless potential. As gargantuan towers are erected seemingly daily, it's abundantly clear that Dhaka is an economically valuable city, filled with business people hailing from all walks of life. But for the city to flourish, there's much that needs to be done.

Firstly, one of the most prominent things foreigners notice when coming to Dhaka is the immense poverty. There are desperate people in need of help, people that could contribute to the expansion and betterment of Dhaka, yet they are largely ignored and left to suffer. The city needs to work out a solution.

Secondly, one thing that I have experienced first-hand is how difficult it can be for a woman. I am British and Southeast Asian, so I'm always cautious to dress decently, and ensure my legs and arms are covered, but on numerous occasions, I have been sexually harassed by men who think that they're entitled to touch me inappropriately and question me about incredibly personal matters. I have even had some outright proposition for sex, because in their eyes, I'm a foreign woman on her own, and therefore a prostitute that is undeserving of autonomy and respect. This needs to change.

Thirdly, the immense traffic and awful road conditions need to be addressed. Though the long boulevards of Gulshan are maintained with care, the roads leading out of this area are riddled with massive potholes. In addition to this, the insane driving is a huge hazard. Cars zigzag between lanes with abandon, and the buses suddenly swerve without warning. These buses were the source of much controversy when a number of university students were mercilessly mowed down.

More needs to be done to enforce the rules of the road, and stricter punishments must be implemented to deter drivers from running people over sans consequence. In addition to this, alleged "VIPs" should not be allowed to close the roads for their sake. This entitled mindset highlights the vast divide between the rich and the poor, and the former should not be allowed special privileges that are an inconvenience to the latter just because they perceive themselves to be more important.

- Dizzi

WHAT'S ON

Group Art Exhibition
Title: Three Worlds
Venue: Shilpangan Gallery,
Lalmatia, Dhaka
Date: January 31 –
February 11
Time: 3 pm – 8 pm

Winter Festival
Title: Heem Utshab
Venue: Jahangirnagar University
Date: February 6-7
Time: 10 am onwards

Book Fair
Title: Amar Ekushey Boi Mela
Organiser: Bangla Academy
Venue: Bangla Academy
Premises
Date: Feb 2 - 29
Time: 3 pm onwards

Group Art Exhibition
Title: Breaking Ground: Modern Art
in Transition
Venue: Subir Choudhury Exhibition
Hall, Bengal Shilpalay, Dhanmondi
Date: Dec 17 – Feb 15
Time: 1 pm – 8 pm (Except Sundays)

Group Art Exhibition
Title: 7
Venue: Galleri Kaya, Uttara
Date: January 24 –
February 7
Time: 11:30 am – 7:30 pm



Abul Hayat



Animesh Aich

PHOTOS: STAR

Stars who are releasing books at the Ekushey Boi Mela

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

The much awaited Ekushey Boi Mela opens tomorrow. Like every year, besides the literary professionals, many stars of the showbiz world have authored their own books, which will be released at the fair.



Asif Akbar



Putul



Shanu

Noted actor Abul Hayat writes books for the Ekushey Boi Mela regularly. This year, he will be coming up with three books. Out of the three, *Time Bank*, a story book and *Priyo Opriyo*, a compilation of five plays, are published by Priyo Bangla Publishers. The other one, *Echhara Ashar*, a story book, is published by Boi Pustok Prakashan.

Lux Superstar Shanarei Devi Shanu will be coming up with a novel, *Lipstick* by Anwesha Publication and a poetry book. Singer Putul, who wrote a book for the fair last year, will be returning with *Kalo Golaper Bhitore Theke Utsharito Alobrittyanto*, published by Tamralipi Publications. The book will be available from

the first day of the Ekushey Boi Mela.

Naznin Hasan Chumki is a prominent name in theatre and television. Besides acting, she has directed and written many plays and scripts for tele-fictions as well. She is making her debut as a writer with the novel *Binita*, published by Nagori Prokashon. On the other hand, singer Lopa Hossain's novel, *Amar Ekta Tumi Chai*, is published by Desh Publications.

Renowned director Animesh Aich's second novel *Jamini* by Tamralipi will also be available. Popular singer Asif Akbar will be making his debut as a writer with *Pothkora to Manhattan*.

Deepika Padukone and Rishi Kapoor to headline the Hindi remake of 'The Intern'

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Deepika Padukone recently took to Twitter to announce her next project. The film, also starring Rishi Kapoor, will be the Indian adaptation of Hollywood film *The Intern*, which featured Robert De Niro and Anne Hathaway in the lead roles.

Speaking about the film, Rishi Kapoor said in a statement, "*The Intern* is a very relevant film for the present-day Indian workplace milieu and it showcases human relationships beautifully. I am very excited to be working with Deepika and being a part of this heart-warming story. It is great that Warner Bros. and Azure are



officially making this film in India."

The Hollywood film revolves around a septuagenarian who takes up an internship at an e-commerce fashion startup, managed by a young woman. How their relationship develops over time forms the crux of the plot.



PHOTOS: COLLECTED

PHOTO: COURTESY

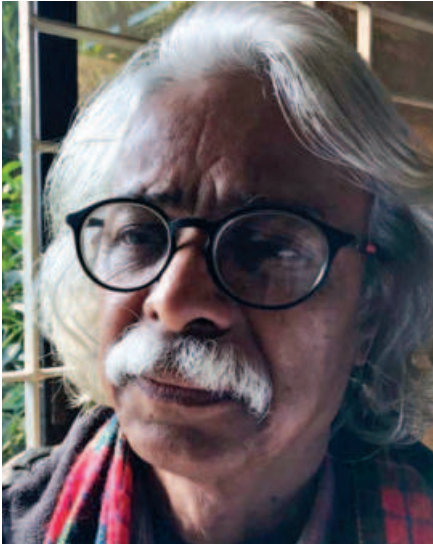
SHOMOYER GOLPO underway at Kala Kendra

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

A solo art exhibition titled, *Shomoyer Golpo*, by Habibur Rahman, is ongoing at Kala Kendra, Mohammadpur. The exhibition opened on January 17, curated by artist Wakilur Rahman. Eminent artist professor Rafiqun Nabi and Mahmudul Helal inaugurated the exhibition.

Artist and art critique, Javed Jalil, spoke at the event. "Artist Habib enjoys the stimulus of conscious willingness to discover the versatile interventions of one's urges," he said.

The exhibition is open for all till February 18 from 4:30 pm to 8:30 pm every day.



Habibur Rahman



A cultural exchange programme between Bangladesh and Nepal held in Manikganj

ZAHANGIR SHAH, from Manikganj

An education delegation team from Nepal visited Manikganj SK Government Girls High School in the district town, recently. The delegation team was comprised of 26 members, including Ranjan Yadav, Second Secretary, Embassy of Nepal in Dhaka, Bhoj Raj Khatiwoda, Chief Administrative Officer and Baudha Raj Niraula, Undersecretary, Shankharapur Municipality of Bagmati, Nepal, along with three other officials and head teachers from 21 one secondary schools of the municipality.

The day began with the delegates visiting Manikganj Government High School where the Head teacher of the school Kamrun Nahar received them with flowers.

Representatives of the Nepali team, led by Man Bahadur Tamang, Head Teacher of Shree Sarada Secondary School, performed after the event. Assistant teacher Mahidur Rahman of the SK Girls High School presented Lalon song and was accompanied by a dance routine by the students.

The team also visited Manikganj Municipality and participated in a discussion with its mayor Gazi Kamrul Huda Selim.



PHOTO: STAR

BRITAIN'S YEARS-LONG BATTLE OVER BREXIT

The curtain came down on Britain's membership of the European Union yesterday after more than three and a half years of disagreements and delays. Here are the milestones in the rocky process.

LEAVE WINS

In a referendum on June 23, 2016 that followed decades of arguments over Europe, Britons vote by 52 percent to 48 percent to become the first nation to leave the EU bloc. Conservative leader David Cameron, who led the campaign to remain in the EU and called the vote expecting to win, resigns as prime minister the next day. He is replaced by Theresa May, the interior minister who also backed remaining.

DIVORCE PROCESS TRIGGERED

May formally triggers the exit process on March 29, 2017, sending a notification letter to Brussels that gives Britain until March 29, 2019, to leave.

DRAFT AGREED

Ending more than a year of acrimonious talks, British and EU negotiators on November 13, 2018, reach a draft divorce deal. But May faces an angry backlash from her own Conservative party over its terms.

TRIPLE REJECTION

On January 15, 2019, British MPs vote against the deal in the biggest government defeat in British parliamentary history. Brussels refuses to renegotiate. The House of Commons rejects the deal again on March 12 and for a third time on March 29.

DEADLINE DELAYS

The EU agrees to delay Brexit until May 22 and then until October 31, 2019. It means Britain is obliged to organise European Parliament elections on May 23, which are won by the newly-formed Brexit Party of anti-EU populist Nigel Farage.



JOHNSON ELECTED

The European election defeat and parliament's refusal to back her Brexit deal forces May to step down as Conservative leader on June 7. On July 23, party members vote for Brexit figurehead Boris Johnson as their new leader. He becomes prime minister the next day. Anxious over Farage's surge in support, Johnson promises to take Britain out of the EU on October 31, with or without a deal. He publishes his "final" Brexit proposals on October 2.

THE ENDGAME

On October 22, British MPs approve in principle a new Brexit deal struck days earlier with the EU. But they reject Johnson's bid to fast-track final approval before October 31. On October 28, EU members agree to postpone Brexit for up to three months until January 31, 2020.

ELECTIONS, GREEN LIGHT

Johnson's resounding win at a December 12 snap general election smoothes his Brexit bill's passage through parliament on January 9, 2020. Queen Elizabeth II gives her formal assent for Britain to leave the EU on January 23, with two top officials in Brussels and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson signing it the following day.

THEN FINALLY ... BREXIT

Divorce happened yesterday. An extendable transition period, during which much in the relationship will not change, has been agreed up to December 31, 2020. More tough talks on the future EU-UK partnership are expected by then.

SOURCE: AFP



British members of the European Parliament from the Brexit Party pose for a photograph as they leave the European Parliament, in Brussels, on the Brexit day yesterday. Inset, Pro-EU anti-Brexit protesters hold placards in Parliament Square in London as UK formally leaves the European Union.

PHOTO: AFP

'New dawn for Europe'

EU chiefs hail as UK quits, warn London would not keep the benefits of membership

AFP, Brussels

The EU's three chiefs hailed Britain's departure from the bloc yesterday as "a new dawn for Europe", warning London would not keep the benefits of membership when it leaves.

Charles Michel, Ursula von der Leyen and David Sassoli -- the presidents of the EU Council, European Commission and European Parliament, respectively -- used an open letter published in European newspapers to say they would do "everything in their power" to make the new relationship with Britain a success.

Britain's 47-year membership of the bloc ended on the stroke of 2300 GMT -- midnight Brussels time, three and a half years after a shock referendum vote to leave.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has promised to "get Brexit done" and unite the country in a new era of prosperity, but months of difficult negotiations with Brussels about the shape of future ties lie ahead.

The three EU leaders made clear they would not roll over easily or allow Britain to "have its cake and eat it", insisting Britain could not have full access to the EU market unless it

agrees to follow European labour, taxation and environmental rules.

"How close that partnership will be depends on decisions that are still to be taken," they wrote.

"Without being a member, you cannot retain the benefits of membership."

Britain cannot have full access to EU market unless it agrees to follow European taxation, environmental rules

Nothing will immediately feel different during 11-month transition period

Nothing will immediately feel different thanks to an 11-month transition period negotiated as part of an EU-UK exit deal ratified this week.

Britons will be able to work in and trade freely with EU nations until December 31, and vice versa, although the UK will no longer be represented in the bloc's institutions.

While Brexit supporters are celebrating, the

EU leaders said they would approach the day as one of "reflection and mixed emotions", reiterating their deep regret at Britain's departure.

"But tomorrow will also mark a new dawn for Europe," they went on.

"The last few years have brought us closer together -- as nations, as institutions and as people. This is why the Member States of Europe will continue to join forces and build a common future."

During the transition period, Britain will continue to apply EU laws but will no longer be represented in EU institutions, and British diplomats in Brussels will have to surrender their passes to the European Council.

EU officials were reminded this week, ahead of Britain's exit, that they should not disclose confidential information about the bloc's business.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is expected to announce his government's negotiating agenda next week, perhaps -- like Barnier -- as early as Monday. But if a new trade deal is to be agreed it will have to be done in record time -- the post-Brexit "standstill" period when the rules remain the same will expire in 11 months.

CORONAVIRUS SCARE

Myanmar sends back China plane

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar yesterday sent a plane back to China with most passengers still on board -- including French and American citizens -- after one man suspected of contracting the coronavirus was taken to hospital.

No cases of the pathogen that has killed 213 people in China have been reported in Myanmar so far but fears have been growing in the impoverished Southeast Asian nation that shares a border with its powerful neighbour.

A total of 79 people were on board the China Southern Airline flight from Guangzhou, including two Americans, two French, two Myanmar, one Columbian and 72 Chinese nationals, according to airport officials. One Chinese passenger was taken to a nearby hospital after displaying possible symptoms of the virus, said civil aviation department manager Soe Paing.

An AFP reporter saw health-workers wearing full protective gear greeting an airport ambulance.

The two Myanmar nationals were also allowed to disembark and taken to the same hospital for checks, Soe Paing added.

"The rest of the people on the flight were sent back."

An airport police officer also confirmed the passengers' return.

Despite a lack of confirmed cases in the country experts fear its fragile health system is in no way capable of coping with a serious outbreak.

Myanmar is also waiting for permission to evacuate more than 60 students trapped in Wuhan since the city, the origin of the epidemic, was sealed off last week.

REUTERS, Shanghai

The coronavirus is threatening to disrupt large parts of China's manufacturing machine and its global supply chains as the spread of infection and strict public health measures force companies and workers to remain idle.

China's most important holiday was set to end yesterday, when many companies planned to get back to work after a week-long vacation, but authorities have ordered businesses in many areas to stay shut longer in a bid to contain the disease.

Widespread travel restrictions, meanwhile, mean millions of migrant workers may be unable to return to what has often been called the world's factory floor.

The World Health Organization on Thursday declared the outbreak a global health emergency as the death toll in China reached more than 200, with over 9,000 infected.

Brian Miller, 32, owner of Easy



Local residents fill a drone with disinfectant before spray at a village in Pingdingshan, in China's central Henan province yesterday, during the virus outbreak in Hubei's city of Wuhan.

PHOTO: AFP

China Warehouse and a bluetooth speaker company in the southern city of Shenzhen, said labour and production disruptions could ripple through supply chains, from raw materials to final assembly.

"If we can't get back to production quick enough, I'll run out of inventory, and I'll have a few months where we won't be able to sell anything. And that's the catastrophe that we all don't want," Miller told Reuters.

US House votes to repeal Iraq war authorisation

ALJAZEERA ONLINE

Refocusing a debate on President Donald Trump's moves in the Middle East in the midst of the Senate impeachment trial, the Democratic-controlled House on Thursday approved measures reasserting congressional authority over war powers.

The House passed a proposal to repeal the 2002 congressional authorisation for the war in Iraq, as well as a plan to prevent tax dollars from being used to take military action against Iran without congressional approval. Repeal of the 2002 authorisation was approved by a 236-166 vote, while the funding measure on Iran passed 228-175.

The actions follow a January 9 vote by the House asserting that President Trump must seek approval from Congress before engaging in further military action against Iran.

Democrats said the three measures,

taken together, would reassert Congress's constitutional authority in questions of war and peace and sending American forces into harm's way.

"For far too long, Congress has been missing in action on matters of war and peace," said Democratic Representative Barbara Lee, who sponsored the measure repealing 2002 war authorisation.

She called the repeal vote long overdue. "It is time to end giving blank checks to any president to wage endless wars," she said.

Republicans said Lee and fellow Democrats were the ones acting irresponsibly.

"After President Trump took decisive action to take out a brutal Iranian terrorist responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Americans, Democrats now seek to restrain our president and restrict his ability to protect our nation," said Representative Steve Scalise, the number 2 House Republican.



POLICE-REBEL GUNFIGHT

3 militants killed, 1 cop hurt in Kashmir

ALJAZEERA ONLINE

At least three fighters were killed and a policeman sustained injuries during a gunfight between rebels and security forces in Indian-administered Kashmir, police said yesterday.

"So far three terrorists have been gunned down," a police spokesperson told Al Jazeera. "One policeman was also injured in the gunfight."

Police said the gun battle started at around 5:00am yesterday after police intercepted a Srinagar-bound goods truck near a toll plaza in Nagrota on the outskirts of the southern city of Jammu.

The rebels travelling in the truck fired on police leading to an encounter, police said.

A senior police officer said, "As of now the gunfight has stopped but we have cordoned the area and search operation is going on."

"We are searching the area to check if there might be a fourth terrorist as well," said Mukesh Singh, the inspector general of police, Jammu.

The officials suspect the militants might have planned to carry out attack at vital installations as well as security camps along the nearly 300-km highway. Four weapons and large quantity of ammunition and explosives have been recovered, the DGP said. Singh suspected the militants to be foreigners.

Authorities have suspended traffic on the main road in the wake of the firing.

'Biggest gamble'?

UK media express both joy, remorse

AFP, London

Britain's Brexit-day front pages expressed both joy at the country's imminent departure from the European Union and remorse and trepidation yesterday as the UK prepares to go it alone after nearly half a century as part of the bloc.

"Yes, we did it!" said the "Daily Express" tabloid, a fervent campaigner for Britain to leave the EU.

The headline was imposed over a map of the UK made up of front pages from the newspaper from the 43 months since the June 2016 vote, which saw three Brexit deadlines come and go before the British parliament finally ratified the divorce agreement.

"A new dawn for Britain," said its rival and fellow Brexit-supporting tabloid The Daily Mail.

The left-leaning Guardian was more circumspect, leading its front page with the words "Small Island" and describing Brexit as "the biggest gamble in a generation".

"PM wants Canada-style trade deal with Brussels," said the Times, leading with an article on Boris Johnson's attempts to flesh out his ideas for a free trade agreement along the lines of a recent EU deal with Canada.

"Britain bows out of EU with a mixture of optimism and regret," said The Financial Times.

"It's been quite a ride," splashed the business City AM paper over a mock-up of a roller coaster carriage filled with prominent faces from the Brexit saga.

In Scotland -- where a majority of voters chose to remain in the bloc -- the headlines were less jubilant.

In Edinburgh, The Scotsman went with "Farewell, not goodbye", above the word for farewell in 24 European languages.

The tabloid Daily Mirror gave most of its front page to the news that 150 Britons were in quarantine over coronavirus fears. On a smaller section of the page titled "Brexit Day", it said "Now it's time to bring country back together."

Police kill man holding 20 women hostage in India

Police shot dead a man holding around 20 women and children hostage at his house in northern India after a 10-hour standoff, state officials said yesterday. The hostages who were held at gunpoint were safe, principal secretary home Awanish Kumar Awasthi said after the raid at the house in a village in Farrukhabad in Uttar Pradesh state. The hostage taker was serving a life sentence for murder and was out on parole, he added. Two policemen and a villager were injured in the rescue operation. After the siege, a group of incensed villagers stormed the house where the children had been kept and attacked the hostage-taker's wife, Awasthi said.

Israel strikes Hamas targets after new Gaza rocket fire

Israeli aircraft struck Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip early yesterday in response to new rocket fire from the blockaded territory, the army said. Three rockets were fired at Israel overnight without causing any casualties. Two were intercepted by air defences, a statement said. Israel swiftly retaliated against Hamas, the Islamist movement which rules Gaza and which Israel generally holds responsible for all rocket fire from the territory, regardless of who launches it. The military struck "Hamas targets in the south of the Gaza Strip", the army said. Israel has deployed additional troops to the Gaza border area since US President Donald Trump unveiled a controversial new peace plan on Tuesday that was angrily rejected by the Palestinians.

Greta nominated for Nobel Peace Prize by Swedish MPs



Teen climate activist Greta Thunberg and the global protest movement "Fridays for Future" were nominated Thursday for the 2020 Nobel Peace Prize by two Swedish lawmakers. "Greta Thunberg is a climate activist, and the main reason she deserves the Nobel Peace Prize is that despite her young age, she has worked hard to make politicians open their eyes to the climate crisis," Left Party parliamentarians Jens Holm and Hakan Svanenling wrote in a letter to the Norwegian Nobel Committee. The pair added that without the Fridays For Future movement and Greta Thunberg, "the climate issue would not have been on the agenda to such an extent as it is today."

SOURCE: REUTERS, AFP

Mominul set to lead in Rawalpindi

Selectors expected to name Test squad today

SPORTS REPORTER



Mominul Haque is set to be retained as captain of the Bangladesh Test side when the selectors announce the squad team for the first Test of a two-match series against Pakistan, which is expected to happen today.

Chief selector Minhajul Abedin has already submitted the Test team to the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) and it was learned that there will be a few changes from the previous Test side that played in India in November last year, when Bangladesh lost the series 2-0.

According to Minhajul, the upcoming series will be a tough challenge for Bangladesh as he expects the conditions in Pakistan to be difficult.

“We have already submitted a Test team to the board and it is expected to be announced tomorrow [Saturday]. The BCB decides about the captain but as far as we know Mominul will lead the side for the first Test against Pakistan. We have some injury concerns as Shadman Islam is suffering from a wrist injury while Mehedi Hasan Miraz is also suffering from a finger injury,” Minhajul told The Daily Star yesterday.

It was learned that another left-handed opener Nazmul Hossain Shanto, who played his last Test against Zimbabwe two

years ago, is likely to replace Shadman while off-spinner Nayeem Hasan is expected to be Mehedi's replacement.

With the first Test in Rawalpindi from February 7 less than two weeks away, the BCB hurriedly started preparations to host the Bangladesh Cricket League, a franchise-based first-class competition that kicked off yesterday.

That raised questions over whether it would be sufficient preparation for the Tigers to put up a fight against the home side, but Minhajul said the BCL games would be the best preparations keeping the short preparation time in mind.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo had a meeting with Tigers' ODI skipper Mashrafe Bin Mortaza alongside chief selector Minhajul at the home of the cricket in Mirpur during the BCL game yesterday.

According to Minhajul, Domingo and Mashrafe had a courtesy meeting as they haven't talked to each other in a long time.

Bangladesh are scheduled to travel to Pakistan on February 4. It will be the second phase of their tour of Pakistan, having played three T20Is in Lahore in January. Bangladesh will travel to Pakistan for the third and final phase to take part in a solitary ODI on April 3 in Karachi, which will be followed by the second Test from April 7 at the same venue.



East Zone spinner Taijul Islam's five-wicket haul restricted Central Zone 213 on the first day of their Bangladesh Cricket League encounter at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Pak beat Afg to reach semi

SPORTS REPORTER

Pakistan Under-19s romped to the semifinal of the ongoing ICC Under-19 World Cup after beating their Afghan counterparts by six wickets during their Super League quarterfinal match at Willowmoore Park in Benoni yesterday.

Electing to bat, Afghanistan managed to score 189 in 49.1 overs before being bundled out. Afghanistan did not have any big partnerships going as skipper Farhan Zhakil's 55-ball 40 at the top and another 41-ball 30 from Abdul Rahman at the death helped Afghanistan reach the sub-par total. For Pakistan, right-arm pacer Mohammad Amir Khan shone the brightest with the ball, scalping three for 58.

After the exchange, riding on a 76-ball 64 from opener Mohammad Hurraira, Pakistan got over the line with 53 balls to spare. Pakistan will face India in the semifinal in Potchefstroom on February 4.

India win another Super Over thriller

AFP, Wellington



India snatched the fourth Twenty20 against New Zealand on Friday yet another Super Over was needed to separate the two sides after the scores were tied following the regulation 20 overs.

New Zealand, batting first in the decider, made 13 with Tim Seifert dropped twice before he was eventually dismissed. In reply, Indian captain Virat Kohli hit the winning runs with a ball to spare.

The third match also ended in a super over with Rohit Sharma hitting sixes off the last two balls to get India home. “What's happened in the last two games is unbelievable,” Kohli said. “It feels good when you are out of the game and then somehow find a way to come back and that shows the character of the team.”

The win puts India 4-0 up in the five match series with New Zealand stand-in captain Tim Southee not happy that his side could not wrap the game up in the 20 overs.

New Zealand, chasing India's 165 for eight, went into their last over only needing seven runs to win and with seven wickets in hand.

However, they were restricted to six runs and lost four wickets to finish 165 for seven and set up the Super Over.

SCORES IN BRIEF

INDIA: 165 for 8 in 20 overs (Rahul 39, Pandey 50 not out, Thakur 20; Bennett 2-41, Sodhi 3-26)

NEW ZEALAND: 165 for 7 in 20 overs (Munro 64, Seifert 57, Taylor 24; Thakur 2-33)

Result: Match tied, India won Super Over decider and lead the 5-match series 4-0.

Player-of-the-match: Shardul Thakur.

SPORTS REPORTER



The opening day of the Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) saw pacers run the show in Chattogram, where South Zone pacer Shafiu Islam picked four of his five wickets in the first over against fellow Bangladesh Cricket Board-run team North Zone at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium yesterday.

In an incredible first over, Liton Das became Shafiu first victim, trapped in front in the first



SHAFIU... 5 for 30

SCORES IN BRIEF

SOUTH ZONE: 262 all out in 67.4 overs (Fazle 125, Mahmudullah 31; Sumon 3-67, Ebadot 2-51)

NORTH ZONE: 46 for five in 12 overs (Rony 26 not out; Shafiu 5-30)

CENTRAL ZONE: 213 all out in 75.1 overs (Saif 58, Taibur 46; Taijul 5-58, Jayed 2-38)

EAST ZONE: 0 for no loss in 0.2 overs (Pinak 0 not out, Tamim 0 not out)

HIGHLIGHTS

● Pacers run riot in Chattogram with South Zone's Shafiu Islam taking four wickets in the very first over of the innings. Shafiu ended up taking his fourth fiver in first-class cricket.

● A total of 15 wickets were scalped in Chattogram yesterday and only one was taken by a leg-spinner, North Zone's Tanbir Hayder.

● South Zone's Fazle Mahmud was the only centurion of the day.

● East Zone's Taijul Islam completed his 22nd first-class five-wicket haul.

ball as a length delivery swung in and undid the right-hander. Junaid Siddique, the next batsman in, was able to sneak a double but he too fell prey to Shafiu's swing, this time the ball rattling the stumps.

Shafiu did create a hat-trick opportunity when he dispatched Mizanur Rahman in the same manner in the next ball. Although Naeem Islam was able to take a double in the next delivery to deny Shafiu a hat-trick, he too saw his stumps take flight in the final delivery of an emphatic over.

Rony Talukdar, who was just a mere spectator of Shafiu's carnage at the non-striker's end, remained unbeaten for a 42-ball 26. Shafiu completed his fiver in his final over of the day and ended with figures of five for 30 in six overs as North Zone managed 46 for five after 12 overs before stumps.

Earlier, South Zone posted 262 before being bundled out in 67.4 overs. On a day when pacers ran riot, it was South Zone batsman

Fazle Mahmud who saved his team from embarrassment. South Zone would not have been able to post a decent score if not for Fazle's 164-ball 125, laced with 17 fours and three maximums. The four North Zone pacers -- Taskin Ahmed, Ebadot Hossain, Sumon Khan and Ariful Haque -- shared nine of the 10 South Zone wickets.

At the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, East Zone spinner Taijul Islam bagged a fiver to help bowl out Central Zone for a modest 213 in 75.1 overs. Taijul gave away just 58 runs in 22 overs, of which eight were maidens. For Central Zone, opener Saif Hassan played a patient 214-ball 58 while it was a 60-ball 46 from Taibur Rahman in the middle that helped their cause. Both Saif and Taibur's eventually fell prey to Taijul's wiles.

After the exchange, East Zone played just two deliveries and were still to open their scoring when the umpires called stumps because of bad light.



India captain Virat Kohli (L) celebrates after hitting the winning boundary after a second successive T20I against New Zealand went to the Super Over in Wellington yesterday. India lead the five-match series 4-0.

PHOTO: BCCI

Ngidi, Shamsi fit for ODIs against Eng

ICC

South Africa seamer Lungi Ngidi, spinner Tabraiz Shamsi and all-rounder Jon-Jon Smuts are back in contention for the one-day international series against England, which begins on February 4.

All three players have passed their fitness tests at CSA's strength and conditioning camp. Sisanda Magala, who was also at the camp and named in the ODI squad, has not yet met the fitness requirements and will continue to work with fitness trainer Tumi Masekela, targeting the three-match Twenty20 International series that takes place after the ODIs.

“I'm proud of the work that's been achieved by the four players who have been in our high-performance camp for the last three weeks,” said Graeme Smith, the Cricket South Africa interim Director of Cricket.

“I'm pleased that Lungi, Tabraiz and Jon-Jon have been declared fully fit to join the ODI squad and I'm confident that Sisanda will be in that circle soon enough.”

Mendis helps SL to take series

AFP, Harare



Kusal Mendis struck an unbeaten century as Sri Lanka batted out the fifth day of the second and final Test against Zimbabwe at the Harare Sports Club on Friday to claim a draw and a 1-0 series win.

Zimbabwe had declared overnight on 247 for seven to set Sri Lanka an improbable target of 361 in 98 overs, and at 107 for one in the 39th over, the tourists may have felt in with a chance of victory. But when that became 140 for three, they gave up the chase and instead batted for the draw, reaching 204 for three at the close.

Mendis was superb for his 116 from 233 balls, a seventh Test century,

first as an aggressor in the chase for runs, and then for his stoic defence when it became apparent that a draw was the best result possible for Sri Lanka. The two matches are not for Test Championship points as Zimbabwe, briefly suspended from international cricket last year for government interference, are not part of the competition.

Zimbabwe made an early breakthrough at the start of the Sri Lanka second innings when Sri Lanka captain Dimuth Karunaratne (12) edged seamer Carl Mumba to wicketkeeper Regis Chakabva.

But Mendis and opener Oshada Fernando (47) put on 81 in 24.3 overs as Sri Lanka sensed there were still runs in the pitch, before the latter was trapped leg before wicket

by off-spinner Sikandar Raza, who finished with career-best match figures of 8-176.

When the dangerous Angelo Mathews (13) was caught at mid-on by Craig Ervine off seamer Victor Nyauchi, the tables turned in the favour of the hosts.

SCORES IN BRIEF

ZIMBABWE: First innings 406 and second innings 247 for 7 declared (Taylor 67, Williams 53 not out, Masvaure 35, Raza 34; Fernando 2-43, Embuldeniya 2-81)

SRI LANKA: First innings 293 and second innings 204 for 3 (Mendis 116 not out, Fernando 47; Mumba 1-13)

Result: Match drawn and Sri Lanka won the two-Test series 1-0.

Player-of-the-match: Sikandar Raza.



Sri Lanka batsman Kusal Mendis's unbeaten 116 on the final day guided the visitors to a draw in the second Test against Zimbabwe at the Harare Sports Club in Harare yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

What to WATCH

DAY'S EVENT

STAR SPORTS 3

ICC U-19s World Cup

Super League Play-off Semifinal 1

West Indies South Africa

Live from 2:00pm

SONY SIX

Australian Open Women's Final

Live from 2:30pm

STAR SPORTS SELECT 1

English Premier League

Leicester v Chelsea

Live from 6:30pm

Liverpool v Southampton

Live from 9:00pm

Man Utd v Wolves

Live from 11:30pm

Bangladesh Cricket League

Four-day Match, Day 2

North Zone v South Zone

Venue: ZACS, Chattogram


Central Zone v East Zone

Venue: SBNS, Dhaka

BANGABANDHU NAT'L C'SHIP

A silent impact

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangabandhu National Football Championship is silently advancing to its business end as the first-leg matches of the final round of eight different zones was completed yesterday, but the tournament -- which was revived after 13 years to celebrate the 100th birthday of Father of Nation Sheikh Mujibur Rahman -- has hardly draw spectators' attention due to a lack of publicity.

Naogaon, Pabna, Chattogram, Rajbari, Cumilla, Mymensingh and Netrokona won their first-leg matches, with the return legs scheduled for February 3, while the match between Bagerhat and Noakhali ended in a stalemate.

The championship's revival is certainly a commendable initiative from the Bangladesh Football Federation (BFF) as it gives each of the district teams an opportunity to play at least four matches on a home-and-away basis.

The winners progress to the Cup round while the losing teams play each other in the Plate round, a new format in the country's football. Previously, teams would leave the championship after losing their first match, but this initiative ensures they get to play three more matches regardless of the result in their first game.

However, the standards of the championship are far from the benchmark of leagues in Dhaka as district teams got little time to prepare. Some even had to face challenges in forming their squads due to the absence of football activities at the district level.

"We initially picked 40 players through a trial. We made announcements for the trial through large megaphones in all the upazilas and then trimmed it to 20 after training," Joypurhat DFA president Enayetur Rahman Akanda told The Daily Star yesterday. "The standards are more or less good, considering the championship is happening after a long period."

Joypurhat yesterday lost 3-0 to Naogaon after having previously played four matches and will play the home leg on February 3. However, Akanda said the financial assistance afforded by the BFF was not enough to play a home-and-away basis championship.

"We didn't face much trouble in forming the squad because the local league has been organised regularly. We picked players from those clubs. But we are struggling to meet expenses as we already spent Tk 1 lakh playing three away matches," said Sherpur DFA president Manik Laskor, whose side yesterday lost 0-1 to Netrokona.

However, Abdul Matin, who was match commissioner for three games, was disappointed with the poor turnout, observing only 1,000 to 2,000 spectators watching the matches in Kurigram, Nilphamari and Rajshahi.

"I'm really frustrated after observing the lack of enthusiasm and I mentioned the poor turnout at the stadium in my report. However, the players have been trying their best to perform although I think there is dearth of team cohesion due to a lack of preparation," said Matin.

Former referee Mansur Azad believes that fans and players would be more enthusiastic had the game's governing body allowed Bangladesh Premier League players, thereby drawing more people to the big bowl.


Another match commissioner seeking anonymity said that there were hardly any quality players due to the absence of district leagues, adding that the players in the competition were not technically sound.

However, the DFA presidents and the match commissioners urged the game's governing body to hold the championship every year, opining that the situation and standard of the game would gradually improve.

THIEM

outlasts Zverev

AFP, Melbourne

Tireless Dominic Thiem came from a set down to outlast German Alexander Zverev and make his first Australian Open final Friday, booking a showdown with seven-time champion Novak Djokovic.

The 26-year-old fifth seed, the first player from Austria ever to reach the Melbourne decider, battled past seventh-ranked Zverev 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7/4) on a sweltering evening.

Defending champion Djokovic awaits him after the second seed ended Roger Federer's dreams in straight sets Thursday to make his eighth Melbourne Park final.

Thiem has his work cut out against the Serb who is on a 12-match unbeaten streak this season and has won all seven of the Australian Open deciders he has contested.

And if Djokovic needs extra motivation, winning on Sunday will see him reclaim the world number one ranking after Rafael Nadal crashed to Thiem in the last eight.

"It was an unreal match, two tie-breakers, so tough and so close. It was almost impossible to break him," said Thiem.

"Being in the Australian Open final is unreal. What a start to the season for me."

Thiem had dealt with semifinal pressure before, although always on the slower red clay at Roland Garros, where he reached the past two finals only to be beaten by Nadal.

That experience paid dividends as he coolly closed out the match after 3hrs 42 mins to give himself another chance to break the stranglehold of the Big Three and win his first Grand Slam.

"I was playing four hours 10 against Rafa (in the quarter-finals), who is the most intense guy on tour, almost always so intense and long," Thiem said.

"So it was not easy to recover. But once all the adrenalin came, already when I walked into the full stadium was fine, actually, but still I had some troubles in the first set."

A jittery Thiem was broken in the opening game, saving two break points before sending a backhand wide to immediately be on the back foot.

Both players were nervous and the German failed to consolidate, broken straight back.

Their momentum was interrupted when rain began falling and the roof needed closing, but it was only a brief intermission and Zverev

resumed to hold for 2-2.

Thiem was still struggling with his first serve and a double fault handed the German a chance to go 4-3 in front and he grabbed it.

Zverev took command, putting 90 percent of his booming first serves in, and broke again to seal the set as the Austrian error-count mounted. But the 22-year-old lost focus and two double faults in game three of the second set handed Thiem a 2-1 lead.

Zverev managed to break back but he was too erratic as Thiem broke again and clung on, firing an ace to take set two.

Bizarrely, play was halted for nine minutes

It was an unreal match, two tie-breakers, so tough and so close. It was almost impossible to break him... I was playing four hours 10 against Rafa (in the quarterfinals), who is the most intense guy on tour, almost always so intense and long. So it was not easy to recover.

DOMINIC THIEM
AUSTRIA

one game into the third set when a light went out above the baseline and it bothered Zverev.

When they resumed, Thiem held serve and then broke with an epic backhand winner as Zverev again lost concentration and the momentum appeared to shift.

Thiem is one of the best returners in the game and was getting almost every ball back. He looked to be on his way, but Zverev refused to surrender and broke again to even it up.

It went to a tiebreak where Thiem turned on the style to take a stranglehold on the match.

There was little between them in the crucial fourth set as they traded blows. It went to serve and another tie-breaker when Thiem's experience helped him over the line.



Lionel Messi takes the ball past Leganes goalkeeper Ivan Cuellar before scoring his second and Barcelona's fifth in a 5-0 drubbing of Leganes in a Copa del Rey encounter on Thursday.

PHOTO: FC BARCELONA

Boost for Setien as Messi leads Leganes rout

AFP, Madrid

Lionel Messi scored twice as Barcelona hammered Leganes 5-0 on Thursday to advance to the quarterfinals of the Copa del Rey and deliver a much-needed boost for new coach Quique Setien.

Messi's double, as well as goals from Antoine Griezmann, Clement Lenglet and Arthur Melo rounded off an emphatic win at Camp Nou, where Barca successfully bounced back from Saturday's surprise La Liga loss away at Valencia.

"We did a lot of things well but I am not completely happy because we also

lost control of the game in the latter stages of the first half," said Setien.

Defeat at Mestalla allowed Real Madrid to pull three clear at the top of the league and put early pressure on Setien, who replaced Ernesto Valverde as coach earlier this month.

His appointment will be judged on performances in the league and Champions League this season but Barca have a rich recent history in the Copa del Rey, which they have won in four of the last five years.

They will be in Friday's draw for the last eight but Sevilla will not after they fell to a shock 3-1 defeat away at Segunda side Mirandes. Real Madrid, Valencia, Real Sociedad, Granada,

Villarreal and Athletic Bilbao complete the list.

Before the game, the Catalans' club director Guillermo Amor ruled out buying another striker before the end of the January transfer window on Friday, meaning Griezmann is likely to step into the role of the injured Luis Suarez down the middle.

"There may be a risk of injuries but I have confidence in the players I have," said Setien.

Sevilla's defeat to Mirandes, who sit 10th in the second tier, was the biggest shock of the round. Matheus Barrozo scored twice before Alvaro Ray put Mirandes out of sight. Sevilla's Nolito scored a late consolation.

Zidane not considering Bale exit

AFP, Madrid

Zinedine Zidane has said he is "not contemplating" Gareth Bale leaving Real Madrid on Friday before the end of the January transfer window.

Bale came close to joining Chinese Super League side Jiangsu Suning last summer and English newspaper the Times reported Friday he was in talks to rejoin former club Tottenham.

But a source at Spurs has told AFP they are not in negotiations to sign Bale this month. Another source close to the player insisted earlier this week that "nothing has changed" and he would not be leaving Real Madrid in January.

Asked about the possibility of Bale being sold on Friday, Zidane said in a press conference: "Gareth is with us, I'm counting on him. I do not contemplate this possibility."

Bale was left out of the squad to face Real Zaragoza in the Copa del Rey on Wednesday, having completed only one full training session following an ankle injury.


Zidane would not say if he would return for the city derby against Atletico Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu on Saturday.

"I'm not going to tell you who is going to play," Zidane said. "The players all have to be prepared."

There was also a positive update regarding the fitness of Eden Hazard, who has recovered from his foot injury and could feature against Atletico.

Fernandes hails Ronaldo's influence

AFP, London

Portugal midfielder Bruno Fernandes completed his move from Sporting Lisbon to Manchester United on Thursday, claiming he was inspired to switch to Old Trafford by compatriot Cristiano Ronaldo.

The 25-year-old has signed a five-and-a-half year contract with an option to extend for a further year.

The long-anticipated deal, with an initial fee of 55 million euros, was finalised after Fernandes agreed personal terms and passed a medical. The fee could rise to 80 million euros with add-ons.

Fernandes said he was delighted to be joining the club, who are fifth in the Premier League table.

"My love of Manchester United really started when I used to watch Cristiano Ronaldo play and ever since then I have been a big fan of this great club," Fernandes explained. "For me, to now play for Manchester United feels incredible.

"I have worked hard to get to this moment and I can promise the fans that I will give everything for the badge to help bring us more success and trophies."

Manager Ole Gunnar Solskjaer admitted Fernandes had been a long-term target.

"We have been tracking Bruno for months and everyone here has been tremendously impressed with all his attributes and what he will bring to this team," he said. "Most importantly he is a terrific human being with a great personality and his leadership qualities are clear for all to see."

"Bruno's goals and assists stats speak for themselves. He will be a fantastic addition to our team and he will help us push on in the second part of the season."

United are badly in need of midfield reinforcements due to long-term injuries to Paul Pogba and Scott McTominay, while Marcus Rashford's back problem has also left Solskjaer short of options in attack.

Fernandes offers a goal threat, having scored 63 goals in 137 appearances for Sporting.



Chattogram Port Authority (CPA) chairman Rear Admiral Julfikar Aziz distributes prizes among the winners as chief guest of the CPA annual sports competition 2020 at the CPA Stadium on Thursday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED