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Rab in for reckoning

ZYMA ISLAM and PORIMOL PALMA

Rab will neither be allowed to own properties in the US nor engage in transactions with anyone in the US because of the sanctions.

However, only the seven former and current high officials of Rab, who were named in Friday's order will be restricted from entering the United States, according to an official of the US Embassy in Dhaka. Other Rab employees will not necessarily be affected by this.

The executive order 13818 to which Rab has been subjected to is titled "Blocking the Property of Persons Involved in Serious Human Rights Abuse or Corruption".

The term "person" refers to an individual or entity in the order.

"As a result of designations pursuant to the Executive Order, all of the property and interests in property within US jurisdiction of the designated individuals and entities are blocked," said the official, "and accordingly, a US person generally may not engage in any transactions with such an

entity, unless authorised by the Office of Foreign Assets Control."

In the order, the term "United States person" means any US citizen, permanent resident, entity organised under the laws of the US or any jurisdiction within the US (including foreign branches), or any individual in the United States.

The executive order signed by former president Donald Trump in 2017 mentioned that properties of individuals or entities subjected to the sanctions cannot be transferred, exported or withdrawn.

The embassy official said that the Global Magnitsky Act, which enabled the sanction against Rab, is focused on assets of designated entities.

Currently, the named individuals on the Specially Designated Nationals list are former director general of Rab Benazir Ahmed, Director General of Rab Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun, Additional Director General (operations) of Rab Khan Mohammad Azad, former additional director general (operations)

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



Loaded trucks are parked near Raja Narayan Dhar Road in Lalbagh area of the capital yesterday. Locals claimed that the truck stand is illegal and has been set up occupying the land of the BIWTA.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Bangladesh defends Rab

Momen questions human rights in US

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka yesterday defended the actions of Rab saying the force is on the forefront of combating heinous crimes, including terrorism and drug trafficking.

It also raised questions about the human rights situation in the US.

The response came after the United States on Friday imposed sanctions on Rab and seven of its current and former officials, including Benazir Ahmed, now inspector general of police (IGP), and Director General of the force Chowdhury Abdullah Al-Mamun.

The authorities here termed the US decision unilateral and underscored the need for pursuing the path of dialogue, engagement and collaboration, instead of

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Murad denied Canada entry

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Disgraced former state minister Murad Hassan on Friday was denied entry to Canada, where he was headed to after stepping down from his post last week.

Canada Border Services Agency did not make any official statement on the incident.

Neither did the agency make public its reasons for putting Hasan back on the Emirates Airlines aircraft on which he landed in Toronto Pearson International



SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

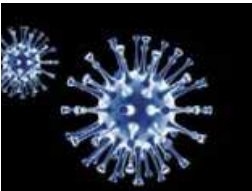
First Omicron cases detected

IN BANGLADESH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two players of Bangladesh women's national cricket team, who tested positive for Covid-19 last week, were infected with the Omicron variant of the coronavirus.

"They are in good health. [But] we will observe them for two weeks and they can be released once they've cleared the virus completely," said Health Minister Zahid Maleque at an event at Dhaka Shishu Hospital yesterday.



The two -- one 21 years old and the other 30 -- are the first cases of the new variant in the country.

On Monday, the mandatory quarantine period for the cricket team was extended as per government rule after the two tested positive.

The government announced a 14-day mandatory institutional quarantine for all incoming passengers from seven South African countries, including Zimbabwe, in

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

Girl going to school killed in road crash

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

A schoolgirl was killed after a battery-run three-wheeler hit her from behind while she was crossing a road in Pirojpur's Nesarabad upazila yesterday.

The victim -- Maisha Akter, 10, of the same upazila -- was going to school when the accident occurred, said locals.



SEE PAGE 2 COL 2

HSIA Runway Closure Mismatch, delays irk passengers

RASHIDUL HASAN

Hundreds of passengers had to endure what they said was mismanagement at the Dhaka airport over the last two days following the introduction of an eight-hour daily closure of the lone runway.

The authorities of Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport had assured that the runway closure, which came into force on midnight Thursday, would not cause any significant disruption to flight schedules and passenger handling services, but in reality just the opposite happened, passengers alleged.

The runway needs to be closed to facilitate the construction and expansion of taxiways for the under-construction third terminal of the airport by the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh (Caab). The daily closure will continue till June next year.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



A neighbourhood street at Bastuhara Colony in Khulna city resembles a gutter and smells even worse as rain water mixed with sewer water inundates the area due to poor drainage.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Independent runner killed

STAR REPORT

An independent union parishad chairman candidate was killed and at least 20 other people were injured in pre-polls violence in Pabna yesterday morning.

The casualties occurred when supporters of the Awami League chairman candidate in Varara union of Pabna Sadar upazila and a party rebel candidate clashed in Koladi area of Varara village, police said.

The dead is Md Yasin Alam, 35, a resident of Varara village and also an independent chairman candidate in the polls, scheduled for December 26.

Meanwhile, the Election Commission yesterday postponed the polls to Varara Union Parishad following the death of the independent candidate, confirmed Senior District Election Officer Md Mahabubur Rahman.

Sultan Hossain, the rebel AL chairman candidate and also a cousin of the deceased, said, "Although Yasin was contesting the election, he was a supporter of mine."

He alleged that supporters of AL candidate Abu Sayeed attacked his followers in Koladi Chara Bottola area around 9:00am when they were conducting electioneering.

"Carrying arms and lethal weapons, they attacked my supporters, leaving 10 to 15 people injured. Among the injured were Yasin and seven of my family members," Sultan said.

Md Aminul Islam, officer-in-charge of Pabna Sadar Police Station, said some injured were taken to Pabna General Hospital.

As Yasin's condition deteriorated, he was referred to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital. But he died on the way to RMCH, the OC added.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

4TH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION Bangladesh being readied to tap into opportunities

Says PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government is preparing the country for tapping the opportunities of the fourth industrial revolution to accelerate its economic growth towards the desired level.

"We're formulating an innovative education ecosystem (IEE) by increasing the budget for research and innovation. We're framing the National Blended Learning Policy-2021. Through this policy, we'll be able to introduce an education system bridging the technological gap," she said.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6



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BANGLADESH UPDATE



177

New cases in 24hrs



15,78,996

Total cases



28,022

Deaths



15,43,862

Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE



5,315,679

Deaths



269,653,514

Total cases

Malaysia to reopen for Bangladeshi migrants

UNB, Sylhet

After a gap of over three years, Malaysia will reopen its job market for Bangladeshis by this year-end, Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Imran Ahmed said yesterday.

"The Malaysian government has shown interest in signing a memorandum of understanding [MoU] with our government over the issue. The agreement date will be revealed in a day or two after we get the necessary documents," he told reporters at the Sylhet Circuit House.

According to the minister, the Malaysian job market will be reopened

for Bangladeshi workers in several sectors -- tree plantation, gardening, agriculture, production, mining, construction and domestic service.

Besides, another MoU will be signed for sending workers to Greece, said Imran, urging people to refrain from going abroad illegally.

Malaysia is one of the most popular destinations of Bangladeshi workers.

As many as 1,057,056 Bangladeshis found work in Malaysia between 1976 and 2019, according to the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training (BMET).

Manpower export to Malaysia has remained suspended since 2018.

Murad denied Canada entry

FROM PAGE 1

Airport at 1:31pm Eastern Standard Time on Friday.

Emirates's only outbound flight from Toronto is to Dubai, shows the airline's website.

Expatriate Bangladeshis in Canada, as well as the Toronto-based Bangla news portals, reported the CBSA denied Hasan, a former state minister for information and broadcasting, entry after receiving an overwhelming volume of objections against him.

Hasan was "escaping Bangladesh and coming to Canada with criminal charges", the expatriate Bangladeshis wrote in their e-mails to the CBSA. He made derogatory, sexist and misogynist comments against some females in Bangladesh and he threatened an actress of violating her.

"The Prime Minister of Bangladesh forced him to resign and after resigning, he is on his way to Canada. We believe, Canada should not be a place for potential rapists and criminals! He is travelling with government official passport, but he may not leave the country once he gets in," said one of the e-mails seen by The Daily Star.

At least 170 complaints on more or less the same grounds were lodged with the CBSA, according to the non-resident Bangladeshis in Canada.

"We do not want Canada to allow in Bangladeshi looters, rapists, violators of women rights, anti-socials, killers and others," said Monjure Khoda Torik, one of the organisers of Luthera Birodhi Mancha.

Two Toronto-based Bangla news portals -- notundesh.com and thebanglatimes.com -- reported that Hasan was quizzed by CBSA officials upon arrival in Canada; he was asked about the recent developments surrounding him in Bangladesh.

Due to public outrage over his

misogynistic remarks, the prime minister on December 6 directed Hasan to hand in his resignation. The next day, Hasan sent in his resignation to the prime minister and President Abdul Hamid.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan yesterday said the state is not offended by the remarks made by Hasan and will not file a case under the Digital Security Act on the matter.

"If someone is aggrieved, they have the right to sue. Why are you asking me? If you are aggrieved, you can sue," he said in response to queries from reporters after attending a programme at the National Press Club.

In an interview recently, Hasan made offensive comments on BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia, acting chairman Tarique Rahman and his daughter Zaima Rahman.

He then got embroiled in another controversy when an audio clip of a phone call between him and actors Mammun Hasan Emon and Mahiya Mahi was leaked. The clip went viral on social media.

In the phone call, Hasan was heard uttering obscenities to Mahi and coercing her to come to a city hotel where he was staying.

Mahi declined to, which prompted Hasan to threaten her to haul her to the hotel by members of the law enforcement and intelligence agencies. He even threatened to rape her.

On January 7, 2019, Hasan, a lawmaker from Jamalpur-4 constituency, was appointed the state minister for health. A few months later, he was transferred to the information ministry.

Jamalpur Awami League unit has relieved Hasan from his post as its health and population affairs secretary.

Mismanagement

FROM PAGE 1

Due to the closure, the schedules for at least 12 international flights, operated by Qatar Airways, Singapore Airlines, Emirates, Saudia Airlines, Turkish Airlines and Malaysian Airlines, had to be changed.

Some 85-90 flights now depart and touch down at the airport within the 16-hour window. Around 10,000 passengers depart for different destinations from HSI, sources at the airport said.

Several passengers said they had to suffer delays at the airport due to lack of manpower, additional ground handling facilities and other necessary services.

They said signs of mismanagement were everywhere at the airport, including inside and outside the terminal, passenger check-in counters of airlines, immigration and boarding bridges.

Long queues were seen at the check-in counters, immigration and other places due to delays of several flights over the last two days.

"Shahjalal airport authorities failed to ensure that the additional requirements at the airport were met. Due to this problem, several flights departed the airport behind schedule, causing suffering to passengers," said Idris Mia, a Saudi-bound passenger.

Md Harun, another passenger heading for Saudi Arabia, said the authorities should ensure enough check-in counters, boarding bridges, security check-in counters, baggage loading and unloading bays and other related facilities for smooth operation of all flights within the 16-hour window. But they were yet to ensure this.

The airport operations will be tougher for the five days from today as the runway will remain closed for an additional two hours (from 10:30am to 12:30pm) to enable flight management training under the Air Force as part of preparations for the Victory Day celebrations, sources at the HSI said.

An official at the HSI admitted that they are struggling to maintain the new schedule.

"But we have taken measures to ensure required services for smooth

operation of flights," the official said wishing anonymity.

Sources at the airport said around 13 flights took off in just one and a half hours since 10:30pm on Thursday, causing problems in airport operations as the authorities couldn't ensure additional facilities for the passengers and the carriers.

Departure of several of the flights were delayed as the airport authorities could not complete immigration process of around 2,400 passengers in time, sources at the airport said.

Group Captain AHM Touhid-ul-Ahsan, executive director at HSI, said some problems arose in the first few days of flight operations under the new schedule.

He said the airport authorities have already given directives to the immigrations authorities to operate all immigration counters so that passengers can complete their immigration on time.

Different airlines have been demanding the authorities ensure additional check-in counters and other necessary facilities to deal with the pressure of passengers under the new tight schedule.

The authorities have announced that Osmani International Airport in Sylhet will be available for any emergency take-off and landing during the closure of the Dhaka airport runway.

Girl going to school

FROM PAGE 1

Maisha was a grade-IV student of Akalom Government Primary School in the upazila.

According to the victim's family, a speedy three-wheeler, locally known as Bow Gari, hit Maisha while she was crossing the road.

Locals rescued the girl and rushed to Nesarabad Upazila Health Complex where on-duty doctors declared her dead.

As the news spread, her schoolmates blocked the road for some time. Local representatives later brought the situation under control.

Contacted, Abir Mohammad Hossain, officer-in-charge of Nesarabad Police Station, said they would take legal steps once the victim's family files a complaint regarding it.



Air quality in the capital is worsening with the arrival of winter. The photo of dust reducing visibility on Shyampur Pagla road in the capital was taken around noon yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Rab in for reckoning

FROM PAGE 1

of Rab Tofayel Mustafa Sorwar, former additional director general (operations) of Rab Mohammad Jahangir Alam, and former additional director general (operations) of Rab Mohammad Anwar Latif Khan.

Besides, a travel ban was imposed on Lt Col Miftah Uddin Ahmed, a former official of Rab.

The executive order prohibits making of any contribution or provision of funds, goods, or services by, to, or for the benefit of any person whose property and interests in property are blocked. It also prohibits the receipt of any contribution or provision of funds, goods, or services from any such person.

Over the years, Human Rights Watch, Robert F Kennedy Human Rights and senate bodies made multiple requests for sanctions on Rab.

On August 30, 2021, a US congressional body, the Tom Lantos Human Rights Commission, which is a caucus body of the US House of Representatives, held a hearing with two international rights bodies that recommended sanctions be taken against Bangladesh over the actions of Rab.

At the hearing, Meenakshi Ganguly, South Asia director at Human Rights Watch, said the US should impose targeted sanctions against top security

forces to spur accountability, while Angelita Baeyens, vice president of the international advocacy and litigation department at Robert F Kennedy Human Rights, called for Rab officials to be banned from joining the UN peacekeeping missions.

At that hearing, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee from Houston said, "Bangladesh has already been exposed. I have heard it; the commission has heard it."

Earlier last year, 10 US senators from the Republican and the Democratic parties urged the Trump administration to impose targeted sanctions on "senior commanders" of Rab, which they said had reportedly killed more than 400 people extrajudicially since 2015.

In the UK on August 24 this year, a human rights-focused international justice chamber, Guernica 37, called on the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to slap sanctions on nine current and former senior officers of Rab.

It said sanctions would "send a clear message to the government of Bangladesh that the UK does not tolerate serious human rights abuses, even from a partner".

Contacted, Robert Chatterton Dickson, the UK high commissioner in Bangladesh, said, "At this moment, however, we are not imposing any sanctions for any officials or entities

in Bangladesh."

The EU, UK, US and Canada have in the past coordinated with each other regarding sanctions.

On the day the sanctions on Rab were announced, Canada and the UK joined the US in sanctioning specific entities affiliated with the Myanmar military.

On December 2, 2021, they all imposed coordinated sanctions on Belarus for human rights violations and for creating a migrant crisis at the Belarusian borders.

On May 17, 2021, US, UK and Canada imposed parallel sanctions on Myanmar military junta for executing a coup, detaining and deposing Aung San Suu Kyi.

On March 22, 2021, Britain, the EU, the US and Canada imposed sanctions on senior Chinese officials who played a role in the persecution of Uighur Muslims in Xinjiang province.

At present the US does not train Rab and Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime unit of police because of rights violations.

In 2010, a leaked US Embassy cable published in Wikileaks claimed that the UK had provided training to Rab on "investigative interviewing techniques". Following that, the Human Rights Watch recommended that the UK ends the provision of any training to Rab.

Bangladesh defends Rab

FROM PAGE 1

"resorting to naming and shaming that has proven to be a self-defeating exercise".

"The government has no information on who were killed by the Rab," Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said after an event at the Foreign Service Academy yesterday.

"They [the US authorities] should do more fact-finding and not say anything just for the sake of saying," he said, regretting the sanctions on "such an institution that made Bangladesh free of terrorists, including Bangla Bhai".

Momen said people "trust the institution".

He claimed that six lakh people disappear and police kill about 1,000 every year in the US, but no one is punished. "This [sanctions] probably is just for a show."

Asked if the US move could affect the bilateral relationship with Bangladesh, the minister said it may be the case, but the US can say it.

He said the US took actions against many countries but those were beneficial neither to those countries nor the US people.

In another development, Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen yesterday summoned US Ambassador Earl R Miller and expressed Bangladesh's disappointment at the US sanctions.

The decision was taken unilaterally and without any prior consultation with the Bangladesh government,

Masud said.

The issues cited for imposing the designated sanctions remain under active discussions, he said, adding that the US decided to undermine an agency that had been on the forefront of combating crimes considered to be shared priorities with successive US administrations.

The foreign secretary regretted that the allegations made against Rab over certain specific incidents had been explained, along with information on the corresponding justice and accountability measures undertaken, to not just the US administration but also to a number of UN human rights mechanisms on multiple occasions.

He emphasised that Bangladesh remained committed to upholding the rule of law and human rights, and maintained a "zero tolerance" approach to any wrongdoings or aberrations by its law enforcement agencies.

Besides, he highlighted that the observance of the 50th anniversary of the diplomatic relations between the two friendly countries next year should open up further avenues to enhance the breadth and dimensions of the existing partnership.

Ambassador Miller took note of the concerns raised, and assured of conveying the same to Washington DC. He expressed the willingness of the US government to remain closely engaged with Bangladesh in

the coming days on issues of mutual interests.

Yesterday, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan claimed that the authorities investigate every incident of human rights violation in Bangladesh and take legal action accordingly.

He said the US did not impose the sanctions fairly.

"They did it based on exaggerated news. Maintaining law and order is a challenging task in Bangladesh," he told reporters after attending a programme at Dhaka Wasa.

Meanwhile, Rab claimed that the force does not violate human rights.

At a press conference, Rab Director (Legal and Media Wing) Commander Khandaker Al Moin said 28 members of the force, with a manpower of 9,000, have sacrificed their lives to protect human rights and maintain law and order.

Besides, more than 1,000 members got maimed and 2,000 others injured, he said.

About the "gunfights" involving Rab, he claimed that they open fire only in self-defence and when under attack by criminals during drives.

Moin said Rab initiatives made the Sundarbans robber-free with around 326 rehabilitated. Besides, many militants returned to normal life because of their initiatives.

"Rab always takes strict action against its members whenever they violate the law," he added.

Independent runner killed

FROM PAGE 1

Refuting the allegation of attacking Sultan's men, AL nominee Abu Sayeed said followers of Sultan attacked his men, leaving 10 to 12 people, including his brother, injured.

Additional police members were deployed in the union to avoid any fresh law and order situation, said Additional Superintendent of Police Rokonuzzaman Sarkar.

He said police detained two people in connection with the incident. "We have video footage of the incident. We are trying to identify the lawbreakers."

The fourth phase of the UP polls will be held on December 26.

In Tangail, at least 20 people were injured in an attack on supporters of an independent (AL rebel) chairman candidate allegedly by the followers of the ruling party candidate in Nikrail union of Bhuapur upazila yesterday afternoon.

Independent candidate Masudul Haque Masud alleged that supporters of AL nominee Abdul Matin Sarkar attacked his followers when they were electioneering in Khokar Doba area.

Despite repeated attempts, this newspaper could not reach the AL candidate for comments as his mobile phone was switched off.

In Feni, two AL rebel chairman

candidates -- Saiful Islam and Mohammad Ibrahim -- filed complaints with Feni Model Police Station against the ruling party candidate over vandalising their homes.

The houses were allegedly damaged on Friday evening. However, AL nominee Kalimullah denied the allegation.

In Manikganj, supporters of Hamidur Rahman Alai, AL chairman nominee in Ghior Union Parishad polls, allegedly attacked independent candidate Md Ohidul Islam Tutul and his followers on Friday evening, leaving six people injured.

Digital Bangladesh Day today

BSS, Dhaka

The fifth "Digital Bangladesh Day-2021" will be celebrated through various programmes in the country and Bangladesh missions abroad today.

With the theme "Digital Bangladesh-er Orjon, Upokrito Sokol Jonogon", the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Division has chalked out elaborate programmes to celebrate the day.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the main programme of the day and address the prize-giving ceremony virtually at Bangabandhu International Conference Center (BICC) from the Gono Bhaban residence at 10:00am.

The day's programme, however, will begin with paying homage to Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman by placing a wreath at his portrait at Dhanmondi-32 in the city at 7:00am.

State Minister ICT Division Zunaid Ahmed Palak will be present as the chief guest.

At 8:00am, a procession led by Palak will be brought out from the South Plaza of the Jatiya Sangsad maintaining the social distancing and it will end at the Khamarbari intersection.

A national seminar titled "Digital Bangladesh-er Orjon, Upokrito Sokol Jonogon (achievements of Digital Bangladesh: benefit all people)" will be held at the BICC at 3:00pm while Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Anisul Huq will address it as the chief guest.

BNP outraged by Chinese ambassador's remarks on Bangladesh, govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The BNP has expressed outraged and surprised by the review and comments made by Chinese ambassador to Bangladesh over Bangladesh and its government.

In a press statement, signed by BNP's Senior Joint General Secretary Ruhul Kabir Rizbi, it said, "A video statement of Chinese ambassador to Bangladesh has come to the notice of the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP). We, like pro-democracy people, are outraged and surprised by his review and comments about Bangladesh and the government."

"Democracy, equality, human rights and social justice are the key consciousness of our great Liberation War which was achieved at the cost of the lives and sacrifices of millions of martyrs. At a time when this illegal government is continuously depriving the entire country from all these rights, the unrealistic statement made by the Chinese ambassador in favor of Bangladesh and the present government has deeply angered and hurt the people," it said.

Terming the government fascist one, the statement said the current government has snatched the right to vote from the people and destroyed democracy in the country.

The people of the country and Bangladesh Nationalist Party expect that China will stand by the people, not beside illegal government, it said.

Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 1

Hasina said this while delivering her speech at the closing ceremony of a two-day international conference on the 4th Industrial Revolution-2021 held at Bangabandhu International Conference Centre.

She joined the programme, which was organised on the birth centenary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and the Golden Jubilee of independence, virtually from the Gono Bhaban.

Given the perspective of the Fourth Industrial Revolution, three issues are gaining importance -- the development of the industry through innovation of sophisticated technology, creating a skilled workforce, and protecting the environment, the PM said.

She said scientists believe that humans will have to coexist with artificial intelligence devices shortly. And some new types of challenges have to be tackled.

For example, she mentioned, machines will shrink the human workplace; the demand for cheap labour will decline, inequality will increase, and migration will be encouraged. "Foreign investment in developing countries will fall, and inequality in technological know-how will increase."

"We're launching 5-G Network Service soon. It'll completely change the business model, education system, standard of living, and conventional digital and social media."

"I believe the ICT and software industry will enrich our export sector in the future. We're giving special incentives to overseas industries to set up research-development and manufacturing centres in Bangladesh," the PM said.

Education Minister Dr Dipu Moni, Deputy Minister for Education Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury, University Grants Commission of Bangladesh (UGC) chairman Prof Dr Kazi Shahidullah, its Member Sazzad Hossain also spoke at the programme.

ROAD SAFETY, OUR RIGHT

Students threaten tougher movement if demands not met

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

If the 11-point demand for safe roads and half fare for public transport is not met by December, tougher programmes will be announced from the first day of January, warned participants of the ongoing road safety movement.

The announcement was made yesterday afternoon at a rally of students, teachers, guardians and workers near the capital's Rampura Bridge.

Shohagi Samia, a student of Khilgaon Model College and representative of the demonstrators, said, "We want to make it clear that this movement is not just about students, but people from all walks of life."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

No justice, no compensation

Say families of transport workers who died in road crashes



Shiuly breaks down in tears while retelling her family's hardship ever since her husband was killed by a bus plying the wrong side. PHOTO: STAR

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All was going well for Shiuly Begum. A serene family life with her bus driver husband and four children, this was all that she had hoped for.

But then everything changed, all because a bus decided to ply on the wrong side three years ago.

On April 3, 2018, while going to Mirpur from the family's Bashabo home, Shiuly's husband Mizan Kazi was hit by the bus near Purana Paltan. "My husband, who was a bus driver himself, died under one," a sobbing Shiuly told a programme of Nirapad Sarak Chai at Jatiya Press Club yesterday.

Losing the family's only breadwinner, Shiuly had to take the difficult decision to leave their rented flat and go back to her village in Mymensingh, even if this put a halt to the studies of two of her children.

"I don't know whether my five-year-old son will start his schooling. I don't know if I can afford it," she said. In the last three years, she has gone

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Three killed, five hurt in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Three people were killed and five injured in road accidents in two districts during the last two days, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Mymensingh, a man was killed and four were injured as two motorbikes collided head-on on Mymensingh-Gafargaon road at Char Bhelamari in Nandaail upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased -- Md Sumon (35) from Gafargaon upazila -- was a marketing officer at a private company.

In Dinajpur, two persons were killed and another was injured when a speeding truck hit a rickshaw-van carrying them in Birganj upazila on Friday night.

The deceased were identified as Bachchu Mia (42) of Thakurgaon and Md Abdul Based (65) of Dinajpur.

The injured -- Alatafur Rahman -- was undergoing treatment at Birganj Upazila Health Complex.

Highway police said the accident happened at Chakai village in Birganj around 9:00pm. Police seized the truck.

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Ministry of Labour and Employment

Green Factory Award 2020

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Four trophies are displayed, each with a circular logo at the top and a nameplate at the base. The nameplates read:

- ডিউরেবল প্লাস্টিক লি: Durable Plastic Ltd.
- হবিগঞ্জ এগ্রো লি: Habiganj Agro Ltd.
- অলপ্লাস্ট বাংলাদেশ: Allplast Bangladesh Ltd.
- বঙ্গ বিল্ডিং ম্যাটেরিয়ালস লি: Banga Building Materials Ltd.

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No smoking areas at hotels, restaurants

Demand speakers
STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Designated smoking areas at restaurants and hotels should be prohibited by changing provisions of Smoking and Tobacco Products Usage (Control) (Amendment) Act, 2013, said speakers at a discussion yesterday.

At the event arranged at a city hotel, findings of a study in this regard was disclosed, said a press release.

According to the study, designated smoking areas in the capital's restaurants are being kept using loopholes in the law.

Voices for Interactive Choice and Empowerment (Voice), a research and advocacy organisation, with support of Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids (CTFK), conducted the study in August and September of 2021.

Addressing the discussion, Awami League lawmaker Ashim Kumar Ukil said the provision of keeping designated spaces for smoking in restaurants should be repealed in the existing law.



Hours after the fire was doused at port city's Agrabad SRB Colony, slum dwellers were seen running around the place, trying to salvage whatever was left of their belongings. Meanwhile, it took eight firefighting units to douse the blaze at Bangla Motor, inset.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN, PALASH KHAN

3 injured in fire at Bangla Motors

5 shanties gutted in Ctg slum

STAR REPORT

At least three people were injured in a fire at RK Tower in Dhaka's Bangla Motors area yesterday afternoon.

The injured -- Mamun Sheikh (32), Manik Fakir (20), and Tafsir Mia (26) -- were admitted to Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery with 34, two and seven percent burns, respectively.

The three were working on the sixth floor of the 10-storey building when the fire broke out around 12:15pm.

The floor houses a godown of Rabeya Enterprise, which sells products online.

Eight firefighting units doused the fire around 4:15pm, said Debashis Bardhan, deputy director (operations and maintenance) of Fire Service and Civil Defence.

Debashis said there was no permission to run a godown on the floor. Besides, minimum fire safety arrangements were absent there.

Abu Saied, account officer of Rabeya Enterprise, said they suspected that the fire originated from an electric short-circuit.

Meanwhile, in Chattogram city, a fire broke out in a slum at Agrabad SRB Colony around 4:20am.

A total of five shanties in the slum were gutted in the incident, said police and fire service officials.

On information, six firefighting vehicles rushed to the spot and managed to douse the blaze around 6:00am, said Farid Ahmed, sub-assistant director of Fire Service and Civil Defence, Chattogram.

Primary investigation to ascertain the source of the fire is ongoing.

Officials, however, suspected that a short-circuit caused the fire.

After the fire broke out, Abdul Jalil (70), who lived next to the slum, died of cardiac arrest, possibly due to seeing the fire, said Sakhawat Hossain, officer-in-charge of Sadarghat Police Station.

No justice, no compensation

FROM PAGE 3
to various ministries and offices. But while justice remained a far cry, she could not even obtain a minimum sum of compensation.

Her story sheds light on how not just families of regular commuters, but even those of transport workers suffer from the chaotic state of the country's roads.

Jannatul Mawa lost her mother in a road accident years ago. After the accident, her father, a covered-van driver, was the only one taking care of her, until he too passed away in a fatal road crash.

Now a 10th-grader at a city school, Mawa said, "Nobody is by our side. No one

will understand how it feels losing a loved one in a road crash."

Like Shiuly and Mawa, family members of numerous others, who lost their beloved ones on the road, were present at the session.

Speaking there, Nirapad Sarak Chai chairperson Ilias Kanchan said, "It has been 28 years since I got involved with this movement for safer roads, but we're yet to get it."

Speaking as the chief guest, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said, "We have become a nation of law-breakers. I agree with the demand for safe roads and want to work together [with such movements]."

Road safety, our right

FROM PAGE 3
Speaking as a teachers' representative, Prof Anu Muhammad of Jahangirnagar University said the government needs to play a more pro-active role in making the roads safer.

He said while it's great that the government has given instructions

regarding the demand for half fare for public transport, it needs to follow through on the promise and ensure implementation.

Mozammel Haque Chowdhury, secretary general of Jatri Kalyan Samity, said as long as a gazette notification is not issued over half fare, transport workers and owners will become more reckless again.



Uprooted by heavy downpours and thunderstorms around a month ago, this tree has been an obstacle for pedestrians near the DSCC Nagar Bhaban area ever since. Recently, the city corporation auctioned it off to local timber traders, whose staffers were at work cutting the tree yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

Govt not interfering in the judiciary

Says Quader

BSS, Dhaka

The government is not interfering in the judiciary at all rather judiciary is working independently, said Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader yesterday.

The minister said this at a press conference held at his residence in Dhaka.

He said the independence of the judiciary to BNP means that its verdict has to go in their (BNP's) favour.

This dual policy of BNP is now clear to the people, said Quader, also general secretary of Awami League.

Responding to a statement of BNP leaders that there is no freedom of media, Quader said the media is enjoying freedom and working without any interference.

"BNP is vilifying the government day and night. Even the government is being criticised in newspapers and talk shows every day," he said.

"If the media is not independent, then, why no action has been taken against any media or them?" Quader asked.

All over again?

Dismantling work of vessel that ran aground on Parki beach 4yrs ago starts; experts voice concern



PHOTO: STAR

MANOJ KUMAR BARUA, Ctg

Dismantling work of Crystal Gold, the ship that has remained stranded on Chattogram's Parki Beach since 2017, started on the beach yesterday.

This comes after the company was imposed a Tk 2 crore fine for commencing ship-breaking works on the beach without permission from the Department of Environment (DoE), Chattogram, in 2019.

Talking to this newspaper yesterday, Amjad Hossain, director of the ship's owning company -- Four Star Enterprise -- said, "We have started dismantling the 192-metre ship. We have also paid the Tk 2 crore fine to the DoE."

Contacted, Mofidul Alam, director of DoE, Chattogram, said they have received the fine and allowed the company to start the works on the beach. "But we have

SEE PAGE 9 COL 6

Consequence of rights violations

Says Fakhrul about US sanctions on Rab, 7 top officials

UNB, Dhaka

BNP yesterday described the US sanctions on Rab and its seven current and former top officials as an inevitable consequence of serious violations of human rights.

"As per news published today (Saturday), sanctions have been imposed on Benazir Ahmed (current IGP) and the Rab chief. I don't think it's a surprise..." said BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir.

He said those who violate human rights and kill people have to face such a consequence. The BNP leader said their party now wants to see whether the government takes action against those who are accused of violating human rights.

Fakhrul said the US sanctions have proved right what BNP has long been talking about violations of human rights and killing and torturing of people by using the state machinery.

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MORE NEWS
A group of people is gathered for a protest or rally, holding a banner with text in Bengali.

PHOTO: STAR

Doctors Association of Bangladesh formed a human chain in front of Jatiya Press Club yesterday, demanding BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia's better treatment abroad.

Virtual exhibition on Rohingya culture

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A 21-day virtual exhibition on Rohingya art and culture opened on Friday, representing key aspects of Rohingya memories, experiences, and aspirations.

IOM and Bangladesh Embassy in the Netherlands organised the exhibition through the Rohingya Cultural Memory Centre (RCMC), IOM said in a press release yesterday. Supported by the Netherlands Foreign Office, the exhibition can be accessed at <https://artspaces.kunstmatrix.com> until December 31.

CU's 45th batch reunion held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The first reunion event of Chittagong University's 45th batch was held on the campus on Friday. Around 250 former students took part in the day-long programme.

The day featured students of 2009-2010 session bringing out a colourful rally from CU's Zero Point. Later, a cultural session was held at the Botanical ground of the campus.

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www.northsouth.edu

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1, Minto Road, Dhaka 1000

Invitation for Tenders

Applications are hereby invited from the experienced and bonafide suppliers for purchase of below mentioned items/services for InterContinental Dhaka. Prospective Bidder/Vendor must have experience on relevant service/supply for at least 4 years during last 5 years for any star hotel or Multinational organization or Super Store.

Group No.	Tender name	Tender publication date	Tender document last selling date	Tender document submit/closing date & time	Tender document opening date & time
1.	Sale of Hotel Garbage	12 December 2021	19 December 2021	20 December 2021 on or before 03:00pm	20 December 2021 at 03:10pm
2.	Imported Food Item	12 December 2021	19 December 2021	20 December 2021 on or before 03:00pm	20 December 2021 at 03:10pm
3.	Local Food Item: Groceries	12 December 2021	19 December 2021	20 December 2021 on or before 03:00pm	20 December 2021 at 03:10pm
4.	Local Food Item: Vegetable & Fruits	12 December 2021	19 December 2021	20 December 2021 on or before 03:00pm	20 December 2021 at 03:10pm
5.	Local Food Item: Fish	12 December 2021	19 December 2021	20 December 2021 on or before 03:00pm	20 December 2021 at 03:10pm
6.	Local Food Item: Meat & Egg	12 December 2021	19 December 2021	20 December 2021 on or before 03:00pm	20 December 2021 at 03:10pm

Interested bidder/vendors may purchase tender document at a cost of BDT 1,000.00 (non-refundable) in cash from Materials Department during office hour. Detail terms & conditions and quality standards have been delineated in the Tender Document. Authority of InterContinental Dhaka reserves the right to accept or reject any or all application/Tender without assigning any reason whatsoever.

D-177 Materials Department

INTERCONTINENTAL
DHAKA
(Owned by Bangladesh Services Limited)
1, Minto Road, Dhaka 1000

Notice for New Enlistment & Renewal of Existing Suppliers

Applications are hereby invited from the experienced and bonafide suppliers for Enlistment with InterContinental Dhaka in the following categories for the year 2022 only.

Group-A: Engineering items- Electrical, kitchen & Laundry, Refrigeration, Hardware, Mechanical, Construction & Repairing.

Group-B: General items- Computer/printer/photocopy machine Accessories, Decoration works, Digital Marketing, Printing & Packaging & tailoring works.

Group-C: Food items: Vegetable, Fruit, Fish, & Meat vendor.

Interested suppliers are therefore, requested to submit their application on their company letterhead attaching the following documents:

- Photocopy of updated Trade License for the year 2021-2022, updated Income Tax Certificate, VAT registration and Bank Solvency certificate (original copy) from any schedule Bank of Bangladesh.
- Experience certificate original from any reputed organization on related field.

Application must reach to the Materials Manager Office of InterContinental Dhaka 1, Minto Road, Dhaka 1000 on or before 22nd December 2021 during office hour. After examining the above documents, if found suitable, a prescribed Application Form will be issued to the bonafide supplier(s) obtainable from the Material Manager's Office against Pay Order of Tk 5,000.00 (non-refundable) in favor of InterContinental Dhaka from any schedule Bank of Bangladesh and Tk 50,000.00 (refundable) only to be deposited as security money to our Accounts Department in the form of Pay Order in favor of InterContinental Dhaka from any schedule Bank of Bangladesh. Existing suppliers are also advised to renew their enlistment within 30th December 2021 with renewal fee of Tk 5,000/- (non-refundable) in the form of Pay Order in favor of InterContinental Dhaka from any schedule Bank of Bangladesh with related updated legal papers (Trade License, VAT, TIN etc.), otherwise enlistment may become dissolved. Authority of InterContinental Dhaka reserves the right to accept or reject any or all application without assigning any reason whatsoever.

D-178 Materials Department



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The road next to one of the tin-roofed buildings of Quality Integrated Agro Ltd in Habiganj's Madhabpur upazila, has been badly damaged due to plying of good laden-trucks to and from the factory. Inset, rotten chicken are dumped from the poultry farm. The photo was taken at Bhabanipur village recently.

PHOTO: MINTU DESHWARA

Large-scale commercial poultry farms posing health hazard

Quality Integrated Agro Limited (QIAL) running mega poultry farms in closer proximity of human habitation in Madhabpur upazila despite HC status quo

MINTU DESHWARA, BACK FROM HABIGANJ

Six large unauthorized commercial poultry farms are posing hazards to public health and agriculture in Madhabpur upazila of Habiganj violating a High Court order.

Although there is no provision for setting up poultry farms in populated areas without compliance with the law, all those commercial farms have been set up in the vicinity of houses, educational institutions and mosques in the villages flouting the law.

Ibadur Rahman Bilal, a local Awami League member from Kamalpur village, said that the illegally established poultry farms were emanating unbearable stench making the villages inhabitable. Apart from this, the roads in the area have become battered due to plying of heavy vehicles carrying feed and other things to and from the farms.

The stench coming from those farms is making the locals fall sick. Due to the stench of the farm, the devout Muslims of the area are also having difficulty going to the mosque to offer prayer, he also said.

The owner of the poultry farm is so influential that the people of the area do not dare to raise voices against him. Allegations are there that the farm owner harassed those who came forward to register protest against him, he added.

On a recent visit to the area, this correspondent found that several layer and broiler chicken farms have been set up in Kamalpur, Kalikapur, Harinkhola and Gopinathpur villages. Due to the dumping of litter and other wastes of the poultry farms, the farmers could not cultivate boro this season and rohi crops. The people living next to the farm have been the worst affected.

The locals said, "We cannot breathe freely.

As the owner of the farm is influential, no one dares to speak against him. It will not be possible for us to live in this area if the farms are not closed or any alternative measures are taken."

Anisur Rahman Adil, the founding principal of Hazrat Shahjalal (R) Alim Madrasa in Kamalpur, said that Quality Feed started several mega poultry farms in Kamalpur village without obtaining clearance from the Department of Environment and Livestock Department.

In the public interest, Anisur Rahman Adil filed a writ petition with the High Court on April 1 last year challenging the legality of setting up the farms in a populous area. Following the hearing, the HC bench of Justice MdMojibur Rahman Mia and Justice Md Kamrul Hossain Mollah issued status quo on the activities of the six poultry farms.

Despite a recent High Court (HC) order, new electricity connections were given to Fariha Layer Farm and Harinkhola Poultry Farm, violating the court order.

But even after six months, no steps have been taken to implement the HC order, he added.

Despite the recent HC order on Fariha Layer Farm and Harinkhola Poultry Farm, new electricity connections were given to the farms in clear violation of the court order, he also said.

Md Manjurul Islam, a security guard of Poultry Farm No 6 of the company located in Harinkhola village, said that the broiler farm

started here on September 18 and electricity connection was also provided on September 17. There are over 36 thousand chicks here.

Farhadul Islam, the land owner of Farm No 6 in the same village, said that he did not know how the farm started its operation after the order of the High Court, but the company relaunched its operation on September 18.

Gedu Mia, a farmer who owns land in Gopinathpur village, said that the people of the company harassed them with assault cases whenever they talked about the problems. "The land adjacent to the farm cannot be cultivated because of the stench and the bodies of rotten chickens dumped on it; our land is ruined," he added.

Abdur Rashid, deputy director of Quality Integrated Agro Limited (QIAL), said, "The status quo was issued on one of the poultry farms shed next to the madrasa and we have shut it in compliance with the HC order."

"On the other hand, we are running the company commercially with all kinds of approval," he added.

Contacted, Madhabpur Upazila Livestock Officer Dr Md Abdus Sattar Beg admitted that QIAL has been running large-scale farms in the villages without registration.

Asked how QIAL could continue their business for so long without registration, he said that he was unable to answer the question as he was posted in the upazila only recently.

Mizanur Rahman, deputy director of Department of Environment (DoE) in Habiganj, said Emran Hossain, the director of DoE in Sylhet, sent a letter to know the details about Quality Integrated Agro Limited (QIAL).

"We visited the area and saw that only the poultry shed next to the madrasa was closed," he said.

Tangail free day observed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A five-day celebration programme, marking the Tangail free day, began yesterday amid festivity in the town.

Tangail was freed from the occupation of Pakistani Army on December 11, 1971.

On this day in 1971, freedom fighters (FFs) hoisted the national flag of independent Bangladesh after freeing Tangail from the Pakistani occupational forces.

To mark the historical day, Tangail municipality has taken a five-day long, from December 11 to December 16, victory festival programme titled "Bijoy Utsab" at Shaheed Smriti Pouro Udyan in the town.

The five-day Bijoy Utsab programme was inaugurated yesterday morning by releasing balloons and pigeons.

Later, a colourful procession was brought out in the town.

People from all walks of life, including freedom fighters, local public representatives, politicians, government officials and many other individuals took part in the procession that paraded the main roads of the town.

During the Liberation War, the brave freedom fighters of Tangail gave their best efforts and created history.

The stories of their braveness and extra ordinary heroic roles spread all over.

The heroism of the 'Kaderia Bahini,' led

by brave Freedom Fighter Abdul Kader Siddique, during the Liberation War will be remembered forever.

After the formation of Zila Swadhin Bangla Gono Mukti Parishad on March in 1971, local youths started organising.

Trainings of the freedom fighters were also continuing simultaneously.

On April 3, the Pakistani Army entered Tangail town, breaking the resistance of the freedom fighters at Goran-Satiachara in Mirzapur.

But, within a few days, Kaderia Bahini got united again and started fighting with the occupation army in different places of the district.

On the other hand, another group of the freedom fighters led by Khandakar Abdul Baten, now late, started resisting the occupational forces at different spots.

However, the Kaderia Bahini played the main role of resistance and the Pakistani army made bewildered by their attacks from the all sides.

On December 10, with the landing of around 2,000 paratroopers of the 'Mitro Bahini' in Poullea area near Tangail town Pakistani Army started turning back to Dhaka.

On December 11, members of the 'Kaderia Bahini' entered the town, captured the police station and hoisted the national flag of Bangladesh there.



A cross section of people including freedom fighters, public representatives, politicians and government officials bring out a colourful procession in Tangail town yesterday, marking the Tangail free day.

PHOTO: STAR

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তারিখঃ ০৯ ডিসেম্বর ২০২১

নং-১৮.২০.০০০০.০১৮.৯৯.০৪৩.১৯-১১১৯

বিষয়ঃ অগ্রহায়নকরণপত্র (Expression of Interest-EOI) দাখিলের আহ্বান সম্বলিত বিজ্ঞাপন।

১।	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	: নৌপরিবহন মন্ত্রণালয়।
২।	সংস্থা	: জাতীয় নদী রক্ষা কমিশন।
৩।	সেবা প্রস্তুতকারী স্বত্বা	: জাতীয় নদী রক্ষা কমিশন।
৪।	সেবা প্রস্তুতকারী স্বত্বার কোড	: প্রয়োজ্য নয়।
৫।	সেবা প্রস্তুতকারী স্বত্বার জেলা	: ঢাকা
৬।	সেবার নাম	: বিভাগীয় পর্যায়ে জাতীয় নদী রক্ষা কমিশন শক্তিশালীকরণ সম্পর্কিত প্রস্তাবিত প্রকল্পের ফিজিবিলাটি স্ট্যাডি।
৭।	অগ্রহায়নকরণপত্র কার নিকট চাওয়া হচ্ছে	: পরামর্শক সেবা প্রতিষ্ঠান (কনসালটিং সার্ভিসেস ফর্ম)।
৮।	রেফারেন্স নম্বর নং-	: ১৮.২০.০০০০.০১৮.৯৯.০৪৩.১৯, তারিখঃ
৯।	প্রকটন/সম্মতি	: নিম্নতম ব্যয় ভিত্তিক নির্বাচন পদ্ধতি।
১০।	বাজেট ও অর্ধের উৎস	: রাজস্ব বাজেট
১১।	উন্নয়ন সহযোগী সংস্থা	: প্রয়োজ্য নয়।
১২।	প্রকল্প/কর্মসূচির কোড	: প্রয়োজ্য নয়।
১৩।	প্রকল্প/কর্মসূচির নাম	: প্রয়োজ্য নয়।
১৪।	অগ্রহায়নকরণপত্র (EOI) দাখিলের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	: ২৭/১২/২০২১

আবেদনকারীর জন্য তথ্য

১৬। কাজের সফলকরণ বর্ণনায় মাঠ পর্যায়ে নদ-নদীর অবৈধ দখল, দূষণ ও নাব্যতা সংক্রান্ত দূর করার জন্য পরিদর্শন, যাচাই ও প্রয়োজনীয় ব্যবস্থা গ্রহণের নিমিত্ত জাতীয় নদী রক্ষা কমিশনের শক্তিশালী করার জন্য বিভাগীয় পর্যায়ে বিভাগীয় কার্যালয় স্থাপন ও নদীর পানির গুণাগুণ পরীক্ষার জন্য টেন্ডিং ল্যাবরেটরি স্থাপন এর বিষয়ে সম্ভাব্যতা যাচাই (ফিজিবিলাটি স্ট্যাডি)।

১৭। পরামর্শক প্রতিষ্ঠানের অভিজ্ঞতা, সম্পদ ও সেবা প্রদানের সক্ষমতার বর্ণনায়: পরামর্শক প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিম্নবর্ণিত যোগ্যতা থাকতে হবেঃ

(ক) ৫ বছরে ন্যূনতম ২৫ লক্ষ টাকার ফিজিবিলাটি স্ট্যাডি করার অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে।

(খ) হাইড্রোমরফোলজিক্যাল স্ট্যাডি করার জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় সংযুক্ত অভিজ্ঞ বিশেষজ্ঞ ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং প্রকৌশলী (সিভিল/পানি প্রকৌশল) পূর্ণকালীন বা পার্টটাইম থাকতে হবে।

(গ) সাধারণ প্রশাসন, জমি ব্যবস্থাপনা, আইন, পরিবেশ বিজ্ঞান, প্রকটন/সম্মতি, হিসাবরক্ষণ, পুরকৌশল প্রকৌশল, রসায়ন, মাইক্রোবায়োলজি, টেন্ডিং ল্যাবরেটরি যন্ত্রপাতি বিষয়ক বিশেষজ্ঞ থাকতে হবে। উপর্যুক্ত বিশেষজ্ঞ রয়েছেন, এমন প্রতিষ্ঠানের সাথে চুক্তির মাধ্যমে তাদের সেবা গ্রহণ করলে তার প্রমাণ দাখিল করতে হবে।

১৮। অন্যান্য চাহিদার বিবরণঃ

(ক) হালনাগাদ ট্রেড লাইসেন্স, ভ্যাট নিবন্ধন সনদ, কর রিটার্ন দাখিল করা থাকতে হবে এবং এর প্রমাণ দাখিল করতে হবে;

(খ) স্থায়ী অফিস থাকতে হবে;

(গ) ব্যাংক সলভেন্সী সনদ থাকতে হবে;

(ঘ) পরামর্শক কাজের অভিজ্ঞতা প্রদানের জন্য কার্যক্রম ও সফল সম্পাদন সনদ দাখিল করতে হবে।

(ঙ) জনবলের শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা/অভিজ্ঞতা সম্বলিত জীবনবৃত্তান্ত এবং অন্যান্য সংশ্লিষ্ট প্রমাণপত্র দাখিল করতে হবে।

১৯। বিদেশী প্রতিষ্ঠানের সাথে এসোসিয়েশন বা বাধ্যতামুক্ত নয়।

২০। কাজের ফেইজসমূহঃ কাজ শুরু করার সময়ঃ ১/২/২০২২:

ডেলিভারেবল	বর্ণনা	সময়সীমা
১ম ডেলিভারেবল	ইনসেপশন রিপোর্ট	কার্যক্রমের ৭ দিনের মধ্যে
২য় ডেলিভারেবল	মধ্যবর্তী প্রতিবেদন	কাজ শুরু ১ মাসের মধ্যে
৩য় ডেলিভারেবল	চূড়ান্ত প্রতিবেদন	কাজ শুরু ২ মাসের মধ্যে

২১। অগ্রহায়নকরণপত্র (EOI) আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার নামঃ মোঃ আমিনুল ইসলাম।

২২। অগ্রহায়নকরণপত্র (EOI) আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার পদবীঃ সচিব, জাতীয় নদী রক্ষা কমিশন।

২৩। অগ্রহায়নকরণপত্র (EOI) আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার দপ্তরের ঠিকানাঃ হোসাইন টাওয়ার (১২ তলা), বীর উত্তম গাজী গোলাম দস্তগীর রোড, ১১৬ নয়া দপল্টন, ঢাকা-১০০০।

২৪। অগ্রহায়নকরণপত্র (EOI) আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার টেলিফোনঃ ৫৮৩১৪১০৯

২৫। কর্তৃপক্ষ দাখিলকৃত সকল অগ্রহায়নকরণপত্র (EOI) বাতিল করার অধিকার সংরক্ষণ করেন।

মোঃ আমিনুল ইসলাম
সচিব
জাতীয় নদী রক্ষা কমিশন

জিডি-২২৯১

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Executive Engineer
District: Panchagarh
www.lged.gov.bd

Memo No. 46.02.7700.000.14.001.21.2535 Date: 08/12/2021

Invitation for Tender (Works, OTM)
e-Tender Notice No. 17/2021-22

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for 01 (One) No. Package for this District.

Sl. No.	Name of work and Package No.	ID No.
01	Construction of 20.0m long RCC Girder Bridge on Sonahar Jognath Hat GC-Khanshama GC via Badsha Bazar Road at Chainage: 6100m under Replacement category [177342007] under Debiganj Upazila, District: Panchagarh, Package No. SupRB/Pan/Replace/21-22/W-103	635523

This is online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited through online from any registered bank branches up to 02-January-2022, 16:00. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Md. Shamsuzzaman
Executive Engineer
LGED, Panchagarh
Telephone No. 0568-61249
xen.panchagarh@lged.gov.bd

GD-2292

আয়োজনে: গিডার প্রো

সহযোগিতায়: মানুসে

আজি

Disabled Rehabilitation and Research Association (DRRA), a non-governmental organisation, in cooperation with Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) distributed different assistive devices among 50 people with special needs at a programme at Manikganj Deputy Commissioner's Office yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit

More than US\$27 b committed to tackle global malnutrition and hunger crisis

STAR HEALTH DESK

Recently government and private sector donors have pledged more than US\$27 billion at the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit to address the global malnutrition and hunger crisis. Represented by five Heads of State and Government, 45 countries with high burdens of malnutrition and a dozen donors delivered renewed policy and financial commitments to end malnutrition. These commitments demonstrate country leadership and prioritisation of nutrition at a crucial time, as fiscal resources are constrained, and malnutrition rates are on the rise due to the continuing global COVID-19 pandemic.

"More than 140 million children suffer from stunting, and undernutrition is considered as an underlying cause of nearly half of deaths of children under five years old. Moreover, COVID-19 cast a significant impact on nutrition. The pandemic will likely cause 13.6 million more children to suffer from wasting," said Japan's Prime Minister, Fumio Kishida. "Let me recall our Sustainable Development Goal to end hunger, achieve food security and improve nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture by 2030. Now is the time for us



to take action. No one should be left behind."

At the event, Japan committed over US\$2.8 billion to provide nutrition-related assistance globally. Among other priorities, this investment will contribute to nutrition in Universal Health Coverage and efforts to create more sustainable and nutritious food systems.

In addition to the donor's pledge, countries with high burdens of malnutrition led the way at the Summit, delivering commitments towards increased domestic programming and promising more robust policies and programs to reduce malnutrition rates. For example, Bangladesh, represented by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, committed to cutting anaemia rates by one-third, stunting among children by one-fifth, and

wasting among children by one-quarter within the next five years.

The Government of Indonesia committed to fighting malnutrition and specifically to accelerating efforts to reduce stunting nationwide. Accordingly, resources will support maternal and child nutrition interventions, including promoting infant and young child feeding, nutritional supplementation for adolescent girls and pregnant women, and nutrition care and support for children with severe malnutrition.

Despite malnutrition being the underlying cause of nearly half of all child deaths under five, less than one per cent of global foreign aid is currently spent on nutrition. To help close the gap, numerous donor governments and multilateral institutions also pledged a combined total of over

US\$27 billion in commitments at the Summit. The European Union committed US\$2.8 billion over 3 years, the United States committed US\$11 billion over 3 years, and the African Development Bank committed US\$1.35 billion over 6 years.

UN agencies also delivered renewed commitments at the Summit. By 2025, UNICEF aims to reach at least 500 million children, adolescents and women annually with malnutrition prevention programs to prevent stunting, wasting, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and obesity. The World Health Organisation (WHO) committed to developing a Global Action Plan to prevent and manage anaemia in women and children and accelerate progress toward reducing anaemia in women of reproductive age by 50 per

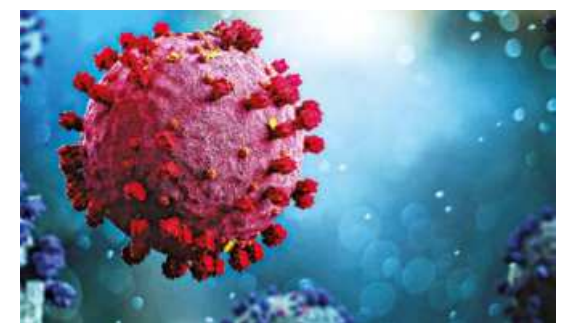
cent by 2030. The World Food Programme committed to increasing the proportion of its programs' beneficiaries who consume healthy diets to 80 per cent in 2025.

Even before COVID-19, the global burden of malnutrition remained worryingly high, though progress was being made in reducing the more severe forms of malnutrition, including stunting and wasting in early childhood. Malnutrition triggered by COVID-19 could kill 283,000 more children aged under-5, leave 13.6 million more wasted and 3.6 million more stunted, and make 4.8 million more women anaemic over the next three years.

The Nutrition for Growth Summit focused on improving nutrition outcomes through universal health coverage, food systems transformation, and greater resilience in fragile and conflict-affected states. The Summit also emphasised financing and robust data systems as essential to strengthening program design, delivery, and accountability.

The Summit is the culmination of the Nutrition for Growth Year of Action—a global effort to bring together country governments, donors, businesses, and UN agencies to accelerate progress on malnutrition.

UPDATE



Omicron—a variant of concern

RAMISHA MALIHA

The variant of SARS-CoV-2 B.1.1.529, termed Omicron, was labelled a variant of concern by World Health Organisation (WHO) on November 26, 2021. The number of people testing positive has risen in areas of South Africa affected by this variant. Scientists in and outside of South Africa are carrying out several research projects to comprehend Omicron better.

Compared to other variations, including Delta, it is not yet clear if Omicron is more transmissible. Also, Omicron infection has not yet been proven more dangerous than infection with other forms. Initial data suggests that hospitalisation rates in South Africa have increased; however, this may be due to an increase in overall infection rates, rather than a specific infection with Omicron, as previously thought. When it comes to the most vulnerable persons, all forms of COVID-19 (including the dominant Delta version) can cause severe sickness or death, so prevention is always crucial.

Initial evidence suggests that Omicron may be more likely to re-infect patients. WHO is collaborating with technical partners to determine how this variation may affect existing countermeasures, such as vaccines. Vaccines are still needed to combat serious sickness and mortality, including Delta. Vaccines still protect against severe disease and death.

E-mail: ramisha.maliha@thedailystar.net

HEALTH bulletin



HIV as a risk factor for sudden cardiac death

People living with HIV (PWH) are at an increased risk of cardiovascular disease and electrophysiological changes that may lead to sudden cardiac death (SCD). SCD was twice as common in PWH in a recent research published in New England Journal of Medicine; however, one in three fatalities was attributed to overdose.

Researchers have now utilised the Veterans Aging Cohort Study (VACS) data to investigate the link between HIV and SCD. PWH made for 30% of the over 144,000 VACS participants (median age 50) (median baseline CD4 count 385 cells/L).

Hypertension, diabetes, raised LDL cholesterol, obesity, alcohol use, COPD, and cardiovascular disease were more common among HIV-negative veterans. 3035 SCDs occurred throughout a median 9-year follow-up; incidence rose with age in HIV-positive and HIV-negative veterans.

With a lower baseline CD4 cell count and a higher HIV viral load, the risk of SCD increased in PWH. When confounders were taken into account, PWH had a 14% greater risk of SCD than HIV-negative people. PWH with a baseline CD4 count of 200 cells/L had a 29% greater risk, while PWH with a baseline HIV-1 viral load of >500 copies/ml had a 17% higher risk. HIV infection was linked to a % higher incidence of SCD in a study confined to never-smokers.

The analysis revealed that advanced HIV infection is linked to an increased risk of SCD and that cardiovascular risk factor modification should be essential for primary HIV care.

Evercare completes its 50th BMT procedure

STAR HEALTH REPORT

Evercare Hospital Dhaka, the first JCI-accredited hospital in Bangladesh, announced at a press meet that they have successfully completed their 50th bone marrow transplant (BMT). They now have a record of conducting the highest number of allogeneic BMTs in the country.

With a dedicated BMT unit and a leukaemia unit, Evercare Hospital Dhaka is fully equipped to tackle different kinds of leukaemia using autologous and allogeneic BMT with full match and half match (Haplo).

Furthermore, the hospital has a stem cell processing lab; a Cryopreservation facility; outpatient and inpatient procedure facility; an in-house molecular diagnostic facility that provides fast and accurate diagnosis; BMT beds with central oxygen supply, HEPA Filter and a system for reverse osmosis water purification.

In addition, it has a molecular lab that uses state-of-the-art technology of Flow Cytometry to diagnose the

specific type of cancer. Furthermore, services like subtyping, FLAER-based PNH, immune-histochemistry, and PET-scan are available to assess the patient's condition quickly and correctly.

Early diagnosis and planning of BMT procedures are crucial to leukaemia treatment. Therefore, top-notch treatment planning tests like MRD and IHC tests are used to monitor the effectiveness of the treatment and adapt for necessary changes.

Dr Abu Jafar Mohammed Saleh, Coordinator & Senior Consultant, Hematology & Stem Cell Transplant, Evercare Hospital Dhaka, said, "BMT is a very precarious procedure that comes with a lot of challenges. Before this development in Evercare Hospital, there was limited treatment for leukaemia. Hence, we are pleased to have been able to conduct this procedure in our hospital with success. We have a vision of providing comprehensive medical support to the people of Bangladesh. Therefore, the

expansion of our BMT unit is a step forward in this regard. We currently have the utmost confidence and support from our clientele, and we wish to continue working with our best efforts to see this centre become one of the best in this subcontinent."

Dr Ratnadeep Chaskar, CEO & Managing Director, Evercare Hospital Dhaka, said, "We are the first private hospital in the country to bring the advanced equipment required for BMT. With a fully equipped leukaemia unit, BMT unit and the treatment planning processes, we hope to help more patients who are fighting the painful fear of losing their lives to cancer."

Dr Arif Mahmud, Deputy Director of Medical Services, Evercare Hospital Dhaka, said, "We have the best facilities for BMT treatment in Evercare Hospital Dhaka. Due to this development, patients no longer need to seek BMT treatment abroad. It is much more cost-effective to do it in the country, and our success rates are as good as developed countries."



Need for skilled healthcare workforce in rural Bangladesh

A national consultative meeting on "Community Paramedics: A Skilled Healthcare Workforce in Rural Bangladesh" was organised by Achieving Sustainability Towards Healthcare Access (ASTHA), a project of Swisscontact Bangladesh, in Dhaka recently.

The discussion meeting highlighted that public, private, and NGO combined efforts should be established to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In Bangladesh, a shortage of skilled healthcare workers is a major public health issue. Rural areas are particularly concerning, as residents rely heavily on unqualified providers.

Mr Ali Noor, Secretary for Medical Education and Family Welfare Division to the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, emphasised, "The role of community paramedics in rural health service is essential and should be spread across the country to ensure the availability of essential primary healthcare services." To develop a rural healthcare system, the government and non-government institutions must help. He also emphasised monitoring their service scope and quality.

Mujibul Hasan, Country Director of Swisscontact Bangladesh, has stressed the importance of public-private partnership in the country's overall growth. Additionally, he reinforced Swisscontact's key role in facilitating and strengthening that public-private partnership and collaboration in attributing Bangladesh's growth towards becoming a middle-income country.



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ON THE ROAD AGAIN

The death of Notre Dame College student Nayeem Hasan under the wheels of a garbage truck in Gulistan on November 24 reignited the students' movement for safe roads that began several years ago when racing buses killed two students on airport road. They stopped vehicles on roads and checked their papers and licences of drivers. Those who failed to produce the papers and licences were handed over to the traffic policemen on duty there. They chanted slogans and showed red cards to chaos and corruption in the transport sector. They also distributed leaflets urging road users to obey traffic rules. But as they were demonstrating on the streets peacefully, students kept on getting killed in road crashes. Police stopped their processions and obstructed their sit-in programmes on several occasions.

Photo: STAR



India, Russia discuss Bangladesh war

FROM PAGE 16
 correspondent reported from the encircled Dhaka as advancing columns of Mitro Bahini came as close as 18km from their main destination.
 Senior Pakistani officers predicted Indian troops would reach Dhaka within 48 hours, reported The New York Times. "Word of the imminence of an Indian attack came from nervous and dispirited officials at Government House. One general spoke melodramatically of throwing himself under a tank, but it is likely that no tanks would be available. Other senior Pakistanis, were expecting to be taken prisoner by the Indians but were fearful that the Bangalee guerrillas would reach them first," added the newspaper.
US CARRIER MAY SAIL TO BANGLADESH
 The United States Navy's nuclear-powered aircraft carrier Enterprise had left Vietnamese waters on December 10, 1971 heading toward the Indian Ocean for a possible rescue of American citizens from Dhaka, reported The New York Times.
 Naval commanders aboard the carrier shared that they had orders to sail to the Strait of Malacca off Singapore to await final instructions to proceed up the Bay of Bengal. The mission of the United States task force would be to evacuate Americans and other foreigners from Dhaka, they added.

The Enterprise, the largest aircraft carrier in the United States fleet and the only nuclear-powered one then in operation, carried about a hundred fighter-bombers, bombers, fighters, reconnaissance aircraft, helicopters and small cargo planes. Her ordnance stores included nuclear bombs.
 Three British C-130's flew from Dhaka to Kolkata today with about 480 British, American and German evacuees, according to United States consulate officials in Dhaka.
INDO-BANGLA ACCORD ON EVACUEE'S RETURN
 The governments of India and Bangladesh reached an accord on the question of the return from India of the Bangladesh evacuees and their rehabilitation. Thirty million people including about 10 million now in India would be rehabilitated in Bangladesh by the end of January, 1972. The decisions were made when the Indian union minister for relief and rehabilitation had a series of meetings with Bangladesh government leaders including Syed Nazrul Islam and Tajuddin Ahmad today.
US URGES UN TO ACT
 The United States urged the Security Council tonight to call upon India to accept forthwith a ceasefire and a mutual withdrawal in the Indian-Pakistani war. But George Bush, the United States representative, withdrew his demand for an immediate vote on an American draft resolution

shortly after midnight after the Soviet, Polish and French delegates had declared that they needed time to get instructions from their governments. The emergency meeting, which had been called at the urgent request of the United States, was adjourned at 12:45am until 10:30am today.
 Bush consented to the adjournment after the delegate of Somalia, Abdulrahim A Farah, had noted that the Indian Foreign Minister Swaran Singh had given a "qualified commitment" of withdrawal in his statement to the council.
 Swaran Singh had said that India would withdraw her forces if Pakistani troops were pulled out of East Pakistan and if Pakistan entered into a peace settlement with the representatives of Bangladesh.
BHUTTO VOWS FIGHT TO END
 Pakistan Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto told a cheering throng of Pakistanis today, "We are not cowards, we will fight to the last man if it has to be." He was addressing a crowd of demonstrators who had gathered outside the Hotel Pierre, where Bhutto had been conferring with diplomats about the Indian-Pakistani war. The demonstration was in favor of the Pakistani government and against the Soviet Union and India.
 Shamsuddoza Sajen is a journalist and researcher. He can be contacted at sajen1986@gmail.com

First Omicron cases detected

FROM PAGE 1
 response to the Omicron variant.
 First reported in South Africa last month, the Omicron variant is reportedly causing milder Covid-19 illness than Delta. But it seems to be spreading faster, according to the latest report published by South Africa's National Institute for Communicable Disease yesterday.
 Bangladesh Cricket Board Physician Debashish Chowdhury said Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) will now follow the protocol of the health ministry.
 "The others [players] tested negative and have no symptom," Nazmul Hasan Papon, president of BCB told journalists yesterday, adding, "The isolation protocol is being fully maintained."
 According to the global genome sequence database GISAID, the Institute for Epidemiology and Disease

Control (IEDCR) collected nasal swabs from both cricketers on December 6.
 The IEDCR-ideSHi Genomics Lab then completed the genomic sequencing of these samples and identified them as Omicron variants of coronavirus.
 The results were submitted and published on the GISAID website on Thursday.
 Mushtuq Hussain, consultant of the IEDCR, told The Daily Star yesterday, "Although the World Health Organization has not reported any fatality due to Omicron yet, it is too early to rule out the probability of danger."
 "As it is now detected in the country, the genomic sequence of every new case of Covid-19 should be done to keep a hold on the transmission of omicron," he said.
 He also urged for rigorous screening at all entry points across the country and enforcement of health safety guidelines.

All over again?

FROM PAGE 4
 formed a monitoring committee and will intervene if the company breaks our guidelines."
 However, Anwara UNO and president of Parki Beach Management Committee Shekh Jobaer Ahmed said, "We have been tasked to monitor the ship-breaking works, as the area falls under our jurisdiction. But the company has started without notifying us."
 Meanwhile, experts have expressed concern over the latest development in this long-running saga.
 Dr Md Atiqur Rahman, associate professor of geography and environmental studies department at Chittagong University, said, "Dismantling this old ship in the beach area will cause extensive damage there. The old, toxic oil of the ship will get mixed with the beach water, which will seriously endanger the biodiversity of the sea."
 "It should've been taken to a designated ship-breaking yard," Dr Atiqur opined.
 The ship washed up on the beach after Cyclone Mora hit the coasts on May 30, 2017. Back then, it belonged to Crystal Group. But it was sold off to Four Star Enterprise at an auction near the end of 2018, after the former owners got embroiled in legal and internal complications.

Bosnian Serb MPs step up secession push

AFP, Sarajevo
 Bosnian Serb lawmakers Friday kickstarted a controversial process of withdrawing from Bosnia and Herzegovina's central institutions, despite repeated warnings against the move from the West.
 The Republika Srpska parliament passed a vote that obliges the local government to organise withdrawal from three crucial joint institutions -- the army, tax and justice system -- in the next six months.
 The process is being shepherded by Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik -- a former Western protege turned nationalist -- who has been threatening secession for years.
 The 62-year-old, who is currently a Serb member of the Bosnian joint presidency, tirelessly underlines that the country he co-runs is "impossible".
 After eight hours of debate, the lawmakers adopted the proposed text by 49 votes for and three against.

Two siblings murdered

FROM PAGE 16
 quoting the locals.
 Over the feud, a group allegedly belonging to Hobi Bepari locked in an altercation with Rafiqul at his grocery shop at a local bazaar on Friday.
 At one stage, they attacked Rafiqul with sharp weapons. When Rafiqul's father Akbor and his brother Shafiqul rushed to the spot, the rivals also attacked them, injuring the two critically. Akbor was given first aid.
 They were rushed to Mymensingh Medical College Hospital (MMCH), where Rafiqul died in the afternoon.
 Shafiqul was referred to Dhaka Medical College Hospital as his condition deteriorated and he died at the hospital yesterday, the OC said.
 On information, police recovered the bodies and sent those to morgues for autopsy.
 The feud has been going on for years and there were several local arbitrations over the issue but could not be minimised, said Md Abu Sayed, chairman of Char Sirta union parishad.
 Police detained two Rubel Mia, 25, and Momtaz Uddin, 40, for their alleged involvement in the killings.

according to the OC. No case has been lodged yet.
 In another incident in Netrakona's Kalmakanda upazila, a mason was beaten to death over land on Friday.
 The victim was identified as Asad Mia, 30, son of Md Abdullah of Ulukanda Bogatia village in Kalmakanda.
 Abdullah had a longstanding dispute over a piece of land with Kamal Mia of the adjacent Gangdharkanda area, said Md Habibullah Khan, the OC of Kalmakanda Police Station, quoting locals.
 There was a local arbitration over the issue at Ulukanda on Friday morning. At one point, both the groups locked in a heated altercation and Kamal and his men allegedly started beating Asad with sticks and injured him critically.
 He was taken to Kalmakanda Upazila Health Complex from where he was referred to MMCH. He died at the hospital on Friday night.
 Police recovered the body and sent it to MMCH morgue for autopsy. Police detained one Maznu Mia, 50, for his alleged involvement in the killing.

BR seeks funds from Russia

FROM PAGE 16
 meeting of the Bangladesh-Russia Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Scientific, Economic and Technical Cooperation (BR-IGC) starts tomorrow, they said.
 The three-day virtual meeting would be spearheaded by Economic Relations Division (ERD) on Bangladesh side and would be participated by officials of different agencies concerned of both countries, an ERD official said.
 On the other hand, Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan is expected to visit Russia next week.
 Russian Ambassador to Bangladesh Alexander Mantyskiy called on Sujan last month and invited the minister to visit Russia. At that time, Sujan sought Russian investment in Bangladesh's railway sector.
 Russia has not provided BR with any funds in in Bangladesh in recent past.
THE PROJECTS
 The five projects are Dhaka-Chattogram High Speed Railway; construction of Bhangra-Payra Rail Line; construction of a dual gauge single line from Chakaria to Maheshkhali and Matarbari Power Plant; procurement of 46 broad gauge locomotives; and construction of workshop and depot at Diapara in Gazipur.
 BR has already completed the feasibility study and detailed design of the high-speed railway project.
 The estimated cost of the 224.64-kilometre-long rail route is \$11.11 billion (Tk 93,350.93 crores).
 Once constructed and the high-speed train begins operation, the journey from the capital to the commercial capital (Chattogram) will be slashed to just 73 minutes. An uninterrupted journey between Dhaka and Chattogram will take only 55 minutes.

However, Railways Minister recently told this correspondent that the government would go slow to implement the project as it would require huge investment.
 As part of the government's plans to bring the entire country under the rail network and establish a direct link between the under-construction Payra Sea Port and the capital, BR intended to construct the rail line from Bhangra to Payra.
 The line will cost around \$4.93 billion (Tk 41,797.6 crores), BR documents show.
 To connect the under-construction and proposed Matarbari power plants and proposed deep seaport with Chattogram-Dohazari rail corridor, BR is planning to construct a new dual gauge line from Chakaria to Maheshkhali.
 The estimated cost of the project would be \$1552.95 million.
 Another project is for establishing a dedicated BG depot and workshop with all modern facilities for the maintenance of BG rolling stock of BR's east zone.
 It would cost around \$944.15 million for the construction of carriage, wagon and locomotive workshops, fueling facilities and depot BG rolling stock at Daripara in Gazipur's Kaliganj upazila.
 The last project for procuring 46 BG locomotives, which would cost around \$268.09 million.
 Sheikh Sakil Uddin Ahmed, joint secretary (planning) of the railways ministry said they have made the proposal earlier and will discuss it in the (BR-IGC) meeting.
 An ERD official said the issue related to the railway sector would be discussed at an expert-level meeting on December 14 and a chairperson level meeting on December 15 too.

Bangladeshi

FROM PAGE 16
 Mission Concept.
 The team members are Barnita Basak Trisha and Momentul Haque from Bangladesh Army University of Engineering and Technology; and Sumit Chanda, Samir Imtiaz, Shishir Kairy and Alvi Rownok from Khulna University of Engineering & Technology.
 There were over 28,000 participants from 162 countries in the contest which included 28 challenges and over 2,800 projects.
 The theme for NASA Space Apps Challenge 2021 was "Virtual Planetary Exploration V2.0", for which participants had to create interactive 3D models of geology tools that astronauts can use when exploring surfaces of celestial bodies or planets.
 Team Mohakash came up with the concept of Advanced Regolith Sampler System: a battery-powered motor tool consisting of bucket blades. The buckets are placed in a certain sequence to easily scoop materials known as regoliths, which are fragments found on planetary surfaces.

ডিজিটাল বাংলাদেশ

দিবস ২০২১

১২ ডিসেম্বর

“বিশ্বসংখ্যক তরুণ সমাজের জন্য একটি তথ্যপ্রযুক্তিনির্ভর আধুনিক ডিজিটাল বাংলাদেশ বিনির্মাণ সরকারের অঙ্গীকার। আজ ডিজিটাল বাংলাদেশ স্বপ্ন নয়, বাস্তবতা।”

জাতির পিতা
বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান

“অনুকরণ নয় উদ্ভাবন, ডিজিটাল বাংলাদেশের দর্শন। আমরা এমন বাংলাদেশ গড়তে চাই যেখানে প্রতিটি মানুষ তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি জানসম্পন্ন হবে, উদ্ভাবন আর গবেষণায় ভর করে বাংলাদেশ চতুর্থ শিল্পবিপ্লবে নেতৃত্ব দেবে।”

সজীব ওয়াজেদ জয়

মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রীর তথ্য ও যোগাযোগ প্রযুক্তি বিষয়ক উপদেষ্টা

শেখ হাসিনা এমপি

মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী
গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

জুনাইদ আহমেদ পলক এমপি

মাননীয় প্রতিমন্ত্রী
তথ্য ও যোগাযোগ প্রযুক্তি বিভাগ

এ.কে.এম. রহমতুল্লাহ এমপি

মাননীয় সভাপতি, ডাক, টেলিযোগাযোগ ও তথ্যপ্রযুক্তি মন্ত্রণালয় সম্পর্কিত স্থায়ী কমিটি

এন এম জিয়াউল আলম পি.এ.এ

সিনিয়র সচিব
তথ্য ও যোগাযোগ প্রযুক্তি বিভাগ

ডিজিটাল বাংলাদেশঃ স্বপ্ন থেকে বাস্তবে

ই-গভর্নমেন্ট

২১০০ টি

ডিজিটাল সেবা

ইভাস্টি প্রমোশন

১.৩ বিলিয়ন ডলার

আইসিটি রপ্তানি

কানেক্টিং বাংলাদেশ

১৩ কোটি

ইন্টারনেট ব্যবহারকারী

দক্ষ মানবসম্পদ

২০ লক্ষ

কর্মসংস্থান

২০২৫ সালের লক্ষ্য

- আইসিটি রপ্তানি ৫ বিলিয়ন ডলারে উন্নীত করা;
- তথ্য যুক্তিতে কর্মসংস্থান ৩০ লক্ষে উন্নীত করা;
- সরকারি সেবার শতভাগ অনলাইনে পাওয়া নিশ্চিত করা;
- আরও ১ লক্ষ ৯ হাজার ওয়াইফাই সংযোগ;
- ডিজিটাল ডিজিটাল সেন্টার প্রতিষ্ঠা;
- আরও ৩শ' স্থল অব ফিউচার প্রতিষ্ঠা;
- আরও ২৫ হাজার শেখ রাসেল ডিজিটাল ল্যাব প্রতিষ্ঠা করা;
- আরও ২৫ হাজার শেখ রাসেল ডিজিটাল ল্যাব প্রতিষ্ঠা করা;
- আর্থিক খাতে বৃদ্ধতা ও জবাবদিহি নিশ্চিত ইন্টারঅপারেবল ডিজিটাল ট্রানজেকশন প্ল্যাটফর্ম চালু;
- ক্যাম্পলেস সোসাইটি গড়ে তোলা;
- ফ্রন্টিয়ার টেকনোলজিতে দক্ষ মানবসম্পদ উন্নয়নে শেখ হাসিনা ইনস্টিটিউট অব ফ্রন্টিয়ার টেকনোলজি (SHAFT) স্থাপন;
- ডিজিটাল লিডারশিপ একাডেমি প্রতিষ্ঠা;
- সেন্টার ফর 4IR প্রতিষ্ঠা করা।

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Enforced disappearances remain unresolved

The statistics are too horrendous to gloss over

OF all the fundamental rights guaranteed by the Constitution, the right to life is the most central to the functioning of a state. It is (or should be) inviolable, but if one's right to life is abridged, without the proper application of the law, and if the state takes no action to address the situation and arrest the phenomenon, then not only does the rule of law become the law of the jungle—the Constitution stands defiled, the credentials of the state is slighted and the dignity of society sullied.

This is unacceptable in a society that takes pride as a votary of rule of law. According to a local human rights watchdog, between 2009 and September 2021, as many as 605 persons have disappeared, of whom 154 remain untraced. Among the disappeared, 370 have returned, and a gruesome 81 persons have been found dead during the mentioned period. Predictably, the state agencies have denied any involvement in the matter, but accounts of the victims' families in most cases talk about the victims being picked up by people in plainclothes, sometimes claiming to be members of state agencies.

We do not want to point fingers at anyone, but in this regard, one must acknowledge some incontrovertible facts. First, people have gone missing and a good number still remain unaccounted for. Two, a good number of them have ended up dead. Three, most of those who have returned, suffer inexplicably from a bout of amnesia; they are unable to recall anything of the period after they were captured, kidnapped or apprehended, till they returned home.

Does it not then become the responsibility of the state to go into the depth of the matter? If the state agencies are not involved in enforced disappearances, as they claim, then does it not devolve on them to find out who is? Are we to believe that there is a supra-entity that has managed to cause the enforced disappearance of more than 600 people? Is it not the enough to raise the hackles of the security and intelligence agencies and get them moving to apprehend whoever these people are—who are working clandestinely and doing so since the last decade, and so efficiently too that they are able to evade being identified, leave alone captured, by the state agencies?

These are questions that cannot be brushed aside with puerile answers from the authorities. There are only so many possibilities and reasons behind a person going missing. And that is all the more reason that every missing persons case should be thoroughly investigated. Thus, we wonder, why is there reluctance on the part of the police, reportedly, to register "missing persons" cases? And in some cases, there are pressures on the victim's families to withdraw the case. It demands demonstrated actions by the agencies to address the issue, but there are none at the moment. The authorities should not be oblivious to the possibility that lack of palpable action on their part may be taken as indicative of complicity.

Evaluating 50 years of Bangladesh

Exemplary progress and unmet goals

BANGLADESH has come a long way since independence in 1971, crossing many milestones to reach where it has today. The chronicle of the 50-years-long journey is dotted with achievements—as well as numerous catastrophes, thrown its way by both nature and humans, which the country managed to overcome while upholding the tenets of independence. In his evaluation at a recent webinar marking the country's golden jubilee, Prof Rehman Sobhan said, "Bangladesh became a success case from the basket case in 50 years."

It is true that Bangladesh has an impressive track record of growth and poverty reduction that has made us all proud. From being one of the poorest nations at birth in 1971, with the 10th lowest per capita GDP in the world, Bangladesh reached lower-middle-income status in 2015, and is now on track to graduate from the UN's Least Developed Countries (LDC) list in 2026. Labelled as one of the fastest growing economies in the world over the past decades, the credit for its success goes to demographic dividend, RMG exports, and favourable macroeconomic conditions, according to the World Bank.

While eminent economists, scholars, social researchers and think-tanks at home and abroad endorse this view, they however have offered a few words of caution as well. While praising our achievements, they also pause to point out where things could have been much better.

Despite remarkable progress in economic and social development, the country is lagging behind in institutionalising democracy, strengthening important institutions, improving governance and protecting the environment. Widening inequalities in income, fading social parity and declining education standards need to be addressed urgently. Scholars believe ensuring accountability, good governance and public trust are pertinent issues for a democracy.

We feel these well-intentioned suggestions should be considered seriously as part of the 50-year celebration of our independence. There is no denying that the country's progress, and its recognition by the international community, has helped us overcome the negative stereotypes that had previously been attached to Bangladesh. Now we, as a nation, have a healthy positive perception about our abilities and our goals. One of the wisest ways for us to celebrate our success now is to study our strengths and weaknesses at present, so that we can chart our future course to reach the next 50-year milestone.



AN OPEN DIALOGUE
ABDULLAH SHIBLI

Star, in an editorial, hailed the news as a milestone. It rightly pointed out, "As Bangladesh celebrates its Golden Jubilee of independence, this achievement establishes us on the global map as a country with great potential."



It will be very challenging for Bangladesh to attain its development goals if institutional weakness continues.

ILLUSTRATION: BIPOB CHAKROBORTY

The PM of Bangladesh called on business leaders to step up to the plate for the journey forward. "Get ready for LDC graduation challenges," she said at a gathering arranged by the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FBCCI) to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the country's independence on December 1 in Dhaka.

The good news came on November 24 in the form of a statement from the UN headquarters in New York City. "The U.N. General Assembly has adopted resolution A/76/L.6/Rev.1, Graduation

of Bangladesh, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Nepal from the least developed country category," the declaration said.

Incidentally, all three countries, Bangladesh, Laos and Nepal, will cross the threshold and graduate from the LDC category after a preparatory period of five years. Even though the standard period is of three years, these three nations have been granted an "exceptionally extended" timeline, in light of the economic and social damage caused by Covid-19.

Earlier this year, in response to a recent intervention by the government of Bangladesh, the Committee for Development Policy of the United Nations (UN CDP) agreed to extend the transition period by two more

it embarks on this historic journey? A cursory look at the recent studies done by national think-tanks and international agencies reveals that the major hurdles that lie on the path to middle-income status are low investment, unequal distribution of income and wealth, a private sector stunted by lack of diversification, and weak institutions.

Participants at two recent conferences emphasised the role of institutions and highlighted the critical impact of the lack of a robust regulatory framework, effective and supportive bureaucracy, and the slow development of a supportive ecosystem. "It will be very challenging for Bangladesh to attain its development goals if institutional weakness continues," said Prof Selim Raihan of Dhaka University at the CPD-Cornell University virtual conference.

At a BIDS conference, Prof Rehman Sobhan recently gave a clarion call for strengthening our institutions to support economic development.

A stunning rebuke of our development strategy came earlier this year from the World Bank's Systematic Country Diagnostic 2021 Update (SCD) report. It identified four major challenges, and the first one was the narrow-based private sector which was characterised as "not competitive to drive growth and job creation."

It is well-known that only a few large firms, including conglomerates, drive the formal sector markets. "Such firms remain mostly inward looking and benefit from rents from protected domestic markets and RMG exports under special incentive programmes and from being supported by close links with the banking sector," the SCD added.

Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud, an eminent economist, in his new book and in a recent op-ed in this newspaper, also flagged rampant capital flight, which leads many well-run private businesses to fall into a debt repayment crisis.

"The governments are forced to bail out these companies by various financial assistance, like allowing additional loans and rescheduling existing loans at concessional interest. The interest rates on these loans in real terms—that is, taking inflation into account—often turns out to be negative, thus putting a heavy burden on the financial institutions and harming the economy at large," he added.

The private sector, one must concede, faces one of the world's most burdensome business environments, underpinned by a regulatory governance regime that is unpredictable, non-transparent, and discretionary.

Many of the challenges confronting

Bangladesh as it re-embarks on the trajectory towards sustainable graduation originate from exogenous factors. With the new Omicron variant raising its head and adding to the uncertainty surrounding Covid-19 recovery, one has to be cognisant of the latter's endurance across the world, especially in Europe and North America, and the potential threats on export earnings and remittance inflows.

As the firms at the top flourish, small and medium enterprises (SME) face major roadblocks. These include lack of access to finance and excessive regulation.

Bangladesh is still overly dependent on a few export items, and this has generated its own weakness as well. Although the export sector of Bangladesh has made remarkable progress in the last few decades, exports remained heavily concentrated in few products and limited markets. The vulnerability of export concentration is well recognised in the Bangladesh planning landscape, according to the SCD. The Eighth Five Year Plan and other perspective plans have given due attention and many measures and policy options have been devised to diversify both products and markets. "A blend of skills, finance, improved technology, entrepreneurship, and adequate quality infrastructure is key to the success of the export diversification programme," the World Bank document recognises.

Between 2003 and 2016, the Bangladesh economy generated more than 1.15 million net jobs per year, on average. The strong job creation was accompanied by a continuous labour shift from agriculture to industry and services and from rural to urban areas. Female employment, which rose 4.4 percent annually, increased at a faster pace than male employment.

Since 2015, however, the manufacturing sector became less effective in generating jobs, while female labour force participation declined in urban areas; and there was uneven progress in poverty reduction across the country. The slowdown in growth in recent years has affected Bangladesh's poverty reduction and jobs creation targets.

Another issue in the post-graduation phase is the loss of trade-related ISMs (International Support Measures). Unless timely and appropriate policy measures are taken with the support of our development and trading partners, we might run into some real challenges later this decade.

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

Keeping up with the Fourth Industrial Revolution a crucial factor in economic growth



M M SHAHIDUL HASSAN

OVER the past decade, there has been tremendous interest in understanding how technology is shaping the nature of work and education around the world. The advance of technology has shattered traditional business models and demands the modernisation of industries and new skills from workers. In this context, the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) has seen unprecedented advances in technology that did not occur in previous industrial revolutions. Artificial intelligence, cyber security, cloud computing and robotics are changing our way of life and work. Also, the rapid pace of change is disrupting almost every industry in every country. The Internet of Things enables large-scale production, end-to-end data collection, and advanced decision-making for real-time reporting. Therefore, the 4IR poses a challenge for low-skilled and unskilled workers. While advances in technology create new jobs, many other jobs are also lost.

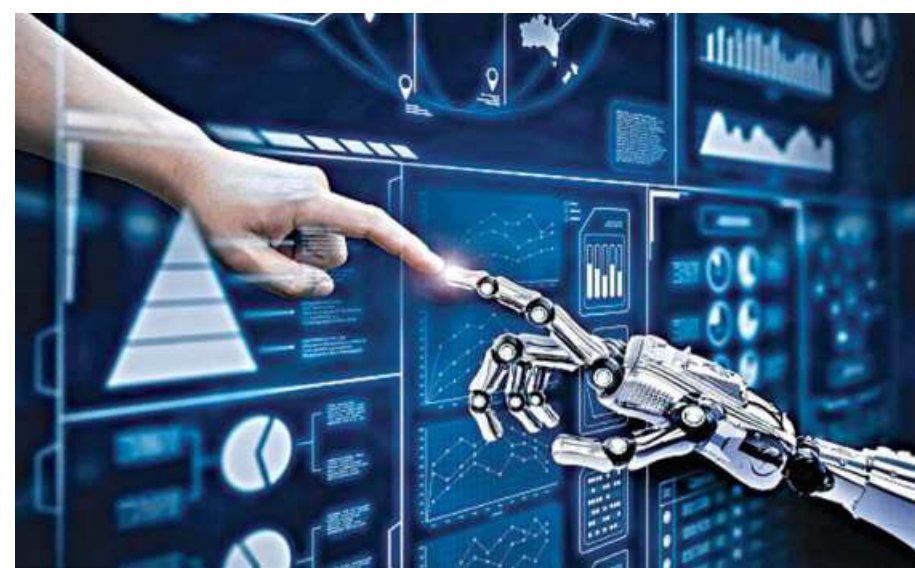
In countries that hold much higher numbers of low-skilled and unskilled workers over high-skilled workers, 4IR is particularly worrying and creates discussions on how technology will affect their socioeconomic development. The role of routine vs non-routine and cognitive vs manual tasks has become a hot topic of debate. In 2016, the World Development Report predicted that over 40 percent of today's jobs in many developing countries may be at risk of being significantly transformed or altogether replaced by digital technologies over the next decades.

Almost 90 percent of Bangladesh's workers are unskilled. As a result, 4IR will pose a great challenge to our government in dealing with this situation. However, more recent research suggests that the adoption of technology to transform many traditional industries immediately into smart industries is not economically feasible, thus, displacement due to automation may not occur immediately (Asian Development Bank, 2018). On

the other hand, about 60 percent of the population works in agriculture, and about 30 percent of GDP comes from agriculture. We cannot expect that the adoption of technology in these sectors will happen anytime soon. Thus, the idea that all industries will become automated and that low-skilled workers will lose their jobs is not correct. However, non-routine jobs need to be accelerated to sustain economic growth. The non-routine and cognitive categories require

steam engine, and 2IR increased mass production using electric energy. In the third IR, electronics and information technology was used to automate production. In 3IR, machines replaced a lot of the work that people used to do. All of these revolutions have substituted the human, but not their thinking.

However, 4IR has the potential to skyrocket economic growth or negatively impact the countries that will lag behind if they do not realise its potentials. It is



Artificial intelligence, cyber security, cloud computing and robotics are changing our way of life and work.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

higher-order cognitive and soft skills. Bangladesh will be able to continue its economic growth without high risks to today's jobs. However, traditional industries have to choose the path of automation to increase the rate of production in the future. Adding resilience to the industry through training and skills development of workers is more important than ever. Since we do not expect that the tasks in routine jobs will change much in the near future, for now, we should focus more on non-routine jobs that will keep pace with the desired rate of economic growth.

Every industrial revolution in the world has been called disruptive in its time, as machines replaced human labour. The first industrial revolution replaced manual work with the invention of the

important for developing countries to take steps to take advantage of the 4IR. The first challenge is lack of awareness and of a coherent strategy. Some of the technologies that are considered to be an integral part of 4IR have been used in manufacturing before, such as robotics and additive manufacturing. However, with the advancement of fields such as machine learning, data science and the Internet of Things, it is now possible to amalgamate these and related technologies to revolutionise manufacturing. Other challenges include lack of infrastructure and lack of specialists in required areas, lack of collaboration between industry and academia, and lack of collaboration among different countries. In 4IR, humans are needed in high-skilled

innovation and critical decision-making jobs, as well as in fields that require emotional intelligence. To coexist with machines and achieve good results in the future, humans should make certain changes in education and skills. We should also develop principles and standards in dealing with the relationship between humans and intelligent machines.

Universities need to produce graduates who are equipped with the skills of complex problem-solving, critical thinking, creativity, human resources management, networking, emotional intelligence, judgment and decision-making, and service orientation. Graduates in science or engineering, or even social sciences, should have knowledge of machine learning. Traditional education inherited from the pre-independence regime of Bangladesh is not producing employable graduates. Now, developed countries adopt a "learning paradigm" instead of an "instructional paradigm" in teaching and learning. The underlying principle behind this new paradigm is based on the concept of teaching to students' ability levels, which has been known to work in improving learning. The Ministry of Education, University Grants Commission and universities need to work together to bring this paradigm into higher education.

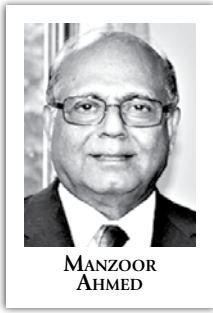
Bangladesh needs to take steps to keep up with 4IR. The country needs to set up Artificial Intelligence (AI) and computing research centres, which should be centers of learning and research in AI. Smart factories need to have security experts and research centres to keep pace with new security threats and their prevention. Bangladesh needs to invest in infrastructure before taking further steps to implement 4IR.

Bangladesh can attain the level of a developed country by 2041 if it can take advantage of the 4th Industrial Revolution and restructure the entire education system, like many developing countries. We need to reform not only higher education, but also primary and secondary education. Research finds that a crucial part of education happens at the age of five. This is important in helping children develop creative minds at a young age.

M M Shahidul Hassan is Vice Chancellor of East West University. Email: vc@ewub.edu

EDUCATION AND THE PANDEMIC

The ostrich syndrome is not the answer



MANZOOR AHMED

THE proverbial ostrich buries its head in the sand in the face of danger, assuming that if it cannot see the hazard, the hazard does not exist or will disappear. Denial of obvious problems as a response to them is thus known as the "ostrich syndrome".

Actually, ostriches don't bury their heads to avoid danger, but they dig holes in the dirt to make nests for their eggs and check on them frequently. Ostriches are more sensible than many humans, who refuse to see obvious problems and whose solution to problems is to pretend that the problems or risks don't exist.

Schools re-opened partially on September 12 after remaining closed for the better part of two academic years. The decision-makers' dilemmas in a difficult situation cannot be underestimated. Yet, it is not helpful if authorities behave as if everything will be fine if they pretend that nothing much has happened and schools can go back to a normal routine.

The SSC and HSC exams have been held, albeit in an abridged form, the admission process and dates for the new school year starting in January have been announced, and schools have been advised to hold their annual exams. Most students will start a new grade in January, having missed most lessons from the previous two grades.

It is far from fine for these students. With minimal learning engagement in almost two years, were they ready for lessons for the new grade after being auto-promoted from their previous grade in 2020? Come January, will they be ready for their lessons after another virtual auto-promotion to the next grade? Students are attending school now for a very

limited number of hours and days since mid-September. And from what we hear, up to a quarter of students, especially girls, have not returned to school.

The pandemic has been an unprecedented global crisis, not just for the education sector, and the end is not in sight. An extraordinary situation demands an exceptional and bold response. It does not make sense to presume that the education machine could be restarted where it was left off in March 2020, as if the intervening 18 months did not matter. In fact,

have not reopened. Vaccinating all older students and keeping students, teachers and their families protected has not gone well. There are warnings about a new and more infectious variant of Covid-19, the Omicron, which have led to the re-imposition of general and schooling restrictions in many countries. The education minister said restrictions would be practiced in our schools again if necessary.

Welcoming school re-opening in September, 10 educationists of the country,

learning," September 25, 2021).

First, a rapid assessment of students' grade-level preparedness was needed. Simple tools for rapid assessment of core grade-level competencies in Bangla and mathematics at the primary level and Bangla, English, mathematics and science at the secondary level should be designed and applied in order to determine the students' grade-level readiness. The result should then be used to place students in an appropriate recovery phase—including accelerated learning activities for core skills—to bring them up to their grade-level readiness.

Second, prolonging the current school year and introducing a permanent September-June school calendar was recommended. Extending the current year to June 2022 would provide more time for the students and the school system to adapt to the new situation, assess students' preparedness, and avoid rushing to public and annual exams by December (which is happening now). There are also ample climate-related reasons to permanently shift to a September-June school calendar, with a predictable and long summer vacation between July-August and classes held during Ramadan with modified hours.

Third, scrapping the Primary Education Completion Examination (PECE), the Junior School Certificate (JSC) and equivalent exams was urged. The energy and efforts of students and teachers should be devoted to recovering from learning loss, rather than preparing for exams.

Fourth, teachers needed support to implement learning recovery. Guidelines and orientation should be provided to schools and teachers regarding the implementation of a learning recovery plan, especially on: a) use of rapid assessment of grade-level student preparedness; b) pedagogic approaches for assisting students using results of the rapid assessment; c) instructional planning to focus

on core competencies aiming to help students become self-reliant learners; and d) providing socio-emotional support to students and communicating with both students and parents. Online platforms should be used extensively for the guidance and orientation of teachers, as well as to complement classroom teaching for the students.

This urgent appeal, however, has not evoked any reaction from the authorities. They are hell-bent on going back to the old routine, no matter how this has affected the students. The decision-makers have not been moved by the warning that, without the proposed steps, most students would not be able to keep up with their grade level lessons, their deficits would be cumulative and that they would be harmed permanently.

It is necessary to get away from the unfortunate mindset that prevails, which is that the schools and the teachers need to conduct their lessons and "cover" the syllabus within the set number of class hours in the school calendar. What students learned, or if they learned at all, was their own business. Meanwhile, a formula has emerged with a set pattern of public exam questions, which could be answered by memorising guidebooks in coaching centres or with private tutors. This formula, plus a little bit of a liberal approach to marking tests, would ensure a high pass rate in public examinations—real learning be damned.

The golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence this year is an occasion for taking a retrospective and prospective look at the progress and challenges in many fields, including education. A longer term view, however, can hardly be taken unless the education system stands on its feet now and survives this month, this year or the next.

Rifat Manzoor Ahmed is professor emeritus at BRAC University.



It is not helpful if authorities act like everything will be fine if schools go back to normal and we pretend the pandemic didn't happen. PHOTO: STAR FILE

the plan to bring all students to their classes and start the normal instruction routine did not work out.

Many private schools outside the government's subsidy net (known as MPO)

including myself, jointly recommended four urgent steps as part of a learning recovery and an accelerated learning agenda in response to the special situation (*The Daily Star*, "Four urgent steps to put students on track for

The pandemic has exacerbated the challenges faced by persons with disabilities

RIFAT SHAHPAR KHAN

THE Covid-19 pandemic has caused serious distress for many people worldwide. Persons with disabilities—an estimated 6.5 percent to 16.2 percent of the population, one of the most marginalised groups in Bangladesh—are no exception. But they remained virtually invisible in the public discourse and policy decisions around supporting vulnerable people during the pandemic.

Covid-19 proved to be highly stressful for persons with disabilities and their caregivers, predominantly women, who had to struggle to fulfil the unique needs of their children with disabilities, without much support from anyone else in or outside the family during the pandemic. This was the case of 16-year-old Korimun, who cannot speak clearly and uses home-grown signs. She was fearful of her mother going outside or leaving her alone during the pandemic. Eventually, her mother lost her job as a part-time domestic worker and had to migrate to her village with Korimun.

"I am scared, people die... boys and girls, everyone dies of Corona"—this is how Julekha (22), a young woman with communication and psycho-social difficulties, expressed her understanding of Covid-19 in a study conducted by the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD) in partnership with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) in 2021.

The pandemic has affected people with different types and degrees of disabilities differently. In the same study, 16-year-old Eemon, who has a visual disability, said, "We are very ill-fated that our education has come to a halt for the past two years." Eemon had to join a courier service as a worker to support his family, as other members faced income loss as a result of the pandemic. It is highly unlikely that he will go back to his much-loved school, even though schools have reopened.

These stories demonstrate that the pandemic's impact on persons with disabilities was as great as that of the general population, but

the former group is likely to suffer more because of their disabilities. The pandemic has been particularly difficult for children with various types of neuro-developmental disabilities, some of whom were earlier enrolled in schools. School activities were the only scope for socialisation and stimulation for many, which worked as their much-needed psycho-social therapy. The school offered activities as simple as singing, mingling, dancing, taking part in sports and art classes, which help them learn self-dependence and care in their own ways, and kept them fit physically and psychologically. For at least 18 months, since March 2020, these children have been deprived of these invaluable experiences.

Classes on national TV or online were not designed to meet the diverse needs of children with disabilities either. Not all children, with or without disabilities, have the access or the knowhow to participate in these online classes. But the digital divide has exacerbated the negative impact of the pandemic on this already marginalised group of children. The digital divide also deprived many children and adults with disabilities of access to much-needed healthcare and counseling services that were, during the pandemic period, only available online.

The ways persons with disability need to interact with the environment sometimes enhanced their vulnerabilities to the pandemic. In the aforementioned study, 32-year-old Deepon, a person with a visual disability, explained: "People who can see can maintain physical distance, but in my case, I bump into others. Suppose someone is coughing or sneezing. Other people around him may move away immediately, but I can't. As it happens, sometimes, people cough on me."

"Self-isolation is very difficult, and perhaps almost impossible for some persons with Down Syndrome or intellectual disabilities"—stated a mother, whose child thrives in socialising and has trouble remembering to keep her distance from others or keep her mask on. Despite her best efforts, her child was infected with Covid-19. Inadequacy of physical therapies has also affected the quality of lives of persons with disabilities,



PHOTO: KAZI TAHSIN AGAZ APURBO

Persons with disabilities remained virtually invisible in the public discourse and policy decisions around supporting vulnerable people during the pandemic.

leading to aggravated physical difficulties due to the closure of services during the lockdown.

The BIGD and LSHTM study also found that persons with disabilities were more vulnerable to domestic violence during the pandemic, since many family members faced double the stress—financial worries along with the heightened demand for caregiving. Covid-19 also increased the security risks for girls and women with disabilities, particularly with neuro-developmental, sensory and/or psycho-social disabilities. A single mother interviewed in the study explained that when she lost her job as a domestic worker in Dhaka, she had to move to her village with her daughter, who has multiple

neuro-developmental disabilities. In Dhaka, she at least knew the people around her. Now, she always remains worried about who might harm her child.

In many cases, persons with disability were the first to lose their job when businesses downsized as a result of the pandemic. On top of that, it is far more difficult for them to find a new job. Nadia, a wheelchair-bound woman who lost a teaching job is now desperately looking for a job that will offer her a wheelchair-accessible environment, which is very hard to find in Bangladesh.

Even before the pandemic, persons with disabilities disproportionately faced poverty, negligence, violence, and other forms of vulnerabilities. Society has largely failed to meet their special needs, and Covid-19 has worsened their crisis.

However, a positive is that the government came up with guidelines for prioritising persons with disabilities for Covid-19 testing, treatment and vaccination. It also increased the coverage of disability allowance during the pandemic, although only a fraction of persons with disabilities in the country benefit from it, and payment was often delayed during the pandemic. Also, the allowance amount of Tk 750 per month is vastly inadequate to sustain them. Even though persons with disabilities faced multifaceted challenges during the pandemic, there was no special allowance for them, or any other initiatives to meet their special needs during this difficult period.

How a society protects and cares for its most vulnerable populations is an indication of how much progress it has made, and persons with disabilities are definitely one of the most vulnerable population groups in Bangladesh. The pandemic has re-emphasised the need for a robust support system for them—fulfilling their economic, social and various other special needs—so that they can have a life of dignity, like others. Now is the time to bolster the demand for a truly disability-inclusive society, making sure that no one is left behind.

Rifat Shahpar Khan is Research Coordinator at the BRAC Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD).

"People who can see can maintain physical distance, but in my case, I bump into others. Suppose someone is coughing or sneezing. Other people around him may move away immediately, but I can't. As it happens, sometimes, people cough on me."

QUOTABLE Quote

T. S. ELIOT
American poet (1888 - 1965)

Half of the harm that is done in this world is due to people who want to feel important. They don't mean to do harm. But the harm does not interest them.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Small setback
- 5 Pillow covers
- 10 Company symbol
- 11 Messed up
- 12 Heaps
- 13 Virgil hero
- 14 Media muzzle
- 16 Highlands wailers
- 20 State without proof
- 23 Courtroom oath
- 24 Magna cum—
- 25 Mushrooms and truffles
- 27 Travel stop
- 28 Christmas tree trim
- 29 Follow behind

DOWN

- 1 Metal waste
- 2 The Big Easy, informally
- 3 Overly eager
- 4 Retire
- 5 Get some shuteye
- 6 Painter Matisse
- 7 Wonder
- 8 Soccer's Hamm
- 9 Kin of blvds.

31 Sheriff's star

15 Latest fad

17 Bowling targets

18 Border

19 Potting need

20 Landed

21 Turner of movies

22 Breathing need

25 Locate

26 Way too early

28 Forum garments

30 Stood

31 Bowling spots

33 Luke's sister

34 Lewd look

35 Tater

36 Horse healer

37 Period in history

38 Drake's music

WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinion@gmail.com.

BEETLE BAILEY

ZOE, I THINK YOU AND I SHOULD TAKE A SEWING CLASS THIS SUMMER.

I'LL DO IT IF YOU MAKE HAMMIE DO IT, TOO.

I GUARANTEE MACHINERY, NEEDLES AND A CONSTANT RISK OF INJURY.

I'M IN!

YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS

S	M	O	G		P	O	L	S
M	A	N	E	D	S	A	R	A
U	N	C	L	E	A	L	I	B
R	I	A	F	A	L	L	O	F
F	A	L	L	O	U	T	L	E
S	L	O	G	S	B	E	E	
A	S	T	R	O				
T	A	N	A	R	O	W	E	D
A	R	I	F	A	L	L	F	O
F	A	L	L	I	L	L	F	O
I	D	I	O	T	E	V	A	D
R	E	N	D	S	D	E	C	A
E	D	G	E		T	E	D	S

BABY BLUES

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

NO JOB IS TOO BORING FOR BEETLE

HE ACTUALLY LIKES TO WATCH PAINT DRY



Heavy damage is seen downtown after a tornado swept through the area yesterday in Mayfield, Kentucky, US.

PHOTO: AFP

US democracy 'weapon of mass destruction'

Says China a day after Biden closes 2-day summit

AGENCIES

China yesterday branded US democracy a "weapon of mass destruction", following the US-organised Summit for Democracy which aimed to shore up like-minded allies in the face of autocratic regimes.

China was left out of the two-day virtual summit -- along with countries including Russia and Hungary -- and responded by angrily accusing US President Joe Biden of stoking Cold War-era ideological divides.

"Democracy has long become a 'weapon of mass destruction' used by the US to interfere in other countries," a foreign ministry spokesperson said in an online statement, which also accused the US of having "instigated 'colour revolutions'" overseas.

The ministry also claimed the summit was organised by the US to "draw lines of ideological prejudice, instrumentalise and weaponise democracy... (and) incite division and confrontation."

Instead, Beijing vowed to "resolutely resist and oppose all kinds of pseudo-democracies".

In closing comments to leaders from scores of countries, as well as representatives of NGOs and philanthropic bodies,

Biden on Friday said democracy "knows no borders. It speaks every language. It lives in anti-corruption activists, human rights defenders, journalists."

"We're committed to working with all those who share those values to shape the rules of the road," Biden vowed, saying the United States will stand by those "who give their people the ability to breathe free and not seek to suffocate their people with an iron hand."

On the first day of the virtual summit, he pledged \$424 million to support media freedom, fair elections and anti-corruption campaigns.

While the US has repeatedly denied there will be another Cold War with China, tensions between the world's two largest economies have spiralled in recent years over issues including trade and technological competition, human rights, Xinjiang and Taiwan.

The US Treasury on Friday sanctioned two high-level Chinese officials for human rights abuses in the Xinjiang region and placed Chinese AI surveillance firm SenseTime on a blacklist for its facial recognition technology targeting the Uyghur minority.



More than 50 killed as storms batter US

Around 100 trapped in Illinois Amazon warehouse

AFP, Washington

At least 50 people are dead after a tornado ripped through the southeastern US state of Kentucky, its governor told reporters, as storms ravaged large swathes of the country.

Several counties in Kentucky were devastated, with the strongest tornado tearing 200 miles through the state, governor Andy Beshear said.

"I fear that there are more than 50 dead ... probably closer to somewhere between 70 and 100, it's devastating," he said, adding this was the "most severe tornado event in Kentucky's history".

The governor said a roof collapse at a candle factory "resulted in mass casualties" in the city of Mayfield.

"Before midnight I declared a state of emergency," Beshear said.

The tornado came as storms wreaked havoc in multiple US states.

A storm earlier tore through a massive

Amazon warehouse in the US state of Illinois on Friday, officials said, with local media reporting around 100 workers trapped inside.

Officials were working through the early hours of Saturday to rescue employees at the facility -- a third of which was reduced to rubble -- who were on the night shift processing orders ahead of the Christmas holidays.

The Collinsville Emergency Management Agency described it as a "mass casualty incident" with "multiple subjects trapped at Amazon Warehouse".

A tornado warning had been in effect in the area at the time of the incident.

In Arkansas, one person was killed and 20 others were trapped after a tornado struck the Monette Manor nursing home, US media reported. In Tennessee, at least two people were killed in storm-related incidents, an emergency management official told local media.

West will counter 'aggressors'

Says UK, calls for unity against Russia, China threats as G7 ministers, allies meet

AFP, Liverpool

The West and its allies need to be united against authoritarianism, UK Foreign Secretary Liz Truss said yesterday, as she hosted G7 counterparts with concern about threats from Russia and China.

The two-day gathering of foreign ministers from the world's richest nations in Liverpool, northwest England, is the last in-person gathering of Britain's year-long G7 presidency, before it hands over the baton to Germany.

Russia's build-up of troops on Ukraine's border is top of the agenda, alongside discussions on confronting China, limiting Iran's nuclear ambitions and addressing the crisis in military-ruled Myanmar.

"We need to come together strongly to stand up to aggressors who are seeking to limit the bounds of freedom and democracy," Truss said as she formally opened the talks, without mentioning specific countries.

"To do this, we need to have a fully united voice. We need to expand our economic and security posture around the world."

Truss held talks on the sidelines of the summit on Friday with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken as well as Germany's new Foreign



Minister Annalena Baerbock.

Blinken flies on to Southeast Asia next week on a visit designed to highlight the region's importance in Washington's strategy of standing up to an increasingly assertive China in the region.

Ministers from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) will join the G7 summit for the first time ever today, in a session earmarked for wide-ranging talks on issues including Covid-19 vaccines, finance and gender equality.

South Korea, Australia, South Africa and India will also participate as Britain's chosen G7 "guests", with many attendees taking part virtually due to the pandemic and emergence of

the Omicron variant.

Truss, who replaced Dominic Raab as Britain's top diplomat in September, delivered her first major foreign policy address Wednesday as crises loom around the world.

She warned Moscow it would be "a strategic mistake" to invade Ukraine, following growing concerns over a big Russian troop build-up on the border.

At a G7 leaders' summit in June, Biden pushed for a stronger collective stance towards both China and Russia, and this week saw Washington, London and Canberra announce diplomatic boycotts of the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics.

Truss said the West needs to work towards ending the "strategic dependence" of a growing number of low- and middle-income countries on its adversaries, in various areas from energy to technology.

At the summit she will push attendees to provide those countries with more finance for infrastructure and technology projects, according to the foreign office.

G7 countries and their allies must offer "an alternative to unsustainable debt from non-market economies" like China, it said.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

DECEMBER 12

1901 - Guglielmo Marconi sends the first transatlantic radio signal, from Poldhu in Cornwall to Newfoundland, Canada.

2000 - US Supreme Court releases its decision in Bush v. Gore, settling the recount dispute in Florida's 2000 presidential election in George W Bush's favor and thus handing him the presidency.

2015 - COP21 climate change summit in Paris reaches a deal between 195 countries to limit the rise in the global average temperature to less than 2°C above pre-industrial levels.

SOURCE: REUTERS

Mexico urges US migration rethink after crash kills 55

AFP, Tuxtla Gutiérrez

Mexico has urged Washington to rethink its migration policy after a horror road accident killed 55 undocumented migrants in a truck on a major transit route to the United States.

Bodies draped in white sheets lined the roadside near Tuxtla Gutiérrez in the southern Mexican state of Chiapas, where a truck transporting some 160 migrants -- most from Central America -- overturned Thursday.

Passengers, bleeding and with broken bones, lay in the road crying out in pain after the latest disaster to befall desperate people traveling through Mexico in search of a better life in the United States.

More than 100 people were injured.

Thousands attempt the long, often dangerous, and expensive journey every year to escape violence and poverty in their home nations in South and Central America.

Such tragedies, Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said Friday, should move the world to address "the underlying problem" -- despair.

"The migration problem cannot be solved by coercive measures, but by opportunities for work and well-being. People don't leave

their villages for pleasure, they do it out of necessity," he said.

If the United States wanted to prevent migration to its shores, added Lopez Obrador, it should invest in social programs in Central America -- a matter he has discussed with Joe Biden.

But "there is slowness," said the Mexican leader.

The victims of Thursday's accident, authorities said, were from Guatemala, Honduras, Ecuador, the Dominican Republic and Mexico.

The driver, who fled the scene, was allegedly speeding when he lost control of the truck.

The National Institute of Migration said it was working to identify the dead, pay for funerals and repatriate bodies. It said survivors will be allowed to stay in Mexico.

The death toll is likely to rise, with many of the injured taken to hospital in a serious condition, according to Luis Manuel Garcia, a local civil protection official.

The Attorney General's Office has opened a homicide investigation.

Guatemalan authorities declared three days of national mourning, and the Vatican expressed condolences to the victims and their loved ones.



Policemen remove Tibetan activists from the Students for a Free Tibet association, as they perform a sit-in at the entrance of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) headquarters ahead of the February's Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, yesterday in Lausanne, Switzerland. The United Nations' human rights office is finalising its assessment of the situation in China's Xinjiang region, where Uyghurs are alleged to have been unlawfully detained, mistreated and forced to work, a spokesperson said on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

XMAS PARTY, LIES AND VIDEOTAPE

Is it curtains for Boris Johnson?

AFP, London

At the British general election in December 2019, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson campaigned on a pledge to "Get Brexit Done" -- and won by a landslide.

But just two years on, Johnson's once seemingly unassailable position is looking shaky after a series of scandals have left his credibility in tatters.

In opinion polls and even among members of his ruling Conservative party, there is open talk that he should quit -- or be forced out by an internal vote of no confidence.

"So far he's been Teflon. Virtually nothing has touched him," Robin Pettitt, a specialist in British politics, told AFP.

But he said a succession of scandals and sleaze allegations "adds up over time".

"There's been so many of them that eventually it's going to overflow," he added.

There has been mounting public anger at reports that Johnson's staff broke coronavirus rules last year by holding a Christmas party in Downing Street at a time when the public were told to cancel their festive plans.

Johnson's repeated denials of wrongdoing, however, have failed to convince, after video footage emerged of his staff apparently joking that they knew it was a breach.



With his mop of unruly blond hair and ill-fitting suits, Johnson has long played up to his image as an unconventional politician. And it has been effective.

His simple Brexit pitch won over voters in the heartlands of the main opposition Labour party in northern England, giving him a whopping 80-seat majority in parliament.

Even after a much-criticised start -- and a still staggeringly high Covid death toll and infection rate -- he has enjoyed a bounce from a successful vaccination campaign.

But his characteristic bluster does not seem to be enough this time.

A YouGov poll for The Times on Friday suggested 68pc of respondents believed he was lying when he denied the rules were broken. And

his overall popularity has plunged to an all-time low in other polls, showing Labour in a rare lead.

Political scientist Steven Fielding said that, with the new Omicron strain threatening Britain, Brexit not as "done" as he claims and the economy stumbling, Johnson is not in a good place.

Johnson, 57, has long been accused of bending the truth.

As a fledgling journalist, he was sacked from The Times for making up a quote. He went on to peddle "euromyths" as Brussels correspondent for the Daily Telegraph.

But if the public were prepared to overlook his bumbling eccentricities, they may be less forgiving of claims of dodgy dealing and cronyism.

An inquiry this week fined Johnson's Tory party for failing to declare who paid for the lavish refurbishment of his Downing Street flat -- a scandal dubbed "cash for curtains".

He has also been condemned for trying to change parliament's disciplinary procedure after Tory MP Owen Paterson was caught lobbying ministers illegally and quit.

According to Pettitt, Johnson's supporters have tolerated his style as long as he has delivered.

But he warned: "If he starts to look like he's not a winner, then they'll fall out of love with him very quickly."

South Korea green-lights plans for 'floating city'

CNN ONLINE

The South Korean city of Busan has green-lit plans for an ambitious new ocean settlement, with work on the first neighborhood set to begin next year.

Comprising a series of interconnected platforms, the proposed "floating city" could eventually accommodate 10,000 people, according to its designers, offering coastal areas a drastic solution to the threat posed by rising sea levels.

The Oceanix project, a collaboration between designers, architects and engineers, unveiled plans for a "flood-proof" city in 2019 -- and organizers have since been looking for somewhere to build prototypes.

Last month, the group signed an agreement with Busan and UN-Habitat, the United Nations' urban development agency, to host the first of its floating neighborhoods off South Korea's coast.

Prefabricated in factories and then towed into position, the proposed platforms will rise and fall with the sea. Each of the five-acre neighborhoods has been designed to house 300 people in buildings up to seven stories high.



Ultimately, these communities could be arranged into larger networks, connected via walkways and bicycle paths. According to Bjarke Ingels Group, the Danish architecture firm leading the design, the neighborhoods could be clustered around a central harbor to form larger 1,650-person villages.

These villages could then, in theory, join to form a wider 10,000-person metropolis -- dubbed Oceanix City -- complete with everything from restaurants and co-working spaces to urban farms and leisure facilities.

The proposed settlement has been envisaged as "self-sustaining," with residents able to produce their own food and energy in "zero waste closed-loop systems."

Myanmar man pleads guilty in plot to attack UN envoy

AFP, New York
A citizen of Myanmar on Friday pleaded guilty in a plot to attack or kill the country's pro-democracy UN ambassador, who has refused junta orders to quit, US officials said.
In August, Ye Hein Zaw, a resident of New York in his early twenties, conspired with two others to force Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun to resign or, if he refused, to kill him, according to prosecutors.
Zaw agreed to pay \$5,000 for the attack, which was foiled by US investigators.
Zaw admitted in court that he "participated in a plot to injure or kill Myanmar's ambassador to the United Nations in a planned attack that was to take place on American soil," US Attorney Damian Williams said in a statement. Zaw is due to be sentenced in May. He faces up to five years in prison.
It remained unclear what, if any, connection the suspect had with the military junta, which on February 1 overthrew the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi.



Indian farmers cheer as they leave the protest site at the Delhi-Haryana state border in Singhu yesterday, as farmers headed home from the Delhi outskirts following a year-long protest against the government's agriculture policies. PHOTO: AFP

MORE NEWS

Trump 'attacked' Netanyahu for congratulating Biden

Former US president Donald Trump spat an expletive about his old ally, Israel's ex-prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, for congratulating Joe Biden on his victory in last year's election, according to a new book. Trump lashed out in an interview for a book on US-Israel relations during his presidency, author Barak Ravid wrote on the Axios website on Friday. "I haven't spoken to him since," Trump told Ravid in an interview. "Fuck him." Ravid said that he interviewed Trump twice for his forthcoming book, "Trump's Peace: The Abraham Accords and the Reshaping of the Middle East." He said Trump, who appeared close to Netanyahu while president from 2017 to 2021, was repeatedly critical of him in the interviews.

Palestinians in West Bank villages hold municipal polls

Palestinians in villages of the Israeli-occupied West Bank voted in municipal polls yesterday, amid a boycott by the main opposition Hamas, the Islamist rulers of Gaza, in protest at the indefinite postponement of a general election. No legislative or presidential election has been held in the Palestinian territories for 15 years, while the last municipal vote -- also boycotted by Hamas -- took place in 2017. Of the 367 villages in the West Bank, 60 had no candidates standing and another 162 had a single list, leaving only 154 villages actually voting yesterday. Polling stations are open until 7:00 pm, with some 405,000 people eligible to vote, according to the elections committee. The municipal vote -- the first of two stages, with cities and towns due to vote in March 2022 -- is widely considered as inconsequential, with most candidates running as independents and Hamas not taking part.

NUCLEAR NEGOTIATIONS WITH WESTERN POWERS

Iran stays firm amid pressure

REUTERS
World powers and Iran have been locked in talks on reviving their nuclear deal, with a European source saying they were working from texts discussed five months ago and Iranian officials saying they were sticking to a tough stance from last week.
The talks resumed on Thursday with the United States and Israel - which is not a party to the 2015 deal - piling rhetorical pressure on Tehran about the possible economic or military consequences if diplomacy fails.
Iran's top negotiator, Ali Bagheri Kani, on Friday said Tehran was standing firm on the position it laid out last week, when the talks broke off with European and US officials accusing Iran of making new demands and of renegeing on compromises worked out earlier this year.
Asked whether new draft proposals that Iran had put forward last week were being discussed, Bagheri Kani told Reuters: "Yes, the drafts we



denied it.
Under the original deal that then-President Donald Trump abandoned in 2018, Iran limited its nuclear programme in return for relief from US, European Union and UN sanctions. The West fears the programme would be used to develop weapons, something Tehran denies.
The indirect US-Iranian talks, in which diplomats from France, Britain, Germany, Russia and China shuttle between them because Tehran refuses direct contact with Washington, aim to get both sides to resume full compliance with the accord.
A year after Trump's reimposition of sanctions on Iran, Tehran began to gradually violate nuclear limits of the agreement. Iran wants all sanctions to be lifted.
A senior EU official said on Friday the talks are moving forward and that various big matters were still open for a deal on a final text.
The talks resumed last week after a five-month hiatus.

Donors approve release of \$280m for Afghanistan

AFP, Washington
International donors agreed to release \$280 million in aid to Afghanistan, the World Bank said Friday, after repeated warnings that more than half the population face "acute" food shortages this winter.
The fund from the Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF) will go "to provide humanitarian assistance to the people of Afghanistan at this critical time," the World Bank said in a statement.
The funds will go to UNICEF and the World Food Programme, who "have presence and logistics capacity on the ground in Afghanistan and will use these funds to cover financing gaps in their existing programs to deliver health and nutrition services directly to the Afghan people."
The bank's management earlier this month offered the proposal to re-direct the funds intended for rebuilding efforts.
The United Nations has repeatedly warned that Afghanistan is on the brink of the world's worst humanitarian crisis.
Around 22 million Afghans, or more than half the country, will face an "acute" food shortage in the winter months, forcing millions to choose between migration and starvation.
That is due to the combined effects of drought caused by global warming, and an economic crisis aggravated by the international community's decision to freeze funding to the aid-dependent nation after the Taliban takeover in August -- a decision the UN described in a recent report as an "unprecedented fiscal shock".
Washington froze about \$10 billion of the country's reserves and the World Bank and International Monetary Fund halted Afghanistan's access to funding.



Biden staffer appointed as director of Unicef

Catherine Russell, a senior official of US President Joe Biden's administration, has been named head of the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef), a UN spokesperson announced Friday. Russell, 60, is currently the director of the White House Office of Presidential Personnel and assistant to the president. Appointed by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, Russell will replace fellow American Henrietta Fore, who resigned in July to care for her ailing husband. Unicef is a UN agency headed by a board of directors made up of 36 members who represent the five regional groups of United Nations member states: Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia-Pacific, Eastern Europe, and Europe. It advocates for children in 190 countries and territories with an overall estimated budget of \$2.8 billion for 2018-2021.



A pro-democracy activist holds an image of Myanmar's ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi as they take part in the "Show Respect for Human Rights in Asia Peace March" in Tokyo, Japan, yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Pak Taliban kill cop after calling off truce

AFP, Peshawar
A Pakistani policeman was shot dead and another officer was hurt while guarding a polio vaccination team yesterday, police said, in an attack claimed by the local Taliban a day after they called off a ceasefire with the government.
Two men riding a motorcycle opened fire on police officers guarding a two-woman polio inoculation team who were administering vaccines to children in Tank district in the northwestern province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
Police guards protecting vaccination teams in have come under attack before, mostly from militants.

Return to democracy Western nations, European Union urge Tunisia

AFP, Tunis
The envoys of seven Western states plus the European Union urged Tunisia on Friday to respect "fundamental freedoms" and set a timeline for a return to democratic institutions.
Tunisia's President Kais Saied on July 25 sacked the government, suspended parliament and seized wide-ranging powers, following months of economic and political turmoil worsened by the coronavirus pandemic.
Four and a half months later, he has yet to declare a clear timeline for his next steps, deepening the uncertainty hanging over the country's battered economy and sparking fears for political freedoms in the birthplace of the 2011 Arab uprisings.
In a joint statement on Friday, diplomatic mission heads of the G7 nations plus the EU said they "strongly support the people of Tunisia in their pursuit of effective, democratic, and transparent governance."
"We restate the importance of respect for all Tunisians' fundamental freedoms, and inclusive and transparent engagement with all stakeholders, including diverse political and civil society voices," they said.
They called for "a clear timeline allowing for a swift return to functioning democratic institutions, with an elected parliament playing a significant role."
Saied's July 25 power grab won support from many Tunisians tired of political parties seen as deeply corrupt and incapable of solving the country's deep social and economic woes.
But he has since faced mass demonstrations and growing accusations that he is becoming a new autocrat.
Human rights groups have repeatedly warned against the trial of civilians in military courts.
Meanwhile, talks with international lenders over a fourth bailout package in a decade have stalled and worries are growing that the country could default on its sovereign debt.

Indian cops recover Maradona's stolen watch

AFP, Guwahati
Indian police have recovered a stolen watch customised for star footballer Diego Maradona and arrested a suspect behind the alleged theft in Dubai, officials claimed Saturday.
Police said they detained Wazid Hussain in the northeastern state of Assam and recovered a Swiss-made Hublot watch after he fled to India following an alleged theft in Dubai.
The 37-year-old had been working as a security guard since 2016 at a Dubai-based firm where memorabilia relating to the Argentinian footballer were stored, police said.
They said the single edition watch, worth about \$26,500, has a photo of the star engraved on its back and carries his signature with his jersey number 10.
"Though there are many limited edition watches available this watch was customised for Maradona," Sivasagar superintendent of police Rakesh Roushan told AFP, quoting information received from Dubai authorities.
Maradona, regarded as one of the greatest players of the game, died last November at the age of 60.
Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said the local police held the accused after receiving a tip-off from their counterparts in Dubai.
Police said the detained man denied the allegations, adding he had returned to his native in Assam in August on the pretext of tending to his ailing father.

Official notice from Bangladesh government regarding procurement regulations. Includes title 'গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার', 'বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ', and a table with columns for 'ক্রমিক নং', 'বিবরণ', 'মূল্য (প্রতিটি)', 'পরিমাণ', and 'তারিখ'.

Repeated failures compounded mental frailties

SPORTS REPORTER



Bangladesh cricket is going through its toughest period in a while and suffering one defeat after another across the formats has definitely taken a toll on the player's mental preparations while intense criticism on social media platforms has served only to reinforce the negative vibe around the national team.

After a debacle in the ICC T20 World Cup, the Tigers were whitewashed by Pakistan in a three-match T20I series as



well as a two-match Test series at home. With their backs against the wall, the demoralised Bangladesh team travelled to New Zealand for yet another challenging series.

According to Ali Khan, a Bangladesh-born Canadian psychologist who worked on the Tigers' mental fitness in 2014, continuous failures have hurt the team's confidence.

"The nature of the human mind is such that once emotions, be they positive or negative, start piling up, their burden reduces the confidence, self-belief and trust that one has on their own performances and abilities. Since results have been poor consistently, pressure from social media, mainstream media, the authorities and

other external forces have been piling up. So insecurity and a lack of confidence denies them from maintaining optimal performance," Ali told The Daily Star yesterday, adding that the effects were compounded by a lack of help from experts.

"The players continuously face challenges but I think the team lacks psychological training. It is absent from their daily routine. Obviously, we have left it to destiny, hoping their psychological fitness remains intact. You can see the drain on their performance whenever they face continuous defeats or face challenges."

Ali prescribed that the Tigers should focus on the task at hand when they are out in the middle instead of overthinking and analysing other probable results, which could lead to lapses in concentration.

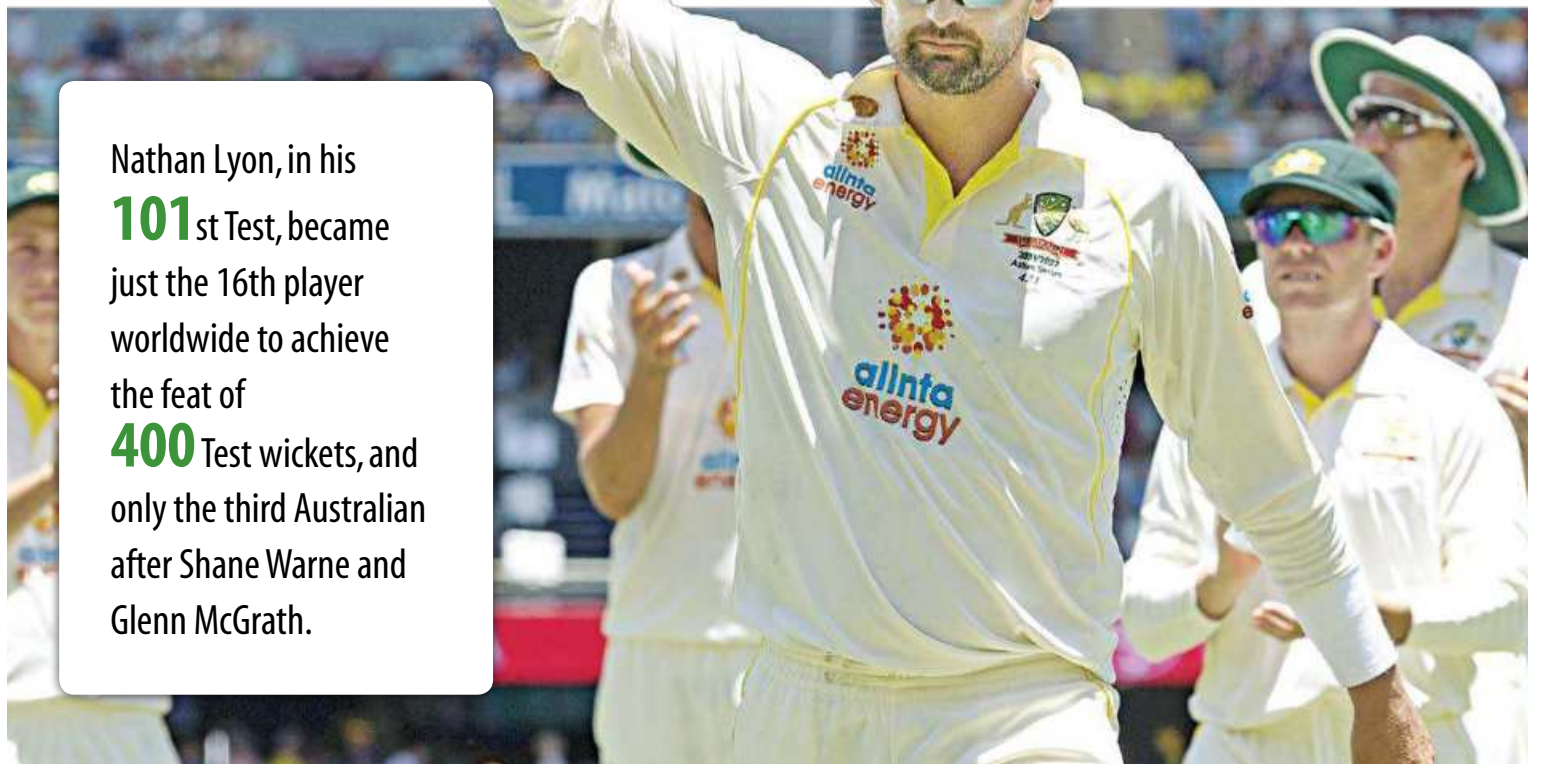
"When the players are going through a tough period, it creates a huge interference in the brain. Due to that, they are unable to give their best. Their minds are engaged on better results, but while performing your mind should be engaged on the present task. Once you have full focus on the task, the players can reach their optimal levels of performance," he said.

Ali, who has worked as a 'life coach' with golfer Siddikur Rahman, also opined that all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan's consistent performances over the years owes to his mental toughness, a characteristic that sets him apart from others.

"In 2014, when I worked with the national team for the first time, I was discussing the characteristics of a champion's mind. After that discussion, Mashrafe Bin Mortaza stood up and said there was one man who had all the attributes. When I asked who that was, Mashrafe replied: 'Shakib Al Hasan, the number one all-rounder in the world'.

"The greater the competition, the greater the mental pressure. A majority of players are unable to stay calm and that hampers their performance. Those who can maintain such focus for a longer period of time, only those few are able to maintain their performance," Ali added.

Life inside bio-secure bubbles has also had a psychological impact on players, with Ali opining that there should be an expert with the team to help players to overcome mental barriers and adjust.



Nathan Lyon, in his **101**st Test, became just the 16th player worldwide to achieve the feat of **400** Test wickets, and only the third Australian after Shane Warne and Glenn McGrath.

Lyon the 'GOAT' claims 400th wicket

REUTERS



It took nearly a year longer than Australia hoped but Nathan Lyon ended his agonising wait for a 400th Test victim in style on Saturday during a match-winning four-wicket haul that sent England crashing to a stinging Ashes defeat at the Gabba.

The shaven-headed 34-year-old had been denied the milestone at the same venue in January where Australia lost the series-decider to India.

He then failed to grab a wicket during England's first innings 147 on day one and toiled fruitlessly through a big shift on day three, seeing edges drop short and balls whistle past the stumps.

Then, finally, the rush of relief. Luring Dawid Malan forward in his second over on Saturday, Lyon deceived the England number three with a sharply dipping ball and produced a bat-pad catch for Marnus Labuschagne.

Pandemonium erupted in the terraces while Lyon was mobbed by his team mates as he became only his country's third bowler to join the 400-club after legspinner Shane Warne (708) and paceman Glenn McGrath (563).

"That was a big message. I think Australia play their best cricket when we're calm and we're playing with smiles on our faces and we're enjoying it. And I think Pat [Cummins] really hit that home. Let's be calm. Let's go do the basics really well and when our chance comes let's be ruthless. That's what Australian cricket teams do, and we want to become a great Australian cricket team."

NATHAN LYON

Though not one for personal milestones, Lyon admitted it was a big relief to tick it off. "I've got a lot of my best mates in that change room. They tend to remind me enough, (ask) if I intend to have 400 on my

shoes like Pidge (McGrath) or run around like Warne, so I had a lot of banter going on," he told reporters.

"It's something that I'm very proud of, there's no doubt about that. It's been some hard toil to get it but it's very rewarding."

Far and away his country's most prolific off-spinner, Lyon has been known as the 'GOAT' for years, as well as 'Garry' or 'Gazza' by team mates after a retired champion Australian footballer.

His rapid transformation from Adelaide Oval groundskeeper to Test spinner in a year is etched in Australian cricket folklore.

The words 'Nice, Garry!' or 'Bowling, Gaz,' by wicketkeepers and team mates in the slips have become part of the fabric of the Australian summer.

Not content with wicket number 400, Lyon continued to punish England by grabbing another three to finish with 4-91 and help Australia wrap up a thumping nine-wicket win.

It came after Warne, now a TV pundit, had said Lyon was bowling for his future against England after a disappointing series against India. Captain Pat Cummins never had any such doubts.

"He came out today and showed why he's one of the greatest of all time," he said.

Alhamdulillah, we reached New Zealand yesterday [Friday] after a long flight.

We arrived at the hotel directly from the airport and here we are undergoing a strict three-day quarantine. All our activities are limited within the rooms and our food is also provided to us in the room. Hopefully, we will be doing some freehand exercises from tomorrow [Sunday]. We have been provided [exercise] bike and TheraBand so that we can exercise inside our rooms. After three days [of quarantine], we will be able to go outside the room and walk around the hotel premises for a while. We will also be able to use the practice facilities here.

MEHEDI HASAN MIRAZ
BANGLADESH ALL-ROUNDER



India's hockey team coach Graham Reid (L) discusses a few points with his charges during their training session at the Maulana Bhasani Hockey Stadium yesterday, having arrived in Dhaka the day before, ahead of their encounter with South Korea in the AHF Asian Champions Trophy opener on December 14.

PHOTO: STAR

BCL begins with hopes of increased competitiveness

SPORTS REPORTER



The ninth edition of the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL) begins today with hopes of achieving a level of competitiveness that has been missing from the domestic arena over the years.

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) previously mentioned that it has certain plans to ensure grassy tops and bouncy tracks at all venues for the league, and to make 'four-day cricket attractive again in the country' as far as players are concerned.

However, this edition of the

BCL will not feature national Test team's players as Mominul Haque and Co are already touring New Zealand for a two-match Test series, scheduled to begin on January 1 next year.

Unfortunately, Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal, who got ruled out of the New Zealand tour after missing the entire series against Pakistan due to a thumb injury, would only be able to participate in the one-day format of the league once the four-dayers end.

"Still nothing is certain. I will just start gripping the bat after the 20th of this month. If I can do that, I have the eagerness to play a few matches when

the one-day format matches in the league begins. But that too depends on the medical team's clearance," Tamim told The Daily Star yesterday.

The usual four-day matches will be played first in a single-league format with the top two sides playing in a five-day final, scheduled to begin on January 2 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur.

The opening day of the league will see BCB South Zone taking on Islami Bank East Zone at the Shaheed Kamruzzaman Stadium in Rajshahi while Walton Central Zone will lock horns with BCB North Zone at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram.

'Feels like 1968 after Enayetur's return'

SPORTS REPORTER

After exiting his vehicle, legendary footballer Enayetur Rahman Khan took a few steps towards another versatile athlete, Pratap Shankar Hazra, hugging him in a soundless embrace for a couple of minutes until Pratap broke the silence by asking: "Have you forgotten how to speak?"

Enayetur, who returned home three weeks ago after spending 27 years in Canada, perhaps did lose his voice in the haze of emotions brought on by seeing his Swadhin Bangladesh teammate. His eyes momentarily welled with tears, which were quickly replaced by a big smile after he released Pratap.

Pratap and Enayetur's presence at a Bangladesh Sports Journalists Association (BSJA)-organised

programme, titled "With Legends", made plenty of footballers emotional as they revisited the golden days of Bangladesh football in the 1980s and 1990s.

The BSJA took the opportunity to arrange a homely get-together featuring members of the Swadhin Bangla football team such as Jakaria Pintu, Sheikh Ashraf Ali, Pratap and Enayetur alongside former football star Golam Sarwar Tipu, Hasanuzzaman Bablu, Sheikh Mohammad Aslam, Ashraf Hossain Chunnun, Wasim Iqbal, Khurshid Alam Babul, Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury and Imitaz Sultana Jonny. Conducting the programme was journalist Dilu Khandokar while organisers and prominent sports journalists who covered those footballers' exploits, lined the seats.

Bangladesh's best footballers were generous in praise of their predecessors, especially for the inspiration they provided.

"Today I am talking to a footballer who was ahead of the others in every aspect. To be honest, I would stop playing and admire his performances," Pratap said. "But his 'problem' was

speaking out against injustice."

Golam Sarwar Tipu added: "Today footballers may have good running and passing ability, but they are brainless. Enayetur was a brave footballer with a brain. A footballer's retirement is akin to death, but that was something we learned after he left the country. But today, it feels like it's 1968 after Enayetur's return."

Hazanuzzaman said: "I had good relations with Enayetur bhai because he always trained with Brothers Union but played for BJMC. He has not been in the country for 27 years but our relationship is intact even today."

"Enayetur Rahman is one of the best footballers produced in Bangladesh. He was a brilliant ball player who could shoot powerfully with either leg. He was a different ilk of forward and I feel really good to see him again," veteran journalist Kamruzzaman said.

Enayetur himself remained modest, rating himself behind others before praising Chunnun, Sheikh Mohammad Aslam, Khurshid Babul, Wasim Iqbal, Abdul Gaffar, Rakibul Islam and others.

"Pintu bhai, Pratap Da and Shantu bhai were the big stars of Bangladesh football. Compared to them, I was really nothing. Those footballers were my idols and I tried to absorb their technique and skill," Enayetur said. "Aslam was a striker who struck many winning goals. Khurshid was a laborious winger and better than European players. Chunnun and Wasim were such brilliant and intelligent players."

"Our country produced a lot of illustrious players but most of them left the country after getting no respect and zero evaluation. Ask me whether a father will inspire his son to be a footballer. Never. You have to evaluate all former footballers socially, then I believe football will regain its prestige," ended Enayetur.



What to WATCH

T SPORTS

Victory Day Kabaddi Final
Live from 04:00 pm
Independence Cup
Sheikh Russel vs Bangladesh Police

Live from 05:15 pm
Lankan Premier League
Colombo Stars vs Galle Gladiators
Live from 08:00 pm
La Liga
Real Betis vs Real Sociedad

Live from 11:30 pm
Real Madrid vs Atletico Madrid
Live from 02:00 am (Monday)
STAR SPORTS HD 1
EPL
Crystal Palace vs Everton

Live from 10:30 pm
STAR SPORTS HD 2
EPL
Leicester City vs Newcastle United
Live from 08:00 pm

DAY'S EVENT

BCL
South Zone vs East Zone, SKS
Central Zone vs North Zone, ZACS

'It is a lovely achievement'

REUTERS, MANCHESTER



England forward Raheem Sterling's 100th Premier League goal was enough to earn leaders Manchester City a 1-0 win over 10-man Wolverhampton Wanderers on Saturday.

Wolves were doing a fine job of frustrating City in the opening period before striker Raul Jimenez's dismissal for two yellow cards in quick succession in first-half stoppage time changed the complexion of the game.

City dominated the second half as a result, edging in front through Sterling's penalty - a decision that required a lengthy VAR check - in the 66th minute.

Sterling slotted the penalty down the middle, becoming the 32nd player to reach 100 Premier League goals.

"(It) is a lovely achievement," Sterling told BT Sport. "There are some fantastic players in that list. I'm really honoured to be in it now. "We knew we (City) had to

keep patient. They kept it really tight, but we knew if we kept playing we'd get an opportunity - and we did."

The home side had plenty of chances to make the result more comfortable, with Jack Grealish's struggles since becoming the British record transfer in the close season continuing as he missed from close range.

However, one goal proved enough for City who picked up their sixth successive league win to move four points clear of Liverpool, who host Aston Villa later on Saturday, at the top of the standings.

Wolves, who battled hard as decisions went against them at the Etihad Stadium, stay eighth on 21 from 16 games.

The game hinged on one moment of madness. Wolves looked comfortable going into the interval before Jimenez's needless dismissal gave City the lift they needed.

The Mexico international received his first yellow card for a foul on midfielder Rodri and 31 seconds later got another for blocking Rodri's free-kick having not retreated enough.



Nepal skipper Anjana Rana Magar takes a selfie with the crowd at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur after the visitors held Bangladesh to a goalless draw in their SAFF U-19 Women's Championship fixture.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Bangladesh denied by resolute Nepal

SPORTS REPORTER



In a rematch of last edition's final, hosts Bangladesh were held to a goalless draw by a resolute

Nepal side in their SAFF U-19 Women's Championship fixture at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur yesterday.

While Bangladesh won that match 1-0 following a 2-1 win against the same opposition in the group stages three years ago in Bhutan, at home soil, the girls in red and green failed to break the team from the Himalayan nation to share the spoils of a goalless draw.

The home side, champions from the inaugural edition in 2018 when the event was an under-18 affair, started brightly as centre-back Akhi Khatun rattled the post from the top of the box 90 seconds into the match.

Playing in a 4-3-3 formation,

the hosts completely dominated possession and looked like the only side worth scoring a goal, but the Nepalese defence held firm and reduced Bangladesh attacks mostly to shots from distance.

Shamsunnahar Jr tried a bicycle kick on skipper Maria Manda's cross on 15 minutes, but her effort was too tame to test Anjana Rana Magar at Nepal goal.

Magar, also the captain of the Nepal team, was solid between the sticks as she dealt comfortably with a number of set-pieces from Manda.

Shamsunnahar Jr, playing as a second striker behind Tohura Khatun, was through on goal on a long-ball from Akhi Khatun three minutes later, but Magar was quickly on to the ball.

The Nepal goalie was called into action again on 32 minutes when she was forced to palm away Shamsunnahar Jr's curling effort for a corner.

Bangladesh's best chance of the

game came nine minutes after restart when Rituporna Chakma had a shot on target from inside the box, only to be cleared off the line by Nepal defender Bimala BK.

Magar produced a brilliant fingertip save on a superb Monika Chakma effort from outside the box three minutes before the end of regulation time as the hosts' hopes of a winning start evaporated.

BHUTAN THRASH SRI LANKA
In the first match of the tournament earlier, Bhutan thrashed Sri Lanka 5-0 after having led by four goals in the first half.

Pema Yangzom scored the first two goals in the 21st and 23rd minutes before Tshering Choden got the third for Bhutan in the 28th minute.

Sonam Lhamo added a fourth at the stroke of half-time before an own goal from T Sivaneshwaran in the 85th minute wrapped up a convincing win for the fourth-placed team from the last edition.

Rangnick has no plan to persuade Pogba

REUTERS

Manchester United interim manager Ralf Rangnick said he did not have to convince players to remain at the Premier League club as media speculation grows over the future of French World Cup winner Paul Pogba. The 28-year-old is returning to Manchester from Dubai, where he spent time rehabilitating after a thigh injury in November and could yet feature in Rangnick's plans, despite being out of contract at the end of this season.

United have been in talks with Pogba over a new deal, but the midfielder has frequently been linked with a move away from Old



Trafford since rejoining from Juventus in 2016 for a then-world record 89 million pounds (\$118.09 million). "I wouldn't say he's not worth keeping but, of course, players have to want to play and stay for a club and a big club like United," Rangnick said ahead of Saturday's league trip to Norwich City.

"If a player doesn't want to play for a club like United medium or long-term, I don't think it makes sense to convince him to change his mind. "He can be an important player but this is true for all the others ... I'm not just the coach of Pogba, I'm also the coach of all the others and my ambition is to ... improve each individual, this is possible by improving the performance of the team."

Xavi insists on creating a new Barca

REUTERS

Xavi Hernandez is worried about the performances of the team he once graced as a player and said on Saturday that they must reset to create a new Barcelona.

Barca's 3-0 defeat at Bayern Munich on Wednesday saw them exit the Champions League at the group stage for the first time in almost two decades and they are 16 points adrift of leaders Real Madrid in LaLiga.

Xavi told a news conference he was surprised when he arrived to find a "discouraged" dressing room and believes the problem is "more psychological than soccer."

"There is more quality here than it appears," he said. "We need a general reset. I have the feeling that defeat is installed and it can't be like that. We need to ask for more commitment, be more demanding, more courageous, work more. We must create a new Barca."

Barcelona are preparing to visit mid-table Osasuna on Sunday as their former midfielder great tries to get the Catalan club's season back on track.

"I'm worried," added Xavi. "We have no option but to keep working hard, licking our wounds and getting back on track."

"Against Bayern I saw a Barcelona that is small (in stature) and we have to accept that. We are working to get Barca back to where we need to be."

After losing 1-0 at home to Real Betis last weekend, Barca are seventh in LaLiga, six points off the Champions League places.

CARLSEN CLAIMS fifth world title

REUTERS

Norway's Magnus Carlsen claimed his fifth world chess crown in Dubai on Friday with a crushing 7.5-3.5 victory against Ian Nepomniachtchi, who faded badly after going toe-to-toe with the Norwegian defending champion in the early games.

The 31-year-old Carlsen benefited from a blunder by his Russian challenger to win his fourth game of the match, with the black pieces, to take an unassailable lead in the best-of-14 contest.

"I didn't expect it go quite like this. I think it was just a very good professional performance overall. No regrets at all, just very satisfied," said Carlsen.

His large margin of victory made it the most one-sided world championship since Jose Raul Capablanca of Cuba defeated German Emmanuel Lasker 9-5 in 1921 - an outcome that few would have bet on during the contest's initial stages.

"After five games there were five draws and I'd had very, very few chances to play for anything more," Carlsen added.

"Then everything kind of clicked and after that it all went my way."

You don't expect to necessarily run away with it in a world championship."

The contest sprang to life in game 6, won by Carlsen with the white pieces after seven hours 45 minutes and 136 moves - the longest game in world championship history.

A dull 41-move draw followed before Carlsen won again with white as Nepomniachtchi, winner of the Candidates tournament in April, blundered a pawn move in the middle game.

Nepomniachtchi made another error in game 9, letting his light-square bishop get trapped after just 27 moves and leaving Carlsen on the brink of a fourth successful title defence.

After another draw, Friday's game 11 showed that Nepomniachtchi, the world number five, had not recovered from his earlier defeats as he lost focus again.

"These things which happened here, they have never happened to me at basically any events," a disconsolate Nepomniachtchi said of his blunders.

"In my career I lost quite some stupid games but not as many in such a (short) time."



Haaland's agent lists four big clubs as options

AFP, Berlin



Mino Raiola, the agent of Erling Haaland, has named Manchester City, Real Madrid, Barcelona and Bayern Munich as clubs the Norwegian star striker could join in 2022.

The 21-year-old has a contract with Dortmund until 2024, but his tally of 23 goals in 20 Champions League games for Dortmund and ex-club Salzburg has attracted Europe's top teams.

There is a release clause, reportedly for 80 million euros (\$90 million), in Haaland's contract which becomes active in 2022.

Raiola has told broadcaster Sport1 there is "a great chance that Erling will leave" at the end of this season.

"Maybe this summer, maybe the summer after," Raiola added.

"He can - and will - take the next step. Bayern, Real, Barcelona, (Man) City - these are the big clubs he can go to."

"We all knew when we moved to Dortmund that this step would come."

The Italy-born football agent



plans to sit down with club bosses at Dortmund in the coming months, adding: "We will say what our idea is and they will tell us theirs."

Haaland has sent goal records tumbling since joining Dortmund in January 2020.

He became the first player in Bundesliga history to score a hat-trick on his debut as a replacement and has since netted 51 goals in as many German league games.

Dortmund, who currently sit second in Germany's top flight, were knocked out of the Champions League during the five weeks Haaland was recently sidelined by a hip problem.

The injury also proved costly for Norway, who missed out on qualifying for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar when they lost 2-0 to the Netherlands last month when Haaland was sidelined.

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