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RAY OF HOPE for 6 sugar mills

Govt set to team up with foreign consortium to reopen them

- The consortium proposes to invest Tk 8,000cr (\$1b) under a 50:50 joint venture with BSFIC
- The six mills are in Pabna, Panchagarh, Dinajpur, Rangpur, Kushtia and Gaibandha
- BSFIC incurred a total of Tk 3,976cr losses in last five years

JAGARAN CHAKMA

The government is close to striking a deal with foreign investors for reopening the six shut sugar mills as part of its plan to make the losing Bangladesh Sugar and Food Industries Corporation (BSFIC) sustainable.

A consortium comprising Thailand's Sutech Engineering Co., the UAE's Sharkara International and Japan's Sojitz Machinery Corporation has expressed interest in investing \$1 billion (about Tk 8,000 crore) to upgrade the outdated facilities at the six mills, according to its investment proposal. The Daily Star has a copy of the proposal.

Production at Pabna Sugar Mills, Shyampur Sugar Mills, Setabganj Sugar Mills, Kushtia Sugar Mills, Panchagarh Sugar Mills and Rangpur Sugar Mills has been on halt since December last year amid mounting losses.

In fiscal 2019-20, the six mills had logged in losses of about Tk 380 SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



INHALING POISON...Without any safety gear, a worker collecting coal in Chattogram's Majhir Ghat area, where coal imported from India, Indonesia and other countries, is stored and then later sold and sent to different parts of the country. Such utter disregard for ensuring health safety measures by the authorities concerned results in serious respiratory and skin conditions for the workers.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAHMAN

Two killed in Rangamati shootout

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Two people were killed in a shootout between two groups of Parbatya Chattogram Jana Samhati Samiti (PCJSS) and United People's Democratic Front (UPDF Democratic) in Dui Kilo area of Rangamati's Baghaichhari upazila yesterday, said police.

The deceased were identified as PCJSS leader Tujim Chakma, 38, and UPDF leader Janong Chakma, 32, Baghaichhari Police Station Sub-inspector Asadur Rahman said.

The gunfight continued for around an hour from 12:10pm. Later, police recovered the bodies from a hill slope around 30 yards off each other. Another person, a motorcyclist named Monu Mia, 30, from Khagrachhari's Dighinala upazila, was also shot. He was sent to Khagrachhari Sadar hospital.

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DSA was misused

Law minister admits

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Acknowledging that the Digital Security Act (DSA) was misused and abused, Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday said steps were taken to stop this practice.

"Many people said Bangladesh needed the Digital Security Act. I acknowledge that the act was misused and abused. I have taken steps to stop this," he said while addressing the annual general meeting of the Crime Reporters Association of Bangladesh in the capital.

He said the first step was the initiation of a dialogue in December last year with the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. The move was aimed at doing whatever needed to ensure the best use of the law following the best practices in the world.

Besides, a team, led by the secretary of the legislative division, was formed and it is continuing dialogues in this regard, he

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Better equipped now, worries still there

MOUJID AHMED SUJAN

The major challenges for the healthcare sector of Bangladesh in 2021 was ensuring supply of Covid vaccines, inoculating a huge chunk of the population, and making sure the infected got beds, ICU beds, and adequate oxygen.

Bangladesh is now better equipped to deal with surges in Covid cases, like the one caused by the Delta variant, but experts fear the country is not out of the woods yet.

On the fear of Omicron variant spreading, Prof Nazrul Islam, a member of the National Technical Advisory Committee on Covid-19, told The Daily Star that if the surge of infections was like that caused by Delta, the crisis would not be as severe but the fear remains.

HEALTH SECTOR 2021

- Nationwide Covid ICU beds in January – 602
- Nationwide Covid ICU beds now – 1,201
- Covid hospital beds in January – 10,495
- Covid dedicated hospital beds now – 21,248
- High-flow nasal cannula in January – 716
- High-flow nasal cannula now – 2,452
- Covid hospitals with central O2 supply – 100
- Covid hospitals with O2 generators – 18

"The oxygen production and supply situations are much better now. But keeping everything functional will be a challenge," Prof Ridwanur Rahman, an infectious disease specialist, told The Daily Star yesterday while reviewing the achievements and failures in the health sector in 2021.

Omicron will likely start creating pressure on the healthcare system early next year, he warned. After the first wave, the deaths, new cases and infection rates were low when the new year had begun in 2021 with hope for some sort of normalcy.

The people of the country, the economy, and the businesses were eying a return to business as usual as the vaccination campaign rolled out on February 7.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3 WHO WARNS OF 'VERY HIGH' OMICRON RISK - P12

Covid cases on the rise again

3 vaccines chosen for booster dose

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country recorded a spike in daily Covid cases as the health directorate logged 495 new infections in 24 hours preceding 8:00am yesterday.

The previous day, the figure was 397. With this, Bangladesh reported daily coronavirus cases above 400 after two months. On October 19, it logged 469 new Covid infections.

The spike in coronavirus cases comes at a time when the country is seeing cases of Omicron variant. Seven people have so far been infected with the new

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

Paranormal turnout

A polling station sees 100 percent vote cast; dead included

MINTU DESHWARA

A Moulvibazar polling centre reported a hundred percent turnout in Sunday's union parishad elections although the voter list included people who have died and those who were not even in the country.

The polling centre in question was the one at Bargaon Government Primary School of Rajnagar upazila's Panchgaon union.

After voting, the result sheet that the centre's presiding officer handed to the union's returning officer showed that all 1,915 votes were cast.

The Daily Star has got a copy of the result sheet and the polling centre's voter list. Scrutinising the latter, it was found that at least 83 people have died and 208 have gone abroad.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3



CROWN CEMENT WILL BE USED IN DHAKA-ASHULIA ELEVATED EXPRESSWAY PROJECT

Crown Cement has signed an agreement with The Fifth Major Bridge Engineering Co. Ltd. of China to supply cement to Dhaka-Ashulia Elevated Expressway Project. **Mr. Md. Mukter Hossain Talukder**, FCA, Chief Executive Officer of Crown Cement, and **Mr. Wei Haijiang**, Project Chief Engineer of The Fifth Major Bridge Engineering Co. Ltd., signed the agreement on behalf of their respective organizations at a city hotel in Dhaka on 29 December 2021.

BANGLADESH UPDATE



495
New cases in 24hrs



15,84,518
Total cases



28,063
Deaths



15,48,416
Recoveries

GLOBAL UPDATE



5,434,319
Deaths



283,402,425
Total cases

DHAKA-MAWA-BHANGA EXPRESSWAY

Project cost to go up again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The cost of Dhaka-Mawa-Bhanga Expressway project is set to rise again as the authorities are going to do some additional work, mainly to ensure road safety.

The work includes construction of some 20 footbridges and remodeling the Mawa and Pachchar roundabouts.

If the revised proposal is approved, the cost of the project would go up to Tk 11,043 crore, up by Tk 40 crore from the current cost.

Moreover, the project deadline has already been extended to June 2022.

All these developments come around two years after the opening of the 55-kilometre expressway, from Dhaka's Jatrabari to Faridpur's Bhanga, by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in March last year.

The four-lane expressway with service lane on both sides is being considered as the country's most expensive road considering the per kilometre construction cost (around Tk 200 crore), officials said.

To ensure smooth movement of traffic across the Padma bridge, the government in May 2016 took up the project to widen the road involving Tk 6,252 crore.

The project deadline was set at April 2019.

In December 2016, the authorities approved a special revision of the project adding Tk 640 crore, mainly for land acquisition.

But in 2018, a separate Development Project Proposal (DPP) was approved with a cost of Tk 4111.85 crore for including more elements in the project and the deadline was fixed at June 2019.

Officials said a project with two DPPs is a rare case. The total cost of the project has gone up to Tk 11,003 crore.

The scheme has witnessed 92.63

percent progress so far. A project of Roads and Highways Department, it is being implemented by Bangladesh Army.

WHY COST ESCALATION AGAIN?

On December 15, the Divisional Project Evaluation Committee held a meeting on the revised DPP, with Road Transport and Highway Division Secretary Nazrul Islam in the chair.

According to the meeting minutes, an additional Tk 148 crore would be required for some additional works of the project.

Around Tk 48 crore would be needed for remodeling Mawa and Pachchar roundabouts, construction of some additional side roads and Tk 14.47 crore for earth works.

Besides, about Tk 85.68 crore would be required for the construction of some 20 footbridges, fencing and some other works.

"In fact, all these will be done to enhance road safety measures," an official involved in the project said.

However, the project authorities have saved more than Tk 100 crore from different works, including consultant's fees, and shifting of utility lines.

Adjusting all these costs, the revised DPP proposed to increase the project cost by Tk 39.94 crore, reads the document.

The meeting also directed the project authorities to ensure its completion within the revised deadline of June 2022.

The prime minister opened the expressway on March 12 last year. However, its users will get full benefits once the construction work of the Padma bridge is completed.

People will then be able to reach Bhanga from the capital (around 75km) within an hour. However, they will have to pay toll for using the expressway.



Traders on boats selling different varieties of rice at the floating market on the Sandha river in Barishal's Banaripara upazila. Farmers from surrounding villages send their harvests to the centuries-old rice market, where they are sold on Saturdays and Tuesdays. The photo was taken on Tuesday.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Better equipped now; worries still there

FROM PAGE 1

But that was not to be, at least for some months, as the government practically put all its eggs in one basket. The supply of shots from India stopped and the campaign was in disarray by April. Things became grimmer with the emergence of the Delta variant in May.

Eventually, the supply of shots was ensured from various sources, including China, but the Delta raged on, shooting oxygen demand through the roof, costing lives and exposing again the government's incapacity in hospital management and timely project implementation.

"There were crises over vaccine supply and Delta variant transmission and hospital management initially. The government managed to deal with those issues well at last," Prof Nazrul told The Daily Star.

Now the Omicron variant has become a cause for concern. Seven cases have been reported so far in Bangladesh and experts warn of trying times ahead.

VACCINE ROLLOUT

The drive to properly inoculate 80 percent of the population began in February using Oxford-AstraZeneca's Covishield vaccine produced by Serum Institute of India (SII).

The campaign suffered frequent hiccups mainly due to a shortage of doses caused by a yawning gap between supply commitments and actual deliveries, forcing the government to stop administering the first of the two doses on April 26.

Gradually, the situation improved

with supplies from the US, China and Japan, prompting the government to resume administering the first dose on June 19. The lion's share of the shots was bought from China.

As of December 27, around 4.87 crore or 28 percent of the targeted population received the two shots.

The government also introduced booster shots on December 28.

DELTA The country started seeing a steady decline in the number of daily cases in February. People were expecting some sort of new normal in the days ahead and the government was even thinking about reopening schools that had been closed since mid-March 2020.

However, infections started rising from March amid disregard for health safety guidelines nationwide. The government imposed restrictions on movement, initially between April 5 and 11, and then extended them in phases.

The transmission started to decline a little towards the end of April but things changed for the worse in the months that followed. Despite lockdowns enforced on July 1, Delta swept across the country, taking lives. On July 28, the all-time highest 16,230 people tested positive for Covid. On August 5 and 10, the daily death toll was 264, the highest ever.

During this time, hospitals across the country were stretched to their limits. Nationwide ICU bed occupancy was more than 90 percent and general bed occupancy was over 80 percent until the end of July.

The demand for oxygen in hospitals rose to 210 tonnes a day when the local production capacity was around 120 tonnes a day.

The government had then failed to install in time the built-in oxygen supply systems in all the hospitals it had planned to. There was a high-flow oxygen supply device shortage, which has been attributed to the deaths of at least 16 Covid patients in Satkhira, Rajshahi and Bogura between June 30 and July 7.

Around 58 percent of the 28,062 Covid deaths, as of December 28, were recorded after the emergence of Delta.

MAJOR INCIDENTS Irregularities in the health department did not stop even during the pandemic.

On September 20, the health ministry cancelled the process for appointing 2,839 people for the posts of medical technologists, technicians and cardiographers due to what it called ambiguity in the answer scripts of the written test.

The understaffed health department continued to struggle in delivering quality healthcare.

A total of 17 important documents, mostly related to purchases, went missing on October 28 from the health ministry.

The ministry formed an investigation committee and suspended four employees as per the committee's recommendation.

But the reason behind the files going missing is still shrouded in mystery.

Ray of hope for 6 sugar mills

FROM PAGE 1

crore, with Setabganj Sugar Mills racking up the most losses of Tk 84 crore, according to the BSFC.

Commercial production at the six mills will begin within 30 months of signing the final agreement with the consortium, according to Md Emdad Hossain, a local representative of the investors.

The consortium will supply a high-yielding variety of sugarcane to local farmers at free of cost such that there would be enough raw materials to keep the mills running around the year.

The high-yielding variety of sugarcane can produce 80 tonnes of sugarcane per hectare per year, according to Hossain. The local variety yields 20 tonnes of sugarcane per hectare per year.

The consortium will produce food products from the sugarcane by-products and high-end spirits that would be sold abroad.

As per its projections, the consortium will be able to recoup its investment within eight years, Hossain said.

Of the \$1 billion to be invested, the Japan Bank for International Cooperation and the Export-Import Bank of Thailand will provide 70 percent of the sum.

The remaining 30 percent will come from the consortium, which will form a 50:50 joint venture with the BSFC that runs the 15 state-owned sugar mills. Previously, the consortium wanted the JV to be 60:40 in its favour.

"We do not have a financing problem for the project as the necessary feasibility study has been conducted -- it will be a commercially viable project," Hossain added.

Contacted, Industries Minister

Nurul Majid Mahmud Humayun acknowledged the government is close to wrapping up negotiations.

The most viable proposal to make the mills profitable has been selected, he said.

The BSFC has received seven investment proposals from foreign investors for upgrading the sugar mills.

"They will produce different by-products in line with sugar production all year round."

At present, the production lines run for only three to four months in a year, so the government has to provide a huge subsidy to meet the overheads, he said.

All the state mills will be modernised in phases to make those profitable and to uphold the sugarcane farmers' livelihoods, Humayun added.

Of the 15 sugar mills under the BSFC, only one is profitable: Carew & Co.

Between fiscals 2015-16 and 2019-20, the BSFC logged in losses of Tk 3,976 crore. It has bank loans of about Tk 7,895 crore and owes about Tk 521.8 crore in arrears to workers.

"We are very positive about the proposal to modernise the sugar mills to make BSFC profitable," said SM Alam, who is leading the negotiations in the industries ministry.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) had a couple of queries before giving the nod to the foreign investment. The queries pertain to the government's share in the venture and the guarantee for the foreign companies' investment.

The deal will close swiftly once all PMO's queries have been answered, said Alam, additional secretary to the state-run corporation under the industries ministry.

Kuwait swears in fourth govt in two years

AFP, Kuwait City

A new Kuwaiti government was sworn in yesterday, the oil-rich Gulf emirate's fourth in two years, after the last one resigned in November amid political deadlock.

Kuwait has been shaken by disputes between elected lawmakers and successive governments dominated by the ruling Al-Sabah family for more than a decade, with parliaments and cabinets dissolved several times.

The last government called it quits in November in the face of a standoff with parliament over reforms.

The cabinet was sworn in before the crown prince, the official KUNA news agency reported.

It is the fourth government that Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah has formed since his appointment as prime minister in December 2019.

Kuwait is the only Gulf Arab state with a fully elected parliament, which

enjoys wide legislative powers and can vote ministers out of office.

Oil Minister Mohammed al-Fares and Foreign Minister Sheikh Ahmed Nasser al-Mohammed Al-Sabah retain their posts in the reshuffle.

However, the new lineup includes a critical voice in Finance Minister Abdulwahab Al-Rushaid, who earlier this month called on government to "focus on a sustainable economy rather than on the fluctuations of oil prices".

Like most Gulf countries, Kuwait's economy and public finances have been hit by the coronavirus pandemic and the slumping price of oil.

In last year's elections, the opposition and its allies won nearly half of parliament's 50 seats.

The polls were the first since the new emir, Sheikh Nawaf, took power on the death of his half-brother, Sheikh Sabah, at the age of 91.

Paranormal turnout

FROM PAGE 1

A hundred percent turnout means that everyone listed in the voter list cast a vote. But considering the number of dead and those who have gone abroad, around 15 percent of votes must have remained not cast, said locals and sources at the local election office.

Locals have raised questions over the authenticity of the result.

They said Abdul Gafur, a resident of Bahadurganj village and listed as number 13 in the voter list of the polling centre, died on August 15 last year.

"How can a dead man cast votes?" asked Jamal Mia, nephew of Abdul Gafur.

Their neighbour, Farukur Rahman,

also died around three months ago. His serial number was six.

"My brother Md Kabir Miah went abroad around one year ago. His serial number was 108," said Monsur Ahmed, a resident of the same village.

Local youth Atikur Rahman said apart from the deceased and those who have gone abroad, many of the villagers also did not go to the polling station.

"So, how could cent percent votes be cast?" he asked.

As per electoral rules, a presiding officer is responsible for conducting elections in that particular polling station, while the returning officer is responsible for all polling stations in that union.

Asked, Bargaon Government Primary School polling station's Presiding Officer Rafiqul Islam admitted that the result sheet showed that the turnout was 100 percent.

"I am looking into the matter," he added.

Returning Officer Mohammad Yunus claimed that it could have been an error of a polling official who was in a hurry.

Contacted, Faruq Mahmud Chowdhury, president of Sushasoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujon) in Sylhet, alleged that this may have happened due to casting of fake votes.

Elections to 838 union parishes across the country were held on Sunday as part of the fourth phase of UP polls.

US sees possible progress in Iran nuclear talks

AFP, Vienna

The United States said Tuesday it had seen possible progress in talks with Iran but joined European negotiators in pressing for urgency in rolling back Tehran's nuclear programme.

Negotiations resumed Monday in Vienna in a fresh push to make headway on reviving a landmark 2015 agreement that curtailed Iran's nuclear activities in return for sanctions relief.

"There may have been some modest progress," State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters in Washington.

"But it is in some ways too soon to say how substantive that progress may have been. At a minimum any progress, we believe, is falling short of Iran's accelerating nuclear steps and is far too slow."

Former president Donald Trump in 2018 withdrew from the nuclear accord and imposed a slew of punishing sanctions, including a unilateral US ban on Iran selling its key export of oil.

President Joe Biden supports a return to the agreement but Iran has kept taking steps away from compliance as it presses for sanctions relief.

The Vienna talks began after

Biden's election but stopped in June as Iran elected a new ultraconservative government. They resumed in late November with Iran agreeing to keep talking after a brief break.

"This negotiation is urgent," negotiators from Britain, France and Germany said in a statement.

"We are clear that we are nearing the point where Iran's escalation of its nuclear programme will have completely hollowed out the JCPOA," the so-called E3 powers said, referring to the deal's official name by its acronym.

"That means we have weeks, not months, to conclude a deal before the JCPOA's core non-proliferation benefits are lost."

Israel, Iran's arch-enemy, has warned of military options if the Islamic republic's programme advances and is suspected in a shadowy campaign that has included the assassination of Tehran's top nuclear scientist.

The Biden administration has also warned of a return to pressure if talks fail and Iran pursues its nuclear work.

Iran was in compliance with the 2015 deal before Trump's withdrawal but has since taken key steps including stepping up its enrichment

of uranium, although it denies that it wants to acquire a nuclear arsenal.

On Saturday, Atomic Energy Organization of Iran director Mohammad Eslami said Tehran had no plans to enrich uranium beyond 60 percent, even if the Vienna talks fail.

Eslami said the enrichment levels were related to the needs of the country, in remarks published by the Russian news agency RIA Novosti.

In response, E3 negotiators said Tuesday that 60 percent enrichment was still "unprecedented for a state without nuclear weapons". Military-grade levels are around 90 percent.

"Its increasing 60 percent stockpile is bringing Iran significantly closer to having fissile material, which could be used for nuclear weapons," they said.

The United States did not specify areas of progress but Russia -- which is participating along with China and the Europeans -- said a working group had a "useful meeting" on nuclear issues and informal discussions on lifting sanctions.

"We observe indisputable progress," Moscow's ambassador to the UN in Vienna, Mikhail Ulyanov, wrote on Twitter.

Five dead, two wounded in US shooting: police

AFP, WASHINGTON

The death toll from a shooting spree across multiple locations in Colorado, which ended when the gunman was himself shot dead, has risen to five, police said Tuesday.

The trail of shooting began around 5:00 pm on Monday and unfolded across at least four different locations in the cities of Denver and Lakewood, said police, who had initially put the death toll at four.

Two women were killed and a man was wounded in the first location in Denver, police said, with another man shot dead outside his residence.

The gunman then traveled to neighboring Lakewood, where he fatally shot another man in the Lucky 13 tattoo parlor and wounded another individual.

DSA was misused

FROM PAGE 1

said, adding that the best practices will be kept in the rules to be formulated under the act.

Anisul said he also talked to the home minister to stop the law's abuse before the rules are formulated.

The minister then said a cell of the law enforcement agencies now looks into the complaint before any case is registered under the DSA. The case is registered only when it is recommended by the cell.

Also, when a journalist is sued under the act, they are not arrested right away, he said.

"This act has not been enacted to curb freedom of speech and press freedom," he said.

The DSA was passed in parliament on September 19, 2018. The journalist community has since been protesting it and demanding that several of its sections be amended to safeguard freedom of the press.

Between January and November this year, 68 journalists were accused in 32 DSA cases while the total number of cases filed under the act is 225, according to data gathered by Article 19, a UK-based human rights body that focuses on freedom of expression.

Two killed

FROM PAGE 1

After the incident, police recovered a submachine gun (SMG), five bullets and 13 bullet shells from the spot, said the SI.

Contacted, UPDF's (democratic) Information and Publicity Secretary Gati Chakma claimed that a group of men from PCJSS went to Dui Kilo area and indiscriminately opened fire on Janong Chakma, killing him on the spot. Gati said Janong was the chief of their unit in Baghaichhari.

Tridip Chakma, secretary of PCJSS chapter in the upazila, said, "None of our members was killed today. We also did not attack anyone."

"The gunfight was fought by members of UPDF and another faction of PCJSS over establishing dominance in the hills," he said.

Despite trying repeatedly, The Daily Star could not reach anyone from the PCJSS faction over phone for comments on the matter.

At least eight people, including three polling officials and four ANSP personnel, were shot dead in Noymile area of Baghaichhari upazila during local upazila polls in March 2019.

Covid cases

FROM PAGE 1

variant that is taking hold across Europe.

The Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) yesterday said the new cases were detected after testing 21,079 samples during the 24-hour period.

The daily positivity rate went up to 2.37 percent from Tuesday's 2.10 percent.

One died from Covid-19 during those 24 hours, taking the total number of deaths to 28,063. The death rate is 1.77 percent.

The deceased was a man, aged between 61-70, the DGHS said in a release.

The total number of confirmed Covid cases now stands at 15,84,518. Though the number of daily deaths registered was below five since December 13, the number of daily new cases was mostly over 250, according to DGHS data.

On December 11, Bangladesh reported its first two Covid Omicron cases in two members of its women's cricket team after their return home from Zimbabwe.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh approved Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna and AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccines for use in its booster shot programme.

DGHS officials said people will not be given any option to choose booster shots, rather one vaccine from those three will be administered.

Bangladesh has been administering Oxford-AstraZeneca, Pfizer, Moderna, Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines for the first two doses.

The National Immunization Technical Advisory Group (NITAG) recommended only Pfizer, Moderna and AstraZeneca shots be used for boosters.

ENDING SEXUAL ABUSE AT WORKPLACE

Separate law need of the hour: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable yesterday stressed the need for a comprehensive law to protect female workers from workplace harassment.

They said achievement in this area will help reduce gender-based violence as a whole.

Speakers urged the government to ratify the International Labour Organisation (ILO) Convention-190 recognising the "right to a workplace free from gender-based violence and harassment."

The roundtable, titled "Gender-based Harassment and Violence: Prevention Requires Coordinated Initiatives" was jointly organised by Gender Platform Bangladesh and The Daily Star at The Daily Star Centre in the capital.

Addressing the roundtable, Nazrul Islam Khan, secretary-general of Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS), said a law preventing workplace violence and harassment against female workers is a necessity and should be formulated within a short time.

Mentioning that a draft has been submitted to the law ministry recently,

54 female workers faced workplace violence in 2021

5.6pc female UNOs faced workplace sexual harassment

48,233 women, children faced violence from Apr 2020 to Sept 2021

RECOMMENDATIONS

Formulate separate law

Take stakeholders' opinions on draft act

Ratification of ILO Convention-190

Proper implementation of HC verdict

he stressed the need for generating stakeholders' opinions on the draft act.

"Without a humane society, it will be very tough for us to accomplish our goal in this regard," said Shirin Akhter, lawmaker and member of parliamentary committee on primary and mass education ministry, while chairing the roundtable.

During a presentation, BILS Director Nazma Yesmin referred to a Transparency International Bangladesh study and said 5.6 percent of female UNOs in the country have faced sexual harassment while on duty, while a Manusher Jonno Foundation study

found that from April 2020 to September 2021, 48,233 women and children faced various forms of violence in the country.

Moreover, a BILS study based on news reports found that from January to December 25 this year, 54 female workers faced workplace violence, she added.

Abdullah Hil Rakib, director of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said they have introduced need-based training at different

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



Siam can usually be spotted collecting scraps all day at this dumping ground at Dakshin Surma upazila's Parirachak area. Whether it's summer or winter, he comes along with his mother at the break of dawn to make a living by selling the scraps. It's not just Siam, however. Several kids just like him, with plastic bags over their shoulders, rummage through the spot pretty much every day. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASTIR

Polls-time govt, search committee led by Hasina

Urges Bangladesh Nationalist Front; Islami Oikya Jote calls for law to form independent, neutral EC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh Nationalist Front (BNF) yesterday placed a three-point proposal, including formation of the Election Commission (EC) through a search committee and an election-time government, led by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

They placed the proposal while holding a dialogue with President Abdul Hamid over formation of the next EC.

Meanwhile, Islami Oikya Jote (IOJ) while holding another dialogue with the president, placed a four-point



DIALOGUE WITH PRESIDENT

proposal, including enacting a law in line with the constitution on formation of an independent, neutral and acceptable EC.

Welcoming the delegation to Bangabhaban, the president said the opinions of political parties are crucial for formation of an acceptable EC, said a press release issued by Bangabhaban Press Wing. He said democracy should not be limited to only elections; it should also be spread through continuous practice.

"It's necessary to evaluate the sacrifices of leaders and workers, and principles and ideals of the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

BNP not to join talks

Says Fakhrul

UNB, Dhaka

Describing the ongoing dialogue on the reconstitution of the Election Commission "pointless", BNP standing committee has decided not to take part in the talks with President Abdul Hamid.

A meeting of the party standing committee, the highest policymaking body, on Monday took the decision, said a press release signed by BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir yesterday. Amid the various speculations about BNP's participation in the talks, the party made its stance clear on it even before receiving the invitation from Bangabhaban for joining the dialogue.



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It will go on whether anyone joins or not

Quader on EC formation process

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said the process to form the Election Commission will continue whether anyone joins the dialogue or not.

The process which was followed earlier in reconstituting the EC is being followed now, Quader said, referring to BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir's statement that the president's dialogue is meaningless and the crisis will not be resolved with it.



SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

'CORONA INSIGNIA' Police to get special recognition

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

In recognition of Bangladesh Police's role in tackling the pandemic, the government has approved a special logo, which will be put on a new "corona insignia" for officers to wear.

There are around 2.15 lakh members in the police force, and every member, including officers of Rapid Action Battalion, will be able to wear the insignia on their uniform.

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan will inaugurate the logo today at a programme at Rajarbagh Police Auditorium, according to a statement of police headquarters (PHQ).

Kamruzzaman Rassel, assistant inspector general (media) of PHQ, told The Daily Star yesterday that the government has approved the logo to appreciate the front-liners. The home ministry gave the approval on October 31, after PHQ requested it. In a letter, PHQ said in 2020, when Covid-19 hit Bangladesh, and during the second wave this year, officers wholeheartedly tried to enforce directives like lockdown, general holiday, social distancing and distributing relief.

According to PHQ, the insignia will cost around Tk 150. The ministry gave the approval by issuing a gazette notification.

'Robust policy needed for healthy financial sector'

TIB calls for integrated strategy to prevent money laundering, ensure proper governance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) yesterday called for formulating an "integrated strategic policy", with participation of different stakeholders, and implementing it to prevent money laundering and ensure proper governance in the financial sector.

Such a policy can make it possible for the government to prevent sending money from Bangladesh through unauthorised channels and avert huge revenue loss, the graft watchdog said in a statement.

TIB welcomed Bangladesh Bank's recent initiative of relaxing rules for foreign nationals residing in Bangladesh

The central bank's latest decision can bear fruit if, after combined efforts of relevant authorities, foreign nationals take this opportunity and send their incomes through legal channels

to send remittance to their countries.

The central bank on Monday issued a notice, stating that foreigners who are working in the country can now send up to 80 percent of their monthly earnings. Earlier, they were allowed to remit 75 percent.

In the statement, TIB Executive Director Iftekharuzzaman referred to a TIB study published in February 5 last year and said a large number of foreign nationals work illegally in Bangladesh and send remittance to their home countries through hundi.

The total amount could be at least Tk 26,000 crore per annum, he said. "As a result, the government's annual revenue loss could be about Tk 12,000 crore," he added.

However, the central bank's latest decision can bear fruit if, after combined efforts of relevant authorities, foreign nationals take this opportunity and send their incomes through legal channels, the TIB executive director further said.

Teacher held over sexual harassment of student

Holy Family Medical College suspends him

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday arrested Holy Family Red Crescent Medical College's Assistant Professor, Dr Salauddin Chowdhury, on charge of sexually harassing a student.

ANM Imran Khan, assistant director of Rab's Legal and Media Wing, confirmed the development to The Daily Star.

Rapid Action Battalion held a press briefing yesterday evening regarding the incident.

Ramna Model Police Station Officer-in-Charge, Monirul Islam, said the student filed a case against the teacher under the Women and Child Repression Prevention Act yesterday.

Quoting the case statement, the OC said that Salauddin had made several inappropriate propositions to the student via Facebook messenger -- starting on September 9, 2020. When she refused his advances, the teacher threatened to fail her in exams.

When he met her on campus, he asked her to delete the messages and to meet him alone on several occasions. The teacher, according to the student,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

1 held with 44 gold bars at Dhaka airport

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Customs officials detained a man and seized 44 gold bars from inside two hammers at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in Dhaka on Tuesday night.

Detainee Ataor Rahman landed at the airport from Sharjah, United Arab Emirates on a flight around 9:15pm, according to a press release.

The officials stopped him when he was crossing the airport's green channel. He initially denied having any taxable items in his luggage, an official of customs told The Daily Star.

"After scanning, we found two hammers in his baggage. We then cut the hammers with bar cutter and found 44 gold bars inside," he said adding that they also found five pieces of gold bangles from his pocket.

The estimated value of the recovered gold is around Tk 3 crore.

Two cases were filed against him in this connection.



An art contest was held at Mymensingh city's Shilpacharya Zainul Abedin art gallery yesterday, marking the 107th birth anniversary of the maestro. Many children participated in the competition, spending their morning drawing and colouring images of the distinguished artist.

PHOTO: STAR

SOUTH ASIAN DIGITAL MEDIA AWARDS Star wins for 5th consecutive time



CITY DESK

For the fifth consecutive time, The Daily Star has been announced as one of the winners of the South Asian Digital Media Awards 2021, organised by World Association of Newspapers and News Publishers (WAN-IFRA), in the "Best Branded Content Campaign" category.

It received the silver award along with Hindustan Times. The Hindu received the gold award, said a press release.

The awards are given by WAN-IFRA every year to recognise South Asian publishers who have delivered unique and original digital media.

From new approaches to digital subscriptions to impactful native advertising campaigns, these are projects designed to inspire everyone. The 2021 awards received more than 140 entries, a record jump of close to double the number of entries than the previous year, which were evaluated by a prestigious international panel of jury consisting of multi-award-winning individuals and journalists.

This year, The Daily Star received the award for the marketing campaign "Break the Taboo", an initiative with

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Bazlul Mobin Chowdhury's death anniv

CITY DESK

Today is the 11th death anniversary of Prof Dr Bazlul Mobin Chowdhury, the first vice-chancellor of Independent University Bangladesh (IUB). Relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to pray for the salvation of the departed soul.



Doa mahfil for Mahfuzul Islam tomorrow

CITY DESK

Mahfuzul Islam, a retired government secretary, breathed his last at Evercare Hospital Dhaka on Tuesday. He was 75. He is survived by his wife, son, daughters, daughter-in-law and two grandchildren. A doa mahfil will be held after Asr prayers tomorrow at Baridhara Jame Masjid and Islamic Centre (Road 1, Baridhara Diplomatic Zone). Relatives, friends and well-wishers are requested to attend the event and pray for his departed soul.



During a drive at Barishal city, law enforcers roamed the busy roads, evicted shops set up on the roadside, and fined motorcyclists for violating traffic rules. Many of the bikers were penalised for illegal parking, not wearing helmet and not having a valid driver's licence. This photo was taken yesterday from Girja area. PHOTO: TITU DAS

Separate law need

FROM PAGE 3
factories to train new workers about their rights and responsibilities in this regard. Barrister Shameem Haider Patwary, member of parliamentary committee on law and parliamentary affairs ministry, said the country's one failure in 50 years is the lack of focus on issues like human development or different global indexes to make rights-based progress. Shamsun Nahar, member of parliamentary committee on labour and employment ministry, said the country cannot be turned into a developed one if

half of its population leave the workforce in fear of violence. Abul Hossain, acting coordinator, Domestic Workers Rights Network, said, "Proper implementation of the High Court verdict on preventing workplace harassment needs to be ensured." Noor Kutub Alam Mannan, acting president of Bangladesh Jatiya Sramik League; Quamrul Ahsan, joint coordinator, Sramik Karmachari Oikko Parishad; and Susmita Paik, deputy director of National Human Rights Commission, also spoke at the event.

Awareness on reproductive health vital

Says Ctg div commissioner

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chattogram's divisional commissioner Kamrul Hasan yesterday said the right knowledge about reproductive health of women and their rights is a must for an enlightened future. He made the remarks while addressing as chief guest at an event titled "Programme Sharing and Stakeholders Engagement Meeting", organised by Bangladesh Nari Pragati Sangha. The meeting was participated by stakeholders of a project titled "Our Health and Our Future". Kamrul also said adults should extend their help to adolescents regarding their health and reproductive issues.

GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE 'ASTHA' made grassroots people aware: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Multi-sectoral project ASTHA has been able to reach a majority of people through digital messaging to raise awareness about gender-based violence amid the spike in number of such incidents during the Covid-19 lockdown. The initiative implemented virtual communication technologies, with 21,504 messages broadcast via mobile phones, and 54 awareness movies broadcast via local-cable network and 182 community-awareness microphones. The information was disseminated yesterday at an event organised in the capital's Gulshan. It was implemented by Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK), in coordination with Ministry of Women and Children Affairs. The project has been implemented in 102 unions under 12 upazilas of Jamalpur, Patuakhali, Bogura and Cox's Bazar. "ASTHA has taken these small components to the grassroots and rightly addressed them," said Law and Justice Division Joint Secretary Ummei Kulsum. Dr Eiko Narita, country representative of UNFPA; Golam Monowar Kamal, executive director of ASK; Rumana Khan of UNFPA Bangladesh; and Anne van Leeuwen, ambassador of the Netherlands embassy, spoke at the event.

Death anniv of Monajat Uddin

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The 26th death anniversary of journalist Monajat Uddin was observed yesterday. Monajat died after falling from a ferry on the way to collect information for an investigative report outside Dhaka when he worked for the daily Janakantha. He started working as a journalist at the age of 18 and worked at six national Bangla dailies till his death, said a press release. Monajat received Ekushey Padak posthumously as well as several national awards. Monajat also wrote 12 books. The family has requested all to pray for the salvation of his departed soul.



Star wins for 5th

FROM PAGE 3
Freedom Sanitary Napkin, on occasion of World Menstrual Hygiene Day. The award event will be held virtually from March 8 to 10, 2022. The Daily Star's campaign primarily focuses on breaking away from taboos related to menstruation through generating awareness with fundamental facts regarding the menstrual cycle and hygiene, and bust myths surrounding them through an interactive microsite.

BNP not to join talks

FROM PAGE 3
Earlier, Fakhru said their standing committee will make a decision on it once they get invitation from the president. He said their meeting elaborately discussed the issue of the president's dialogue with the registered political parties on the formation of the new EC. "In the current political context of Bangladesh, BNP thinks the dialogue on the reconstitution of the Election Commission is just a waste of time without a constitutional guarantee of a polls-time neutral government and impartial administration," he said. Narrating the experiences of previous such talks, the BNP leader said the ongoing dialogue of the political parties with the president will not bring any positive results. "BNP won't participate in any meaningless dialogue."

মুক্তিযুদ্ধ বিষয়ক সাংবাদিকতার জন্য বজলুর রহমান স্মৃতিপদক-২০২১
প্রিন্ট মিডিয়া ও ইলেকট্রনিক মিডিয়া
আগ্রহী সাংবাদিক ও নির্মাতাদের ২০২১ সালে প্রকাশিত বা ইলেকট্রনিক মিডিয়ায় প্রচারিত মুক্তিযুদ্ধ বিষয়ক মৌলিক, অনুসন্ধানী ও দ্বন্দ্বগ্রাহী প্রতিবেদন/রিপোর্ট ৩১ জানুয়ারি ২০২২-এর মধ্যে মুক্তিযুদ্ধ জাদুঘরে জমা দেওয়ার জন্য আহ্বান করা হচ্ছে।
মুক্তিযুদ্ধ জাদুঘর, আগারগাঁও, শেরেবাংলা নগর
ঢাকা-১২০৭, ফোন : ৮৮১১৪৯৯৩
ই-মেইল : mukti.jadughar@gmail.com

RENT @ UTTARA (PREFER FOREIGNER)
4 storied Full building Total 9000 Sft. (Sector-6, Road-5) with 24 hours Security Guard & under CCTV surveillance. Please Cont: 01711-525563, Email: dilan@capital-bd.com

It will go on

FROM PAGE 3
Quader, also the road transport and bridges minister, said this at a briefing at his residence in the morning. An election commissioner was appointed from BNP's list last time, he said, adding, "A strong election commission cannot be formed by delivering speech in the media. A process should be followed for the EC formation. This will prove whether BNP wants a strong Election Commission or prefers to create a controversy," he also said. In response to the allegation of BNP leaders that the government is lying about Khaleda Zia's treatment, Quader said, "There's no truth in their statements due to their endless lies and they've been relying on lies and bad politics since the beginning of Khaleda's case."

Polls-time govt

FROM PAGE 3
party, without giving priority to financial issues in politics in the interest of democracy," said the president during the discussion. Hamid called upon political parties to take initiatives to motivate people in this regard. **BANGLADESH NATIONALIST FRONT** A seven-member delegation, led by BNF president SM Abul Kalam Azad, took part in the dialogue around 4:00pm. During the dialogue, the BNF leaders proposed forming an election-time government led by the incumbent prime minister in line with Article 56 of the constitution. BNF also said the PM will be able to form an election time cabinet comprising the pro-liberation forces. BNF proposed that the president form a five-member search committee comprising two noted professors, one former election commissioner, a former army official and former inspector general of police. **ISLAMI OIKYA JOTE** A seven-member delegation of IOJ, led by Abul Hasanat Amini, held the discussions at 6:00pm. They placed a four-point proposal to the president during the meeting. The proposals included enacting a permanent law for forming the EC, and involving politically non-biased, acceptable, dependable and faithful individuals.

Teacher held over

FROM PAGE 3
The Holy Family Red Crescent Medical College issued a notice, signed by its Principal, Professor Dr Md Daulatuzzaman, in this regard yesterday. The college's anti-sexual harassment cell is now investigating the incident, added the notice.

Padma Oil Company Limited
(An Enterprise of Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation)
Strand Road, Sadarghat, Chattogram
Corrigendum Notice
For Procurement of 03 Nos. x Aircraft Refuellers for POCL Aviation Refuelling Facilities at Shah Amanat International Airport, Chattogram, Bangladesh
This is for information of all concerned that due to some unavoidable circumstances following amendments of serial number-18, 19 and 20 of the tender notice published in "The Daily Somoka" dated 18/11/2021, "The Daily Kaler Kontho" dated 18/11/2021, "The Financial Express" dated 18/11/2021 and "The Daily Star" dated 18/11/2021 and website "POCL & CPTU" shall be amended as follows.

Sl. Nos.	Particular information	Existing		Amended	
		Date	Time	Date	Time
18	Tender last selling date	02/01/2022		09/01/2022	
19	Tender closing date and time	(dd/mm/yyyy)		(dd/mm/yyyy)	
		03/01/2022	02:00pm	10/01/2022	02:00pm
		03/01/2022	03:00pm	10/01/2022	03:00pm
20	Tender opening date and time	03/01/2022	03:00pm	10/01/2022	03:00pm

Accordingly respective clause of tender document shall be amended as per above corrigendum notice and all other terms and conditions of the Tender Notice shall remain unchanged.

Md. Aminul Haque
General Manager (Projects)
Padma Oil Company Limited
Strand Road, Sadarghat, Chattogram
Telephone No. +88031621399
Email: haminul38@yahoo.com

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Divisional Forest Officer
Social Forest Division, Faridpur
Memo No. 22.01.2900.361.02.002.21.2581 Date: 28 December, 2021
e-Tender Notice
e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP portal (www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of goods as stated below:

Sl.	Tender ID, Package No., name of packages	Last selling date and time	Closing and opening date and time
1	Tender ID: 637019, (Package# Farid(S)FD/SUFAL/2021-2022/GD-1), Supply of Poly-propylene Bags	12-Jan-2022, 05:00pm	13-Jan-2022, 03:00pm
2	Tender ID: 641505, (Package# FaridSFD/SUFAL/2021-2022/GD-2), Supply of Nursery and Plantation Materials for VF, Nursery Materials for Strip Plantation and Model Upazilla	11-Jan-2022, 05:00pm	12-Jan-2022, 04:30pm
3	Tender ID: 641353, (Package# FaridSFD/SUFAL/2021-2022/GD-3), Supply of Plantation Materials for Strip Plantation and Model Upazilla	11-Jan-2022, 05:00pm	12-Jan-2022, 15:45pm

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).
Md. Kabir Hossain Patwary
Divisional Forest Officer
Social Forest Division, Faridpur
GD-2413

বাংলাদেশ স্থলবন্দর কর্তৃপক্ষ
Bangladesh Land Port Authority
টিসিবি ভবন (৬ষ্ঠ তলা), কাওরান বাজার, ঢাকা-১২১৫
ফ্যাক্সঃ ৯১২২৬২৭
www.bsbk.gov.bd
স্মারক নং ১৮.১৫.০০০০.০২৩.৯৯.০১৪.১৯-১২৫৩ তারিখঃ ২৮ ডিসেম্বর ২০২১
ভোমরা স্থলবন্দরে ২টি টয়লেট কমপ্লেক্স ও ২টি গোসলখানা ইজারা প্রদানের দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি
বাংলাদেশ স্থলবন্দর কর্তৃপক্ষের আওতাধীন ভোমরা বন্দরে ২টি টয়লেট কমপ্লেক্স ও ২টি গোসলখানা পরিচালনা ও রক্ষণাবেক্ষণের জন্য ইজারাদার নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে আগ্রহী দরদাতাদের নিকট হতে দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছেঃ

ক্রমিক নং	বিবরণ	দরপত্র সিডিউলের মূল্য	দরপত্র জামানত	ইজারার মেয়াদ
১.	ভোমরা স্থলবন্দরে ২ (দুই)টি টয়লেট কমপ্লেক্স ও ২ (দুই)টি গোসলখানা।	১০০০.০০ (এক হাজার)	মোট উদ্বৃত্ত দরের ৩ (তিন) শতাংশ	২ (দুই) বছর
২.	দরপত্র সিডিউল প্রাক্তির স্থানঃ (ক) তত্ত্বাবধায়ক প্রকৌশলীর কার্যালয়, বাংলাদেশ স্থলবন্দর কর্তৃপক্ষ, টিসিবি ভবন (ষষ্ঠ তলা), কাওরান বাজার, ঢাকা। (খ) পরিচালক (ট্রাফিক), বেনাপোল স্থলবন্দর, বেনাপোল, যশোর। (গ) উপ-পরিচালক (ট্রাফিক) এর কার্যালয়, ভোমরা স্থলবন্দর, সাতক্ষীরা সদর, সাতক্ষীরা।			
৩.	দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তির সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও সময়ঃ ১৬/০১/২০২২খ্রিঃ অফিস চলাকালীন সময়।			
৪.	দরপত্র জমা প্রদানের সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও সময়ঃ ১৭/০১/২০২২খ্রিঃ, বেলা ১২:০০টা।			
৫.	ইজারা দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রতিকায় প্রকাশের তারিখ হতে (সরকারি ছুটি ব্যতীত) আগামী ১৭/০১/২০২২ তারিখ দুপুর ১২:০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত তত্ত্বাবধায়ক প্রকৌশলীর দপ্তর, প্রধান কার্যালয়, বাংলাদেশ স্থলবন্দর কর্তৃপক্ষ, টিসিবি ভবন (ষষ্ঠ তলা), কাওরান বাজার, ঢাকায় নির্ধারিত বাস্তব দরপত্র জমা প্রদান করা যাবে এবং ডাকযোগেও ইজারা দরপত্র জমা প্রদান করা যাবে। তবে, ডাকযোগের ক্ষেত্রে আবেদনকারীকে সর্বশেষ তারিখ অর্থাৎ ১৬/০১/২০২২ তারিখ দুপুর ১২:০০ ঘটিকার মধ্যে অত্র দপ্তরে পৌঁছাতে হবে। নির্ধারিত তারিখ ও সময়ের মধ্যে ডাকযোগে প্রাপ্ত দরপত্রসমূহ অত্র দপ্তরে রেজিস্ট্রার এন্ট্রির মাধ্যমে সংরক্ষণ করা হবে।			
৬.	নির্ধারিত টেন্ডার বন্ধ ও ডাকযোগে নির্ধারিত সময়ের প্রাপ্ত ইজারা দরপত্রসমূহ আগামী ১৭/০১/২০২২ তারিখ বেলা ২:৩০টার সময় পরিচালক (ট্রাফিক), বাংলাদেশ স্থলবন্দর কর্তৃপক্ষ, ঢাকা এর দপ্তরে উপস্থিত দরদাতা/প্রতিনিধির সম্মুখে (যদি কেহ উপস্থিত থাকেন) খোলা হবে।			
৭.	ইজারা প্রদানের শর্তাবলী ও তথ্যাদি দরপত্র সিডিউলে বর্ণিত আছে।			
৮.	কোন কারণ দর্শানো ছাড়াই কোন একাধিক বা সকল দরপত্র বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা কর্তৃপক্ষ সংরক্ষণ করে।			

মোঃ হাসান আলী
তত্ত্বাবধায়ক প্রকৌশলী
ফোনঃ ০২-৫৫০১৩৮৩০
জিডি-২৪১৬

Rupali Bank Ltd.
Head Office, ICT Systems Division
34, Dilkusha C/A, Dhaka-1000
Tel: +88-02-9514940
E-mail : ho-it@rupalibank.org, Website: www.rupalibank.org
Invitation for Tenders
Ref. No. HO/ICTSYS/2021/1490 Date: 29/12/2021

Tender No.	The name of tender	Tender last selling date	Tender closing date and time	Tender opening date and time
HO/ICTSYS/21/2021	Procurement of Vulnerability Assessment & Penetration Testing (VA&PT) Tools for Rupali Bank Limited.	17/01/2022	18/01/2022 Time: 03:00pm	18/01/2022 Time: 03:30pm

Please find the detailed Tender Notice in the Bank website (www.rupalibank.org or www.rupalibank.com.bd).
Sd/-
Md. Rahmatullah Sarker
Deputy General Manager
Rupali Bank Limited
ICT Systems Division (5th Floor)
Head Office: 34, Dilkusha C/A
Dhaka-1000, Phone: +88-02-9514940
নং-প্রকা/জসবি/বিজ্ঞাপন/২০২১/৯৮
GD-2416

Office of the Director
Institute of Nutrition and Food Science (INFS)
University of Dhaka
Dhaka-1000, Bangladesh
Phone: 9661900/8400, 8401
Fax: 880-2-8615583
E-mail: directorinfs@du.ac.bd, lnfs@du.ac.bd
Invitation for Tender (OTM)
Memo No. INFS/2021-2022/349 Tender (OTM) Date: 29/12/2021

Sl.	Name of work	Price of tender document: BDT 3,000/-
1.	Supply of Chemicals for laboratory uses	
2.	Tender closing date & time	16/01/2022 Time: 4.00pm.
3.	Tender submission date & time	17/01/2022 Time: 10.30am.
4.	Tender opening date & time	17/01/2022 Time: 11.00am.
5.	Tender opening place	Office of the Director, Institute of Nutrition and Food Science, University of Dhaka.

Professor Dr. Khaleda Islam
Director
Institute of Nutrition and Food Science
University of Dhaka
GD-2417

Collapsed bridge unrepaired for over a year

Nearly 40,000 people of six villages in Kalapara upazila cross the canal to reach their destinations

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

An iron structured bridge over Pakhimara canal under Kalapara upazila of the district has remained unrepaired after it collapsed over a year ago, causing suffering to thousands of locals.

The 116-metre-long ramshackle iron-structured concrete bridge on the canal collapsed on August 5 last year, but the authorities concerned are yet to repair or replace the bridge.

Due to the collapse of the important bridge, people of six villages under Nilganj union in the upazila virtually remained cut-off from the upazila headquarters and the district town.

Locals said about 40,000 residents of those villages are facing huge communication problem in terms of reaching their desired destinations.

They said even after over a year of the bridge collapse their sufferings haven't reduced after repeated pleas to the authorities concerned.

Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) built the semi-concrete bridge on iron beams at a cost of Tk 30 lakh in 2013-14



This iron bridge over Pakhimara canal in Patuakhali's Kalapara upazila remains unrepaired since it collapsed in August last year.

PHOTO: STAR

growers of the six affected villages as huge quantities of seasonal vegetables are cultivated in those villages throughout the year.

Since the collapse of the bridge local farmers facing huge trouble in communication as they have to cross the canal to carry their produce from the field to the Kalapara town every day.

Sulaiman Hawlader, vegetable grower of Kumirmara village, said farmers cultivate different seasonal vegetables round the year, and they have to carry their goods to different markets every morning to sell those.

But since the collapse of the bridge, they are using small boats to carry their produce to Kalapara-Kuakata highway near Pakimara Bazar, and then to Kalapara upazila town on other available vehicles.

Ruhul Amin Mridha, a resident of Kumirmara village, said more than 200 students from six villages on the east side of the canal study in different government schools, secondary

schools and madrasas in Pakhimara area, on the other side of the canal.

After the bridge collapse, villagers built a floating bridge, using hundreds of plastic drums and bamboos, to ease the suffering of the students, he said, adding that the makeshift bridge has also become unusable.

Abdul Hakim of Sonatala village said we requested the local public representatives on several occasions, but their sufferings remained the same.

Local UP Chairman Nasir Mahmud said he repeatedly urged the upazila LGED office to construct a new bridge on Pakhimara canal, but no initiative has been taken yet.

Contacted, LGED Kalapara Upazila Engineer Delwar Hossain said soon after the bridge collapse he sent a proposal to his higher authorities to build a girder bridge there.

Construction work of a new bridge will start as soon the proposal is approved, he added.



fiscal years.

But, due to lack of maintenance and repair work since the construction the iron frame of the bridge started developing rust and suddenly collapsed in the canal last year, snapping communication between Kumirmara, Majidpur, Alemipur, Baintala, Faridganj and Sonatala villages and the upazila headquarters.

Mentionable, the bridge is vital for the

Locals blame

FROM PAGE 12

"There were plenty of trees within 10 yards of where the launch was anchored. The staffers could easily throw a rope and tied the launch with a tree. All passengers then could have moved to safety," said Shohag Mollah, one of the locals who rushed to help the passengers that night.

Dalim Begum, wife of local union parishad member Sobuj Khan, said they woke up hearing people's cry for help. "At first, we thought our village was attacked by robbers. I asked my husband not to go out but he rushed outside and saw the launch burning."

Shamim Sheikh, who lives in the char, said, "Had the launch been anchored for 15 minutes, all passengers could have been rescued safely."

He said as the burning launch was drifting back into the river, locals rushed near it with engine boats amid dense fog. "But the rescue work was extremely difficult as the fire was fierce."

Many passengers jumped in the river and were rescued by boats brought by locals, he said.

Later, the rescued passengers were given shelter and clothes in the char, he said.

Meanwhile, another person burnt in the fire died of her injuries at the Sheikh Hasina National Institute of Burn and Plastic Surgery in the capital yesterday evening.

With her, at least 46 people have died in the incident. Several dozens still remain missing.

The dead is Shahinur Khatun Shwapna, 45, a resident of Sharisamuri village in Barguna's Betagi upazila.

Her husband and daughter, who also suffered burns, were undergoing treatment at the burn institute.

New space telescope

FROM PAGE 12

powered in part by solar panels, which Nasa recently said had been deployed successfully. But it also relies on more traditional propellant to allow it to orient itself in space.

Nasa said that the telescope has enough rocket propellant not only for getting to its eventual destination – a point in space known as L2 – but also the various things that will be required of it for a long time. That propellant is used through the life of the mission for what Nasa calls "station keeping" manoeuvres, as it adjusts its orbit, and for other burns that keep Webb the right way up in space.

It has been able to keep that extra propellant largely because of the precise launch of the Ariane 5 rocket that launched the telescope into space on Christmas Day. Because that and the correction manoeuvres that followed had been so accurate, less fuel than predicted was required and more is left in its tanks.

The deployment of the solar array was also able to happen ahead of schedule, Nasa said. The telescope was programmed to deploy them either when it reached a certain angle towards the Sun or after 33 minutes – and because the launch was so accurate, it was able to point the right way more quickly, opening about 29 minutes after launch.

Now that solar array is deployed, the telescope will move to deploy the other parts of the telescope, including the mirrors that will let it look deep into space. All of that should be done by the time it reaches its eventual orbit, which is expected to happen about a month after launch.

The remaining deployments are all human-controlled, Nasa noted, meaning that their timing or order could change.

WHO warns of 'very high' Omicron

FROM PAGE 12

The WHO said early data from Britain, South Africa, and Denmark – which currently has the world's highest rate of infection per person – suggested there was a reduced risk of hospitalisation for Omicron compared with Delta.

But it added that further data was needed to understand Omicron's severity.

And despite those studies, Omicron's rapid growth "will still result in large numbers of hospitalisations, particularly amongst unvaccinated groups, and cause widespread disruption to health systems and other critical services", warned WHO Europe's Covid Incident Manager Catherine Smallwood.

Europe was again one of the hotspots for the pandemic, which is known to have claimed more than 5.4 million lives around the world.

France, Britain, Greece and Portugal all reported record daily case numbers on Tuesday. France reported almost 180,000 infections over 24 hours.

To hold back the tide, many nations on the continent have brought back curbs with heavy economic and social consequences.

Contact restrictions were in place in Germany for the second year in a row heading into the New Year, as Europe's biggest economy shut nightclubs and forced sports competitions behind closed doors.

It also limited private gatherings to 10 vaccinated people – or two households where any unvaccinated people are present.

Finland on Tuesday said it would bar unvaccinated foreign travellers from entering.

Only residents, essential workers or diplomats will be exempt.

The Nordic country, like Sweden, had begun requiring negative tests for incoming non-resident travellers from Tuesday, a day after Denmark applied the same measure.

But the Belgian government's plans to introduce further restrictions were thwarted as a court suspended an order closing entertainment venues.

Prime Minister Alexander De Croo had announced the original measure on December 22 as Belgium saw a sharp increase in the percentage of tests showing the Omicron variant.

The Covid spikes around the world have caused severe disruptions to travel over the holidays, with thousands of flights cancelled worldwide.

They are also threatening sports events again.

England's top football league is grappling with record cases, while China has imposed strict lockdowns on millions of people to control the spread of the Delta variant ahead of the Beijing Winter Olympics.

Mexico City's mayor on Tuesday cancelled the capital's massive New Year's Eve celebrations as a preventative measure after a rise in Covid-19 cases.

The top American sports leagues have also been hit, as the United States battles a surge fuelled by Omicron, as well as large pockets of unvaccinated people and a lack of access to quick and easy testing.

The US Centers for Disease Control has halved the isolation period for asymptomatic cases to try and limit disruptions and mass labour shortages.

No turning back now

FROM PAGE 12

left no doubt that going beyond the 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 degrees Fahrenheit) heating limit envisioned in the Paris Agreement would push Earth into the red zone.

"As a lifelong optimist, I see the Glasgow outcome as half-full rather than half-empty," said Alden Meyer, a senior analyst at climate and energy think tank E3G.

"But the atmosphere responds to emissions – not COP decisions – and much work remains ahead to translate the strong rhetoric here into reality."

The past year also saw Part 1 of the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's (IPCC) first comprehensive synthesis of climate science in seven years.

It found that global heating is virtually certain to pass 1.5C, probably within a decade. Meanwhile, ocean levels are rising faster than anticipated, and will do so for centuries.

And forests, soil and oceans – which absorb more than half of humanity's carbon pollution – show signs of saturation.

Then there is the threat of "tipping points" that could see permafrost release massive amounts of CO2 and methane, the Amazon basin transformed into savannah, and ice sheets shedding enough mass to submerge cities and deltas home to hundreds of millions.

"Make no mistake, we are still on the road to hell," said Dave Reay, head of the University of Edinburgh's Climate Change Institute.

"But Glasgow has at least created an exit lane."

Part 2 of the IPCC report on climate impacts, seen exclusively by AFP ahead of its February 2022 publication, reveals another yawning gap between the baby steps of COP26 and what is needed in the long term.

LACK OF RAINFALL INCREASES PRODUCTION COST

No smile on sharecroppers' face despite expected yield

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Around 90,000 sharecroppers in Lalmonirhat and Kurigram districts are in a sombre mood despite having an expected yield of Aman paddy as lack of timely rainfall has increased their production cost, farmers said.

Abdur Hossain (55) is a sharecropper. He has no cultivable land except for his homestead of 10 decimal lands.

Abdur Hossain, who hails from Batrish Hazari village of Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, has been cultivating land as a sharecropper for the last 25 years. Like him, RajoniKanta Barman (48), Solaiman Sarkar (52) and Azizur Rahman (48) in the same village have been producing crops as sharecroppers.

This year they have got the desired yield of Aman paddy but they have had to incur loss due to soaring production costs, they said.

According to the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE), the number of families depending on agriculture in Lalmonirhat and Kurigram districts is about 2.5 lakhs. There are more than 90,000 sharecroppers in the two districts.

They have been cultivating the land as sharecroppers for many years.

Abdur Hossain said that he has been cultivating six bighas of land as a sharecropper for several years. According to the agreement, the land owner gets one-third of the crop and the sharecropper gets two-thirds. Sharecropper bears all the expenditure for producing the crop.

"We have got a good yield of Aman paddy this year but we are still in a loss. Due to lack of timely rain this year, we had to depend on underground water and it costs more than Tk 1800-Tk 2000 per bigha," said Abdur Hossain.

Azgar Ali, 53, a sharecropper from Gorokmandal area of Kurigram's Phulbari upazila, said, "I have been cultivating eight bighas of land taking from a local farmer but this year the production cost increased due to dearth of timely rain."

Manjurul Haque, deputy director of DAE in Kurigram, said that the sharecroppers have to work hard to make ends meet.

"Sharing of the crop is a personal agreement between the landowner and the sharecropper. We have nothing to do here," he said.



Dearth of timely rain has increased the production cost of Aman paddy in Lalmonirhat and Kurigram. Many sharecroppers have had to incur loss this year despite having desired yield. The photo was taken from Barish Hazari village of Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Girl confined, raped for a month

FROM PAGE 12

chloroform and abducted her from Amtali's Chowrasta area. They took her to an unknown location, kept her hostage and raped her there for one whole month.

The victim's father said, "The moment our daughter went missing, we lodged a general diary with Amtali police. On the afternoon of December 19, Jisan and his cohorts left her near our house in an unconscious state. We rescued her and took her to Amtali Upazila Health Complex, and then to Patuakhali Medical College Hospital, where she is still receiving treatment."

The girl's mother, who is the plaintiff in the case filed on Tuesday, said, "I want justice for my daughter."

Meanwhile in Kishoreganj's Katiadi upazila, an eighth grader killed herself on Saturday after some youths publicly harassed and threatened her.

The girl's mother filed a case with Katiadi Police Station on Monday, accusing Akash Mia, 25, as the prime accused, and his two friends Arman Mia, 19, and Emon Mia, 20. However, none of them has yet been

arrested.

Md Shahadat Hossain, OC of Katiadi Police Station, said Akash used to harass the minor girl often on her way to school. Her family had informed Akash's father about it, which enraged Akash.

On Saturday, the girl went to school to collect grade nine admission forms. On her way back, Akash confronted her and threatened that if she didn't get into a romantic relationship with him, she would have to face dire consequences.

He also warned her not to tell anyone about his threats, the OC said quoting the case statement.

She immediately called her mother, who came to the spot and took her home. Around 2:00pm, the girl died by suicide.

The news of the incident spread in the area the next day and sparked protests held by locals and her fellow students, who demanded the immediate arrest and exemplary punishment for the accused.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Kishoreganj General Hospital morgue for autopsy. Drives are on to arrest the accused, said the OC.

184 allegations, action zero

FROM PAGE 12

meeting today," he said, adding that the DSHE was also asked to ensure punishment commensurate with the offences.

The ACC secretary said if the government offices take primary actions against irregularities and anomalies, the corruption would be prevented to some extent.

"It will ease our burden and help the commission to focus on major corruption," he said.

Later, Golam Faruk told the reporters that they would comply with the ACC directives.

He claimed they failed to apprise the commission on time due to the pandemic.

A recent study of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) says there were instances where aspiring headteachers or assistant headteachers had to pay between Tk 3.5 lakh and Tk 15 lakh to get the appointments in schools.

Illegal transactions have also taken place for the transfer of teachers, their inclusion to the Monthly Pay Order (MPO) benefits, during schools' academic approval, school

inspections, and more, reads the study titled "Secondary education programme: Governance challenges and way out".

The study also found that while there was an online process for non-government teachers to apply for MPO benefits, they still "had to pay money" at four stages.

Many government school teachers and upazila education officers have been working at the same place for over 10 years using their influence and money.

Many officials of the Directorate of Inspection and Audit (DIA) are also working at the same station for as long as they have scope to "earn money" in those stations, though the corresponding provisions say a person cannot stay at the same station for more than three years.

Pointing out 39-points recommendations, in 2017, the ACC pointed out several scopes of corruption in the education ministry.

It suggested the ministry take initiatives to dispel different irregularities in the education ministry that include procurement, unnecessary visits abroad and expenditure in the name of training.

Taiwan crisis may worsen next year: China

REUTERS, Beijing

China will take "drastic measures" if Taiwan makes moves towards independence, a Beijing official warned yesterday, adding that Taiwan's provocations and outside meddling could intensify next year.

China claims democratically governed Taiwan as its own territory and in the past two years has stepped up military and diplomatic pressure to assert its sovereignty claim, fuelling anger in Taipei and concern in Washington.

China was willing to try its utmost to seek

peaceful reunification with Taiwan but would act if any red lines on independence were crossed, Ma Xiaoguang, spokesman of the Taiwan Affairs Office, told a media briefing.

"If separatist forces in Taiwan seeking independence provoke, exert force or even break through any red line, we will have to take drastic measures," Ma said.

Taiwan has emerged as a key factor in strained relations between China and the United States, the island's most important international backer and arms supplier despite the absence of formal diplomatic ties.

Violence in Gaza as Abbas visits Israel

REUTERS, Jerusalem

An Israeli was wounded in a shooting attack on the Gaza border yesterday, the military said, after a rare visit to Israel by Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas drew condemnation from the enclave's Hamas rulers.

The Israeli military said it responded to the shooting with tank fire, targeting Hamas posts in the northern Gaza Strip. Gaza health officials said three Palestinian farmers were wounded.

Israel's Defence Minister Benny Gantz hosted Abbas in his home late on Tuesday, the Western-backed Palestinian leader's first such visit to Israel in more than a decade, although it signalled few prospects for any resumption of long-stalled peace negotiations.

Following their talks, the Israeli Defence Ministry announced a series of what it described as "confidence-building measures" that would ease the entry of hundreds of Palestinian business people to Israel.

In Gaza, Hazem Qassem, a Hamas spokesman, said that by meeting Gantz, Abbas was "deepening Palestinian political divisions" and encouraging accommodation with "the occupation", a term the Islamist militant group uses to describe Israel.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the shooting attack from Gaza, which the Israeli military said slightly wounded the civilian. The border has been largely quiet since an 11-day war between Israel and Gaza militants in May.

Gantz, in his summation of the meeting on Twitter, made no mention of a peace process, stalled since 2014 after US-backed talks collapsed. Palestinians seek to establish a state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

"We discussed the implementation of economic and civilian measures, and emphasised the importance of deepening security coordination and preventing terror and violence - for the well-being of both Israelis and Palestinians," Gantz wrote.

In a move that could ease travel for thousands of Palestinians, the Defence Ministry said Gantz approved registration as West Bank residents for some 6,000 people who had been living in the territory, captured by Israel in a 1967 war, without official status.

Another 3,500 people from Gaza would also receive residency documentation, the ministry said.



This photo taken on Tuesday and released yesterday shows a man taking photo of ice sculptures at the Harbin Ice and Snow World in Harbin, in northeastern China's Heilongjiang province.

PHOTO: AFP

MORE NEWS

Russia court hits Memorial rights group with second ban

A Moscow court yesterday hit Russia's most prominent rights group, Memorial, with a second ban in as many days despite an international outcry. Judge Mikhail Kazakov ordered the dissolution of Memorial's Human Rights Centre, which campaigns against contemporary rights abuses in Russia, at the request of prosecutors. On Tuesday, the country's Supreme Court had ordered the dissolution of Memorial International, the group's central structure which chronicles Stalin-era purges and maintains the network's extensive archives in Moscow.

Former US Senate leader Harry Reid dies at 82

Former US Senate majority leader Harry Reid, a Nevada Democrat who rose from humble beginnings to lead the upper chamber during the presidencies of George W Bush and Barack Obama, died Tuesday. He was 82. Reid, who used his experience in Congress to help Obama steer his landmark Affordable Care Act through the Senate, had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in 2018. A prize-fighter in his youth, he used his pugilistic instincts to work his way up to becoming one of the longest-serving majority leaders in US Senate history.



South Africa's Tutu to lie in state for two days

The body of South Africa's revered anti-apartheid fighter Archbishop Desmond Tutu, who died at the weekend aged 90, will lie in state for two days ahead of his funeral on New Year's Day, his foundations said. The lying in state was initially scheduled to last just one day - Friday - but has been extended to Thursday "to accommodate more mourners," the Archbishop Tutu IP Trust and Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation said. Tutu's body will lie in St. George's Cathedral, in his former Cape Town parish. His body will be cremated after the funeral and his ashes then placed in the cathedral.

Rapid Covid tests not as accurate with Omicron: FDA

Rapid Covid home tests are more likely to give a false negative with the heavily-mutated Omicron variant compared to earlier strains, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) said Tuesday. In a statement, the FDA said it was collaborating with the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to study the performance of home tests, also known as "antigen" tests, against patient samples containing live versions of the Omicron variant. "Early data suggests that antigen tests do detect the Omicron variant but may have reduced sensitivity," the agency said.

US keeps carrier in the Med amid Russia tensions

The United States has ordered an aircraft carrier to remain in the Mediterranean in a bid to reassure European allies amid fears Russia will invade Ukraine, an official said Tuesday. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin ordered the USS Harry S Truman aircraft carrier strike group to stay in the region and hold off on its scheduled onward voyage to the Middle East. The move comes despite an agreement by the United States and Russia to hold talks on January 10 on Geneva on tensions including over Ukraine.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

PANDEMIC PROGNOSIS 2022

Where does it go from here?

AFP, Geneva

Two years in, as the now Omicron-fuelled Covid crisis rages, there is still hope the pandemic could begin fading in 2022 - though experts say gaping vaccine inequalities must be addressed.

It may seem like a far-off reality, as countries impose fresh restrictions to address the fast-spreading new variant and surging cases and a depressing feeling of déjà vu sets in.

"We're facing another very hard winter," World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said last week.

But health experts say we are far better equipped now than a year ago to tame the pandemic, with ballooning stocks of safe and largely effective vaccines and new treatments available.

"We have the tools that can bring (the pandemic) to its knees," Maria Van Kerkhove, the top WHO expert on the Covid crisis, told reporters this month.

"We have the power to end it in 2022," she insisted. But, she added, they must be used correctly.

A year after the first vaccines came to market, around 8.5 billion doses have been administered globally.

And the world is on track to produce around 24 billion doses by June - more than enough for everyone on the planet.

But glaringly unequal vaccine access has meant that as many wealthy nations roll out additional doses to the already vaccinated, vulnerable people and health workers in many poorer nations are still waiting for a first jab.

About 67 percent of people in high-income countries have had at least one vaccine dose, but not even 10 percent in low-income countries have, UN numbers show.

That imbalance, which the WHO has branded a moral outrage, risks deepening further as many countries rush to roll out additional doses to respond to Omicron.



Early data indicates that the heavily-mutated variant, which has made a lightning dash around the globe since it was first detected in southern Africa last month, is more resistant to vaccines than previous strains.

While boosters do seem to push protection levels back up, the priority must remain getting first doses to vulnerable people everywhere.

Allowing Covid to spread unabated in some places dramatically increases the chance of new, more dangerous variants emerging, experts warn.

So even as wealthy countries roll out third shots, the world is not safe until everyone has

some degree of immunity.

"No country can boost its way out of the pandemic," Tedros said last week. "Blanket booster programmes are likely to prolong the pandemic, rather than ending it."

The emergence of Omicron is evidence of that, WHO emergencies chief Michael Ryan told AFP. "The virus has taken the opportunity to evolve."

Ryan warns that if the world fails to address the imbalance in vaccine access, the worst could still lie ahead.

One nightmare scenario envisions the Covid pandemic left to rage out of control amid a steady barrage of new variants, even as a separate strain sparks a parallel pandemic.

Confusion and disinformation would shrink trust in authorities and science, as health systems collapse and political turmoil ensues.

But better global vaccine coverage could mean that Covid - though not likely to fully disappear - will become a largely controlled endemic disease, experts say.

But we're not yet there.

Experts caution against too much optimism around early indications that Omicron causes less severe disease than previous strains, pointing out that it is spreading so fast it could still overwhelm health systems.

That is a depressing prospect two years after the virus first surfaced in China.

Officially, nearly 5.5 million people have died worldwide, although the actual toll is likely several times higher. All vaccine hesitancy could increase that toll.

Indonesia to bring stranded Rohingya refugees to shore

AFP, Bireun

Indonesia yesterday said it will let dozens of Rohingya refugees come ashore after protests from locals and the international community over its plan to push them into Malaysian waters.

At least 100 mostly women and children aboard a stricken wooden vessel off Aceh province were denied refuge in Indonesia, where authorities on Tuesday said they planned to push them into the neighbouring Southeast Asian country after fixing their boat.

After a day-long meeting yesterday between officials in the coastal town of Bireun, Jakarta backtracked and said the refugees' boat would be towed to shore on humanitarian grounds.

"The decision was taken after considering the emergency condition of the refugees on that boat," said Armed Wijaya, head of the national taskforce on refugees.

The Rohingya boat is now about 50 miles (80 kilometres) from Bireun and would be pulled ashore, he said without elaborating on the timing.

"As it is now in the middle of the pandemic, all refugees will undergo medical screening," he said, adding that the taskforce will coordinate with related stakeholders to provide shelter and logistics for the refugees.

Indonesian authorities first spotted the wooden boat two days ago, stranded about 70 nautical miles off the Indonesian coast, according to a local navy commander. Local fishermen had alerted them on December 25, one of them said.

On Tuesday, Amnesty International and the UNHCR called on the government to let the stranded group of Rohingya refugees land.

The earlier plan by authorities in Aceh to send the refugees into Malaysia also angered locals in Bireun, where a group of fishermen on Wednesday organised a protest demanding authorities to instead allow the Rohingya to disembark.



Stand News acting chief editor Patrick Lam is being taken away by police after a raid in his office in Hong Kong, China, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

POLICE RAID ON PRO-DEMOCRACY MEDIA OUTLET IN HONG KONG

Stand News shuts down

REUTERS, Hong Kong

Hong Kong pro-democracy media outlet Stand News shut down yesterday after police raided its office, froze its assets and arrested senior staff on suspected "seditious publication" offences in the latest crackdown on the city's media.

The police action prompted censure from the Committee to Protect Journalists and the UN Human Rights Office in Geneva which said it was alarmed at the "extremely rapid closing of the civic space and outlets for Hong Kong's civil society to speak and express themselves freely".

Stand News, set up in 2014 as a non-profit organisation, was the most prominent remaining pro-democracy publication in Hong Kong after a national security investigation this year led to the closure of Apple Daily tabloid.

The raid raises more concerns about press freedom in the former British colony, which returned to Chinese rule in 1997 with the

promise that a wide range of individual rights would be protected.

"Stand News is now stopping operations," the publication said on Facebook, adding all employees had been dismissed.

Police said 200 officers searched the Stand News office and three men and four women, aged 34-73, were arrested on suspicion of "conspiracy to publish seditious publications".

Steve Li, head of the police national security department, said police seized assets worth HK\$61 million (\$7.82 million) as well as computers, phones and journalistic materials, and that he did not rule out further arrests.

Police did not identify them but media said four former members of the Stand News board were arrested - former democratic legislator Margaret Ng, pop singer Denise Ho, Chow Tat-chi and Christine Fang - as well as former chief editor Chung Pui-kuen and acting chief editor Patrick Lam.

উত্তরা-মতিঝিল

১৫৬ তম

সোনারগাঁও জনপথ রোড শাখা
সোনারগাঁও জনপথ রোড
উত্তরা, ঢাকা

এবার যাত্রা
পরিকল্পিত নগরী উত্তরায়

গ্রাহক সন্তুষ্টি নিশ্চিত করার লক্ষ্যে আধুনিক ব্যাংকিং সেবা নিয়ে আজ ৩০ ডিসেম্বর ২০২১, বৃহস্পতিবার
যমুনা ব্যাংক লিমিটেড এর ১৫৬ তম শাখা যাত্রা শুরু করছে ঢাকার উত্তরায়।

দেশের আর্থ সামাজিক উন্নয়নে এবং যেকোন ব্যাংকিং প্রয়োজনে আমরা আছি আপনারদের পাশে।

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BOOK REVIEW: NONFICTION

Is economics passé?

On Wahiduddin Mahmud's new book, 'Markets, Morals and Development'

MUNIR QUDDUS

As the world nears the second quarter of the 21st century, some of the nagging questions we still face in the world of socio-economic development are: will the influence of economists increase or wane? Will economics be successful in eradicating extreme poverty, or will we continue to live with extreme inequities in the distribution of income and wealth, unhinged consumption, and rapid depletion of Earth's meager resources, nearing the edge of social, political and environmental catastrophe? These are big questions, which should concern all economists and world leaders, and the answers depend a great deal on economists themselves.

One of Bangladesh's most prominent economic thinkers, Professor Wahiduddin Mahmud, has resolved to do so in his book, *Markets, Morals and Development: Rethinking Economics from a Developing Country Perspective* (Routledge, 2021). In less than 100 pages and over six fascinating chapters, Mahmud asks and provides answers to a number of complex questions which confront humanity today, especially the residents of the "less developed" or developing nations.

Professor Mahmud, who studied Economics at Dhaka University, earned top honors in his undergraduate and graduate degrees. He then went to Cambridge, England, to pursue a PhD in Economics and upon returning, joined Dhaka University as a professor. Besides publishing a myriad of articles and books on a wide range of topics, Mahmud has taught as a guest professor in a number of esteemed institutions, including Cambridge, and has conducted research in a few global institutions, including the World Bank and IFPRI. In 1996 he published *The Theory and Practice of Microcredit* (Routledge), co-authored with SR Osmani.

In this new book, which is short but densely argued, Professor Mahmud makes a number of important points. First, he recognises that modern economics, developed primarily in American and British universities, has attracted criticism for the perceived failures of capitalism and free-market across the world—persistent poverty and growing inequality in income and wealth rampant between the North and the South. Second, pointing to the issue of unprincipled consumption, especially in developed countries that endanger Mother Earth, he demonstrates society's utter disregard for the environment, ethics, and morality.

Modern economic theory—developed in the West—the writer believes, has much to gain and nothing to lose by focusing on the problems of developing nations, where millions of poor reside and have yet to enjoy the fruits of modern civilization; this, he posits, is a win-win proposition. A focus on development economics will yield results that will benefit economic theory and practice and help improve the welfare of the citizens in resource-poor countries. He illustrates a few examples of how ideas developed in the context of problems faced by least developed countries (LDCs) have, in fact, enriched theory and policy in mainstream economics. He mentions the work of Joseph



DESIGN: MAISHA SYEDA

Stiglitz and George Akerlof, both Nobel laureates of 2001, along with Michael Spence, whose work was informed by rural credit markets in South Asia, and the market for milk in Delhi—problems one can find in all developing economies.

The reason behind his optimism, he points out, is that economists have developed a set of analytical tools over centuries that can be wielded to solve developed nations' problems, especially in developing countries. For example, the concepts of opportunity cost, sunk cost, or comparative (vs absolute) advantage are not just clever intellectual gimmicks but powerful concepts which can lead to clear-eyed and often unexpected findings and solutions to real-world problems.

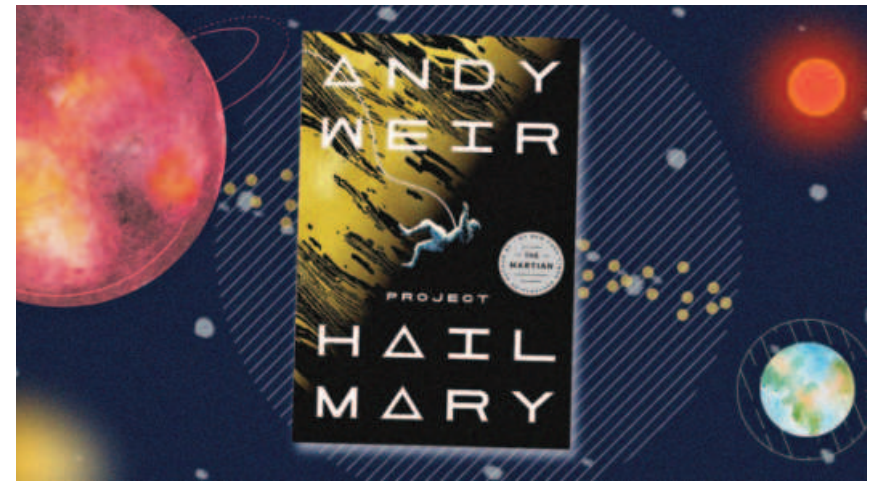
In chapter five of his book, "Amartya Sen's ideas and the Bangladesh Story", Mahmud reviews and focuses on a fraction of Sen's writings which deal with human development and social inequalities, including the concept of freedom and public reasoning. Mahmud writes to understand the application of these concepts to achievements and challenges Bangladesh has faced in its 50-year long journey. Sen has written influential books on subjects such as famines and the measurement of poverty, making foundational contributions. These are all highly relevant issues with many moral dimensions. The writer highlights that Sen is among the few economists who have effortlessly straddled

the divide between the problems faced by the developing economies and those faced by policymakers in high-income wealthy nations.

Mahmud also addresses the question of social business (SB)—a term reportedly coined by his colleague, Professor Mohammed Yunus, to describe a mission-driven organization, which is a business, but one that does not only focus on profits, ignoring human welfare. The writer draws attention to the idea that to exist and perpetuate to serve humanity is business-like in ensuring that all of its fixed and operational costs are fully covered, leaving a surplus, which is, however, reinvested instead of enriching the initial investors and shareholders.

As Bangladesh celebrates its semi centennial anniversary in 2021, this book by Professor Wahid Mahmud is a reminder that the flow of ideas from the West to the East can be reversed. Intellectuals and practitioners in the East are already contributing new ideas to improve disciplines such as economics, especially through the study and practice of economic development. Practices such as micro-finance, or micro-lending, were born and perfected in a resource-poor nation like Bangladesh, but are today practiced across the world.

Munir Quddus, PhD, is a professor of economics and dean, College of Business at Prairie View A&M University. He can be reached at muquddus@pvamu.edu.



DESIGN: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

BOOK REVIEW: FICTION

Humanity's hail mary to save itself

MD TAWSIF MOSTAFIZ

Earth is doomed. A mysterious microorganism called Astrophage is eating away the sun's energy. If you are concerned about the planet getting warmer, fear not! The sun is getting colder and colder, and if this keeps on happening, everyone on earth is going to freeze to death soon. To keep humanity alive, the best minds of planet Earth come together to save the sun. They find out that about 12 light years away, another star named Tau Ceti has come together to save the sun. They find out that about 12 light years away, another star named Tau Ceti has come together to save the sun. They find out that about 12 light years away, another star named Tau Ceti has come together to save the sun.

The bestselling author of *The Martian* (2011), Andy Weir, in his latest science fiction, *Project Hail Mary* (Ballantine Books, 2021), follows the story of Ryland Grace, a high school science teacher, who is the last hope for humanity's survival. Waking up after a long slumber in the spaceship named Hail Mary, and finding himself strapped to his bed, Grace has no recollection of how he got there. In front of him, he finds two others in the same predicament, only they are both dead.

In the beginning of the story, as a reader, you find yourself as clueless as Grace, hurtling towards space. But as it progresses, Grace's memory starts to come back in fragments. He discovers soon enough that he is Earth's lone surviving champion to defend it against the sinister parasite, and should he fail in his mission, the end is nigh.

Soon it becomes evident that Grace isn't the only one burdened with this herculean task; he meets an extraterrestrial being from another planet whose sun is infected by the same disease. The being, however, who Grace calls Rocky, isn't the typical alien you see in movies, with conveniently human-

like limbs or eyes and ears. Rocky sees, and even breathes, differently—and it demonstrates Weir's brilliance in imagining alien life in such a novel and fresh way. The two characters find an unexpected ally in one another; both Grace and Rocky are brilliant, witty, and brave in the face of danger. Their camaraderie is undoubtedly what keeps the readers engrossed.

Andy Weir loves science, and it is evident in his trademark writing style. He explains the science behind each of the characters' courses of action in a way that understanding it feels rewarding. It can, however, feel tedious at times. At the height of the story, the focus tends to shift towards explaining scientific logic rather than the storytelling itself. In some instances the explanations come across as flawed, especially the reason why Ryland Grace, a high school teacher, is one of the chosen ones to save the planet instead of it being a more competent scientist.

Project Hail Mary is a book about the impending death of stars, and the looming threat of oblivion for civilizations. It tells the story of saving planets, and the most unlikely friendships and sacrifices. But despite what the synopsis suggests, it is not a sad story, far from it; Weir knows perfectly well how to lighten the mood. Even in the bleakest moments he manages to salvage some laughs out of a situation and in this regard, Rocky, the alien, steals the show. Weir makes you root for a lifeline that could not be more different than ours. And that is what makes the story so compelling.

MD Tawsif Mostafiz is currently studying EEE in IUT. In his pastimes, he regrets his life decisions and often wonders what he could do with second chances. You can find him at tawsifmostafiz6@gmail.com

THE SHELF

DS Books' favourite reads of the year

STAR BOOKS REPORT



DESIGN: MAISHA SYEDA

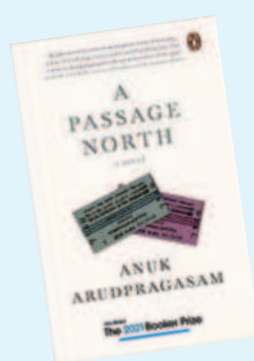
STAR BOOK TALK

What The Daily Star read this year

STAR BOOKS DESK

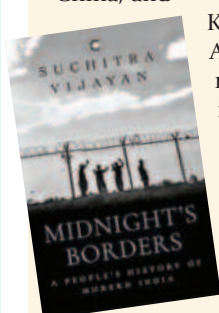
As we near the year's end, the Star Books Team asks the different sections of The Daily Star about the most interesting books that they would recommend to their readers this year.

To watch the video, keep an eye on Daily Star Books' Facebook and Instagram pages!



A PASSAGE NORTH
Anuk Arudpragasam (*Hamish Hamilton*)
Sri Lankan author, Anuk Arudpragasam's Booker-shortlisted second novel, travels through the haunted landscapes of Sri Lanka. The protagonist, Krishan, charts a journey from Colombo to the northern regions surrounding Jaffna, and along the way, he reckons with the trauma and physical remnants left behind by Sri Lanka's civil war, dovetailing into larger philosophical questions of accountability, privilege, trauma, and memory.

MIDNIGHT'S BORDERS
Suchitra Vijayan (*Eka, Westland Publications*)
Author and photographer Suchitra Vijayan, who formerly served on the United Nations war crimes tribunals, travels the 9,000 miles of India's borders to understand how Partition continues to impact individual lives and communities in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Myanmar, Afghanistan, China, and



remnants of the Partition include copious amounts of violence, displacement, prejudice, and trauma among those who live in these border regions.

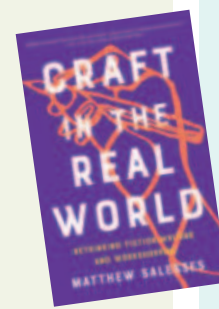
Kashmir. As her reportage informs us, the present-day

WHEN THE MANGO TREE BLOSSOMED
Ed. Niaz Zaman (*Nymphaea Publications*)
Curating short stories old and new, written in Bangla and translated to English, academic, writer, and translator Dr Niaz Zaman curates 50 short stories that reflect the changing landscape of literature in



Bangladesh. In an effort to offer a "clear picture of Bangladesh" that focuses on yet transcends the scope of the Liberation War, Dr Zaman includes stories by some of the most prolific Bangladeshi writers, from Syed Shamsul Haq, Hasan Azizul Huq, Syed Manzoorul Islam, and Selina Hossain to Shaheen Akhar, Razia Sultana Khan, Afsan Chowdhury, and more.

CRAFT IN THE REAL WORLD
Matthew Salesses (*Catapult Books*)
Matthew Salesses is a Korean-born American writer who teaches English and creative writing in the United States. In his latest work of nonfiction, he unpacks the often racist prejudices that shape the creative writing workshop model, as well as the way fiction is written and perceived. In *Craft in the Real World*, he pushes readers to challenge these stereotypes and widen the definitions of craft terms like plot, characters, and audience beyond those perpetuated by Western ideology, rethink their expectations from literature, and incorporate these things into the writing and teaching of creative writing.



WHEREABOUTS
Jhumpa Lahiri (*Penguin India*)
Jhumpa Lahiri's latest novel is an experiment with one of the most crucial elements of any writing—space. Stripped of names—of places, characters, or relationships—*Whereabouts* follows the journey of a woman as she navigates the different spaces of her life, from her own mind to the classroom where she teaches, the museums, bookstores, and streets where she interacts with humanity, and the haven of her own apartment. Her monologues are airy yet rich with observation, and one steps out of them having learned a great deal about how to navigate life itself.



Rackets abound in Teknaf Land Port

It has become a concern for our national security

PORTS are gateways through which import and export goods reach customers to help businesses run smoothly. Hence, it is of utmost importance that these entry and exit points remain functional and free of corruption of any kind. The Teknaf Land Port is one such gateway that has drawn the attention of the law enforcing authorities and the media for all the wrong reasons.

Bangladesh's trade with Myanmar is conducted through this land port but investigations reveal there is hardly any record of confiscation of drugs, especially Yaba, that enters Bangladesh in large volumes on a regular basis. There are also no reported cases of arrests for tax evasion through false declaration of goods. An investigative report on the activities in and around the land port was published in this daily on Wednesday, which threw much light on the real picture there. It has been reported that there are gangs that have been forging import-export and other relevant documents for years and helping clients to evade taxes. This important port operates with a poor scanning system and has no dependable security apparatus to check the smuggling of illegal and contraband items like drugs, etc.

Evidently, over the years, the port has turned into a safe haven for some corrupt officials, their henchmen and unscrupulous traders. In the absence of an automatic scanner machine, customs officials only check about two percent of the cargo through a random sampling method, which is not enough to detect illegal goods inside any import consignment.

It is alarming to learn that cargo boats from Myanmar enter the port without having to undergo rigorous checks by the customs authority. Myanmar nationals coming with the boats as staff members roam freely in the markets nearby. Similarly, local traders, clearing and forwarding agents and port workers also walk right into the boats unrestricted. What causes observers to wonder aloud is the fact that no Yaba consignment has so far been seized at Teknaf Land Port, which is believed to be the major route for its smuggling into Bangladesh.

It is good news that some corrupt employees have been identified by the law enforcing authorities and a ringleader named Nurul Islam, a computer operator, was arrested in September. Investigations conducted by the Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) revealed that the ring leader masterminded smuggling of Yaba and forging of documents for the last many years. The ringleader has allegedly made a fortune of about Tk 460 crore.

It appears to us that from both the smuggling of contraband items point of view and national security point of view, Teknaf Land Port is extremely vulnerable. It deserves to be manned and protected by a more competent and honest contingent of customs officials and security personnel.

World must heed WHO's warning about Omicron

Bangladesh should also prepare its healthcare system for any case surges

As many countries around the world have been experiencing fresh surges in Covid-19 cases—propelled by the highly transmissible Omicron variant—and have brought back restrictions to curb further spread of the infections, Bangladesh should also take necessary preparations to deal with any fresh surge of infections. Reportedly, the WHO has warned the world about the threat Omicron poses, saying that it may lead to overwhelmed healthcare systems worldwide.

Even though early studies suggest that Omicron leads to milder disease, China and Germany have already brought back tough restrictions to prevent new infections caused by this variant. Reportedly, China has been following a “zero Covid” strategy—the country has already put hundreds of thousands of its people under strict lockdown despite the fact that the country is facing a much smaller outbreak compared to many European countries. While France has ordered firms to have employees work from home at least three days a week, other European nations such as Sweden, Finland, Denmark have also brought back fresh curbs despite the fact that these may put their economy in further stress.

At a time when nations around the world are working hard for economic recovery and trying to strike a balance between economically punishing restrictions and controlling the spread of the virus, such fresh surges in Covid-19 cases are truly concerning. And as countries with weaker healthcare systems are particularly vulnerable to this new threat, Bangladesh must take WHO's warning seriously.

While we must not panic about this new variant, we should definitely be well prepared to fight against it. Already seven cases of Omicron have been detected in the country; if we fail to take the precautionary measures in time, the situation might get worse in a short span of time.

Since vaccination is one of the ways to stop the virus from wreaking havoc on our population, the authorities must put all-out efforts to vaccinate as many people as possible in the shortest possible time. The government has already started giving booster shots to those most vulnerable to the virus. While we commend the initiative, we would also like to stress the need for preparing our healthcare system to handle any further surge in infections. Preparing our hospitals and health complexes with the lifesaving drugs, oxygen cylinders and other necessary equipment must be prioritised right now.

Moreover, as countries around the world are putting restrictions on travel and gatherings, authorities in Bangladesh must also consider taking such measures as part of their preparations to deal with the situation.

DECEMBER SURPRISES

Bangladesh's risky passage through the 'digital iron curtain'



MOSTOFA SARWAR

Bangladesh from the “The Summit for Democracy,” an event initiated and hosted by the US from December 9 through 10, which welcomed 111 countries, including India, Nepal, and Pakistan from South Asia.

Second, on December 10, the US announced punitive actions against six current or former ranking officers of Bangladesh's Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), including Benazir Ahmed, the Inspector General of Police (IGP) and the highest-ranking law enforcement officer of Bangladesh. Financial sanctions and travel bans were imposed on RAB officers by two executive departments of the US federal government, citing the violation of human rights, extra-judicial torture, and the killing of prisoners under RAB's

THE United States of America took three ominous actions related to Bangladesh in the 11-day period between December 11 and December 20.

First, the US excluded

information leading to the arrests of two fugitive convicts, Major (sacked) Syed Ziaul Haque and Akram Hussain of Ansar Al-Islam Bangla Team—reportedly an offshoot of Al-Qaeda. Both convicts received death sentences by a Bangladeshi judge on February 16, 2021, in the murder case of Dr Avijit Roy, a US citizen, who was a famed writer and blogger. The murder happened six years earlier, on February 26, 2015, near the Dhaka University campus while Avijit was visiting Bangladesh. Out of the six defendants, five received the death penalty and one received a life sentence in prison.

It is clear from the RFJ's announcement that the US has reservations about Bangladesh's handling of this case. On one hand, it implicitly suggests some acceptance of the investigative and judicial processes of Bangladesh by explaining that “six individuals were convicted in a Bangladeshi court and sentenced for their role in the attack.” On the other hand, it includes a sentence asking witnesses to contact the US Department of State directly with information regarding the fugitives and anyone else involved in the attack: “If you have information about Haque, Hussain, or anyone else involved in the attack, text your information to us.”

who are resident citizens of Bangladesh, and without Bangladesh's cooperation. That cooperation may not be given enthusiastically: from public statements of Bangladeshi Foreign and Home ministers, it appears that they were not consulted and are upset about the US's unilateral announcement, issued nearly ten months after the verdict.

The obvious question arises: Is the US unhappy for some reason? Why is

Why is Bangladesh included in a group with North Korea, Russia, and China? Bangladesh is neither a hostile military rival to the US, nor a geopolitical economic rival.



It is the US's concern that if Huawei equipment and designs are used in the US, China can spy on everything that uses Huawei technology. PHOTO: REUTERS

custody. These same officers played a vital role in suppressing and crushing Islamic fundamentalist terrorist organisations that the US has declared as enemy combatants. Indeed, for its work, the RAB has garnered widespread accolades, including in a phone call between Antony J. Blinken, US Secretary of State, and the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, just two days after these officers were censured.

Third, on December 20, the US State Department's Rewards for Justice (RFJ) programme announced a USD 5 million reward for anyone who could provide

In other words, the US State Department is not only interested in information about the fugitives—it is interested in information about any possible others involved, and it is interested in receiving this information through its own channels, independent of any authority in Bangladesh. Although the US potentially has the jurisdictional right to prosecute this case under legal precepts like the passive personality principle, it would be very difficult—and possibly impossible—to meaningfully try this case in a US court without subpoena powers over witnesses

Bangladesh included in a group with North Korea, Russia, and China? Bangladesh is neither a hostile military rival to the US, nor a geopolitical economic rival. And while concerns about human rights violations may certainly invite harsh scrutiny, the US seems to be ignoring such concerns regarding other countries.

Perhaps we should instead look to the world's emerging “digital iron curtain” for answers. Over the last two decades, there has been intense competition between the US and China in attempts to achieve domination over the digital technology space. In this race, it appears that China, in some areas, runs ahead of the US—at least for now. But the countries are mutually dependent on one frontier: 5G, which is used for advanced telecommunications. The US is superior in computer chip manufacturing and China is ahead in 5G device design and equipment. There are also other small players in parts-making.

China has been alleged to steal intellectual property related to digital technology from Western countries and to engage in digital espionage. Meng Wanzhou—the chief financial officer of Huawei (the Chinese telecommunications giant) and the daughter of Chinese billionaire Ren Wanzhou, founder of Huawei—was arrested and detained by Canada on December 1, 2018, on a charge of fraud and conspiracy filed by the US for circumventing US sanctions against Iran. She was freed from house arrest, conditionally, on September 24, 2021.

COP26 agreed rules on trading carbon emissions, but they're fatally flawed



MATTHEW PATERSON

would allow countries to trade the right to emit greenhouse gases.

Carbon trading is part of how countries intend to meet their obligations for reducing emissions under the Paris Agreement. Unfortunately, the manner in which countries agreed these rules may hobble the Agreement in its goal of averting catastrophic warming.

Carbon markets were central to the design of the Paris Agreement's predecessor, the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which created three different mechanisms for trading carbon. Developing countries had become accustomed to attracting investment via one called the “Clean Development Mechanism” (CDM) which allowed industrialised countries to invest in projects to reduce emissions in developing countries and count them against their own targets under the Kyoto Protocol. Many industrialised countries wanted to retain this sort of flexibility in how they met their own treaty obligations.

As a result, most governments were keen to keep carbon markets as part of the Paris Agreement. In Paris in 2015, the bare bones of mechanisms similar to those in the Kyoto Protocol were agreed, but without the details needed to put them into practice. Why then did it take six years to agree the rules which would govern these markets? This was more than the four years it took countries to do the same in the Kyoto Protocol and, in effect, they were recreating the same mechanisms. The problems in reaching an agreement this time were three-fold, and they weren't satisfactorily resolved in Glasgow.

Going backwards from Kyoto Various states, and many environmental

campaign groups, suspect that carbon markets weaken the overall effort to reduce emissions. As climate change has accelerated over the past decade these concerns have become more acute. Why trade emissions if everyone is trying to get them to zero? There is considerable evidence that carbon offset projects—such as wind farms, which emissions trading can fund—have failed to deliver a reduction in overall emissions. A 2017

their nationally determined contributions (NDCs)—national plans for reducing emissions. They may or may not have an emissions target and they vary in how they account for emissions or which sources of emissions they include in their plans.

How can a market function if there is no clear way of measuring what is being traded? And how should a country trading with another adjust its own NDC to avoid double-counting, when the design of each



Smoke billows from the chimneys of Belchatow Power Station, Europe's biggest coal-fired power plant. PHOTO: REUTERS

study led by the EU Commission found that 85 percent of projects funded by the CDM hadn't reduced emissions.

There are also fundamental design issues in the Paris Agreement that make setting up carbon markets under it much more difficult. The Kyoto Protocol expressed the obligations of industrialised states to reduce their emissions as targets. These could be translated into a fixed number of emissions allowances that provided carbon markets with a clear set of accounting rules and indicators of market demand.

No such set of rules exists in the Paris Agreement. Instead, all states submit

country's NDC varies so much? And what should countries do with all the credits created in the Kyoto Protocol's system? Should they just be rolled over to be used in the new markets? Should they be simply abandoned? Or is there some way of allowing them in but controlling their use? A lot of CDM credits in particular remain, and they could flood the new markets and undermine the integrity of the NDCs.

A cop out

In the first week of COP26, it looked like these issues would continue to dog the negotiations. India supported unrestricted use of CDM credits in the new mechanism while the Solomon Islands (representing

It is the US's concern that if Huawei equipment and designs are used in the US, China can spy on everything that uses Huawei technology. And, according to the US, if China wants, it can sabotage and devastate the entire Western world's power grid, telecommunications, internet, computers, transportation, and anything that uses Huawei's 5G technology. Huawei's business reputation has tempted the US's allies to sign contracts with Huawei. However, under the US's tremendous pressure, Huawei's 5G technology was banned by the United Kingdom, Japan, the Netherlands, and Australia. Canada, Germany, and New Zealand are considering following suit. The list of countries participating in the ban is fluid. Justin Trudeau, the Canadian Prime Minister, expressed his concern on December 25 that China has been acting as an angel to split the Western alliance. This conflict is not going away anytime soon. It may split the world into two camps divided by a “digital iron curtain”.

On December 12, Bangladesh's TeleTalk, according to an agreement signed previously with Huawei, installed 5G infrastructure, with the hope of pushing Bangladesh to the leading edge of the digital revolution. But in the emerging Digital Cold War, Bangladesh's alignment with the Chinese tech giant may make the US unhappy.

The US and its allies are also concerned about the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), led and initiated by China, that attracted support from 139 countries, including Bangladesh. The BRI includes New Silk Road and Marine Silk Road initiatives that would encompass most of the globe. Moreover, there are problems in the South China Sea and the Straits of Taiwan where contentious activities and military exercises are brewing. On the top of that, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue between the US, Japan, India, and Australia—dubbed as the “Great Game” in Asia and “Asian NATO” by China—together with accompanying military exercises named “Exercise Malabar,” are bones of contention for China.

The US's punitive actions against Bangladesh—these December surprises—may be related to Bangladesh's growing relationship with China, and particularly its acceptance of Huawei's 5G technology. This is a very complex geopolitical situation that Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has to navigate carefully, like Odysseus sailing between Scylla and Charybdis. A thorough analysis of risks and rewards and a reimagining of Bangladesh's foreign policy are needed at this juncture.

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A 2017 study led by the EU Commission found that 85 percent of projects funded by the CDM hadn't reduced emissions.

the Least Developed Countries group) opposed using them at all. In week two, these issues were either fudged or hastily agreed. The carbon traders were happy, as were the managers of the COP26 process—the UN secretariat and the UK government. We can now see the cost of failing to grapple with these thorny issues.

The Glasgow decisions on both Article 6.2 and 6.4 of the Paris Agreement are extraordinarily unclear compared with the equivalent ones for the Kyoto Protocol. Specialists in this field are still decoding precisely what they mean in practical terms. It's likely that states will be able to use this opacity to double-count and claim credit for the same emissions-reducing activities.

Countries are supposed to set new NDCs regularly. At the same time, countries will be negotiating individual emission trades. The possibility for a country to game its NDC—making it appear more ambitious than it really is by counting already agreed trades within them—is impossible to avoid. It's hard to see how this doesn't fundamentally weaken the ambition of countries when updating their NDCs.

Monitoring how these mechanisms work in practice and whether they have the desired effect will be important over the coming years. While heralded at the time as a breakthrough in implementing significant tracts of the Paris Agreement, the Glasgow pact on carbon markets might instead be remembered as its undoing.

Matthew Paterson is Professor of International Politics, University of Manchester. Copyright: Inter Press Service

The Bangladesh story



BANGLADESH is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Once called a "basket case" by Henry Kissinger, it is now considered as a role model. Bangladesh's national income has multiplied 50 times, per capita income 25 times

(higher than India's and Pakistan's), and food production four times. Population growth was contained at 2.5 times, raising per capita food availability. Exports have grown 100 times and poverty is down to 20 percent from 60 percent in 1990. Life expectancy has risen to 72. Most social indicators are better compared to regional countries, except Sri Lanka. The value of the Human Development Index increased 60 percent.

Most of this progress has been achieved in the last three decades as the first two experienced anaemic growth and political turmoil. To put their progress in perspective, Pakistan's per capita income in 1990 was twice as much as Bangladesh's but has fallen today to only seven-tenth. Between 2011 and 2019, before Covid struck, Bangladesh's average GDP growth ranged between 7 percent and 8 percent—almost twice as fast as Pakistan's.

The Bangladesh story is an attractive one. How can a country so vulnerable to natural calamities outperform its much larger, better-endowed neighbours—India and Pakistan—in most socioeconomic indicators?

Bangladesh went through difficult times, setting up a new administration, rehabilitating displaced persons, dealing with the assassination of its founder and top political leadership, and several aborted and successful military coups. The military remained in power until 1991 when General Ershad decided to restore parliamentary democracy (there was a brief interruption in 2007 when a caretaker government ruled for two years).

The two major political parties, Sheikh Hasina's Awami League and Khaleda Zia's BNP, have alternated in power since 1991. Since 2009, the Awami League has ruled, having won three consecutive elections. The Battle of the two parties has remained intense

and bitter. Khaleda Zia boycotted the elections and has remained in jail for quite some time, along with many of her party stalwarts. Hence, it is interesting to examine how the country could make substantial economic and social headway with such fierce political rivalry and perceived instability.

First, unlike India and Pakistan, Bangladesh is culturally homogenous with the same language, ethnicity and a shared history and practically no religious, sectarian, tribal and feudal divisions. There is a rural-urban divide

execution capabilities and holding bureaucrats accountable.

Third, women empowerment prevailed even before 1971 but the continued campaign for family planning, female education, health services and microcredit at all levels was carried out vigorously by successive governments, with the active involvement of NGOs. BRAC, Grameen, ASA, etc. have played a pivotal role in spreading education and health facilities and providing women access to microcredit. Aware of its own

abrupt dislocation that could adversely affect investor and market sentiment, allowing investors to pursue their plans uninterrupted, leading to economic gains over time.

Fifth, Bangladesh's efforts to liberalise trade, open its economy, bring in foreign technical know-how and provide generous cash and non-cash incentives to exporters have borne fruit. The spectacular performance, just behind China's, of readymade garment exports have brought beneficial second order effects. Most global brands have

Bangladesh's efforts to liberalise trade, open its economy, bring in foreign technical know-how and provide generous cash and non-cash incentives to exporters have borne fruit.



Bangladesh's unitary form of government has conferred full control of administrative, political, legal and financial powers upon the central government, minimising the frictions inherent in multi-tier government structures.

PHOTO: SAZZAD IBNE SAYED

but rapid development has ensured that the level of general dissatisfaction is low. The pursuit of doing better has become a strong societal ethos. Bangladesh also doesn't face any serious external threats.

Second, the unitary form of government, without the intervening tiers of state and provinces, has conferred full control of administrative, political, legal and financial powers upon the central government, minimising the frictions inherent in multi-tier government structures. Policy and its execution follow a well-defined chain of command. Given a weak opposition and strong leadership at the top (sometimes criticised as quasi or semi-authoritarian), the winning party calls the shots, reinforcing

shortcomings, the government has extended full support to civil society organisations and allowed NGOs to operate freely. Educated, healthy women with fewer and well-spaced children and with access to financial resources has raised female labour participation rates and reduced the gender gap, while the female primary enrolment ratio is 105 percent.

Fourth, despite bitter political rivalries, there has been a continuity in economic policies, projects and programmes. The parties did not deviate from the basic anchors—macroeconomic stability, fiscal prudence, openness to trade, incentivising the private sector and commitment to social development. Policy irreversibility has shown that a change of government would have no

outsourced their production to export houses in Bangladesh. Female employment in the industry has enhanced women's social status and power relations within the family. Entrepreneurship has entered the lexicon of aspiring young people. Outward orientation has improved work practices. Demand for higher education and skills is rising.

Sixth, sustained high growth was made possible only when both domestic savings and investment rates doubled from 15 percent to 30 percent. Given this huge infusion of private capital into the production sectors and public expenditure into infrastructure, with higher schooling of the labour force, the gains from accelerated growth were broad-based. The rising aggregate demand also spilled over

into higher imports but these were financed by expanding exports and remittances and therefore the current account deficit remained manageable.

The lessons we can learn are many. The leadership was convinced that, rather than confining patronage to a narrow elite class, maximising long-term growth generated greater political dividends. Elections were contested on the basis of performance, popularity and the parties' record rather than a candidate's personal standing. A symbiotic relationship between the private sector, politicians and bureaucrats brought about a stable equilibrium. Politicians received money from businesses for their election campaigns, bureaucrats supplemented their low salaries with gifts and payoffs while businessmen expanded their businesses at the expense of labour and the environment. But they did not take the money abroad.

Tax-to-GDP ratio has remained 8 percent to 9 percent. The underlying philosophy seems to be that the multiplier effect of a marginal dollar in the hands of a private businessman is higher than that in the public sector. Consequently, the government has to exercise prudence in fiscal management. The deficits remained a low 5 percent and thus public debt ratios declined due to primary surpluses. Macroeconomic stability, policy continuity, export promotion, investment in human capital (particularly females) and public and private sectors working together are the ingredients of this success story.

Dr Ishrat Husain is former governor, State Bank of Pakistan and advisor until recently to Prime Minister Imran Khan, Pakistan. He retired as a director of the World Bank. This article was originally published in the Pakistani newspaper, DAWN, on December 16.

Those disfigured public figures



"SOME cause happiness wherever they go; others, whenever they go." Oscar Wilde reminded us of this universal

truth with these witty words, which are timeless and wholesome at the same time. The message is clear, obnoxious persons cannot bring happiness to a congregation of decent people. Such characters pollute the environment around them with their eccentric body movements and repulsive and lewd language. The air around them turns acidic, breathing which decent people choke with fatal consequences. The beleaguered audience waits for such pests to leave the room and be gone. Once they are gone, the collective sigh of relief actually says, "good riddance to bad rubbish". Bye bye. Sayonara.

Mark Twain has the right words to define such a person: "Few things are more irritating than when someone who is wrong is also very effective in making his point." We have seen many such "someone" in this country in our lifetime.

Some people, as described above, do not know when to grow up and act their age. Given a podium they would go on and on to irk the audience with their juvenile idiosyncrasies. One will find such toxic people everywhere, in every profession, but to find one in a teacher or a physician is like going overboard. Imagine a physician with a putrid anatomy, and a foul tongue, attending your sick child! You would want to leave his chamber at the first opportunity.

Well, when such noxious people join politics and suddenly finds great power in their hands, they may turn devilishly disoriented. Such men may become a threat to the mental health of the entire nation. When they keep galloping wildly like an unbridled horse, the party top brasses will have to remain cautious lest they cause irreparable damage to the country's body politic.

History is replete with stories of hyper idiotic people damaging their nation as well as their own selves by misusing power bestowed on them by the voters. These public figures, who are supposed to serve the people of the republic, take power too seriously and start to treat the people like their subjects, just like Hiralak Raja. They suppress and repress the people for as long as they can, without ever thinking of the consequences. At the end, the statue of Hiralak Raja finally falls to the ground and is dismantled into many pieces. Similarly, such pathetic public figures are finally left disfigured by their own acts of shenanigans while in power. Tomfoolery does not take these politicians far in life. At the end, they find themselves drifting from

one ghat to another, as no one offers them shelter.

Infidelity while in political office also brings shame to men who give less importance to reputation. Here are the stories of some popular US senators and presidents. President Franklin D Roosevelt was known for his multiple extra-marital affairs beginning in 1914, and continuing until he died in 1945. President John F Kennedy's involvement with Hollywood star Marilyn Monroe, Judith Campbell Exner and with an intern named Mimi Alford filled the gossip columns during his tenure. President Lyndon B Johnson had extramarital affairs with multiple women for many years and he made no attempts to hide them from the press.

William O Douglas, US Supreme Court Justice, was almost impeached for his allegedly uncontrollable

stealing election related documents from the office of the Democrats. He had to pay for this fatal mistake.

One British scandal that used to be covered by the Dhaka based newspapers in the '60s was known as the "Profumo affair", many readers of this daily might recall the incident. It was a major scandal of the 20th century in British politics. John Profumo, the Secretary of State for War in Harold Macmillan's Conservative government, had an extramarital affair with 19-year-old model Christine Keeler. Profumo denied the affair in a statement to the House of Commons, but weeks later a police investigation established the fact that Profumo had lied. The scandal severely damaged the credibility of Macmillan's government, and Macmillan resigned as prime minister in October 1963, citing ill health. The scandal also contributed to the Conservative government's defeat by the Labour Party in the 1964 general election.

Wait! That's not the end of Christine Keeler! The name of the Pakistani dictator General Ayub Khan had gotten entangled with her! Here is a pick from a fashion magazine: "When the famous supermodel of yesteryears, Christine Keeler died recently (2017), some famous British tabloids printed the torrid days of pool parties that showed Field Marshal Ayub Khan in a very different light! Christine Keeler was involved in a scandal in the early 60s that led to the suicide of a Dr Ward. When Ayub Khan was in London, the tabloids reported then, he would visit as a guest at the imposing estate of Cliveden in Buckinghamshire. What was his purpose there? Well, the man loved to swim in the pool at Buckinghamshire. That is not odd, you would say. Well, it was here, the tabloids point out, that the handsome president met the frolicsome Christine Keeler! Of course, the general was in a prominent company. He had been joined in by the British politician, John Profumo. It was conjectured that Ayub also swam with a girl, Mandy Rice-Davies, much younger to him. Well, you cannot grudge him that. Age is no barrier."

Hyper-politicians also wage wars. Perhaps the iconic example of blatant misuse of power leading to colossal destruction and deaths is the Nazi leader Adolf Hitler. He, along with Mussolini, whipped up a war of massive scale that ultimately destroyed the lives of over 75 million people.

Even before them, many tyrannical public figures have fallen on their own sword. The lives of many mighty Roman emperors have been cut short by the swords of their own men. Caligula or Nero was not the best example of popular leaders.

So, what can you say about those toxic people who keep polluting the environment wherever they go? Shahnoor Wahid is a freelance journalist.

History is replete with stories of hyper idiotic people damaging their nation as well as their own selves by misusing power bestowed on them by the voters. These public figures, who are supposed to serve the people of the republic, take power too seriously and start to treat the people like their subjects, just like Hiralak Raja.

libido. Even when he was living with his third wife it was reported that he tried to molest a flight attendant in his judicial chambers.

Gary Hart, a US politician, lost the moral ground to run for the presidency in 1988 when news of his extra marital affairs became public. We also know about the affairs of President Bill Clinton.

And President Donald Trump's unabashed transgressions, especially with women, have become scandalously legendary in US history. This reckless man's ignominious departure from the White House on the last day saddened his family members and staunch supporters only. Others let go a colossal sigh of relief.

President Richard Nixon lost his presidency through impeachment for a different reason. He failed to stop his overenthusiastic assistants from

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh		
Office of the Project Director (ACE, RHD)		
SASEC Dhaka-Sylhet Corridor Road Investment Project		
Sarak Bhaban, Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208		
www.rhd.gov.bd		
Request for Expression of Interest (REOI)		
for		
Individual Consultant Service as Monitoring and Evaluation Expert (Nat'l) for		
SASEC Dhaka-Sylhet Corridor Road Investment Project		
1. Ministry/Division	Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges.	
2. Agency	Roads and Highways Department (RHD).	
3. Name of procuring entity	A K Mohammad Fazul Karim, Project Director (Additional Chief Engineer, RHD), SASEC Dhaka-Sylhet Corridor Road Investment Project.	
4. Procuring entity code	N/A.	
5. Procuring entity district	Dhaka.	
6. Expression of Interest for Selection of	Individual Consultant (National) (Time Based).	
7. Title of Service	Individual Consultant Service as Monitoring and Evaluation Expert (Nat'l) for SASEC Dhaka-Sylhet Corridor Road Investment Project.	
8. EOI Ref. No.	35.01.0000.083.07.044.21-661	
9. Date	28.12.2021	
KEY INFORMATION		
10. Procurement sub-method	Selection of Individual Consultant (SIC).	
FUNDING INFORMATION		
11. Budget and source of funds	GoB.	
12. Development partner (if applicable)	N/A.	
PARTICULAR INFORMATION		
13. Project/programme name (if applicable)	SASEC Dhaka-Sylhet Corridor Road Investment Project.	
14. EOI closing date and time	13 January 2022, 2.00pm.	
INFORMATION FOR APPLICANT		
15. Brief description of the assignment	Under the direct supervision of RHD's Project Director, the monitoring and evaluation expert will be responsible for monitoring and evaluation of the project. The consultant will support the PIU in monitoring implementation and evaluating performance of the consultants and contractors in accordance with respective contracts, ADB guidelines, domestic regulations, and the Loan Agreement under the guidance of PD. During the assignment, special attention should be paid to the following: (i) Prepare annual M&E plan ensure implementation of the approved M&E plan of the project. (ii) Assist PIU in Monitor project activities in accordance with the project general and detailed implementation plans and prepare monthly, quarterly, and annual progress reports, IMED reports, other monitoring reports etc. as required for the project. Review and improve the template/outline for the quarterly and annual reports to be compatible with the ADB/PPMS. (iii) Ensure timely submission of the project reports to RHD, Ministry and ADB for review and endorsement. Detailed Tasks and/or Expected Output: The Consultant will carry out the below tasks to assist RHD in the financial management: (i) Identify bottlenecks and problems that negatively affect smooth implementation of the project and propose remedial measures to PIU. (ii) Develop a comprehensive Project Performance Management System (PPMS) based on the project Design and Monitoring Framework, the Environmental Management Plan, Land Acquisition and Resettlement Plan, and gender and social dimensions with support from the Project Coordinator. The PPMS should specify the quarterly and annual performance targets, data sources, reporting mechanisms, and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) plans and activities. (iii) Support the PIU Finance Specialist in ensuring the compliance with all financial covenants and other obligations stated in the Loan Agreement. (iv) Assess the implementation of the Environmental Management Plan and report through the project quarterly and annual reports. (v) Access the implementation of the project Land Acquisition and Resettlement Plan, gender and social dimensions and report through the quarterly and annual reports. (vi) Provide methodological inputs to Project Director. (vii) Upon the completion of the project prepare, finalize and approval of the Project Completion report. (viii) Perform other relevant tasks that would help the successful implementation of the assignment. (ix) Prepare and submit quarterly, monthly, semi-annual and annual project progress reports, other project related reports, M&E reports within time frame to RHD, Ministry and ADB. (x) Assist PIU in preparation and approval of Revised DPP, Contract Revision etc. (xi) Assist PIU in facilitating monitoring team from RHD, Ministry, Planning Commission, ADB Mission or other higher authority. (xii) Support PIU in internal and external audit and follow-up of internal and external audit recommendations to further improve the internal controls of the project. (xiii) Assist the project in implementing financial recommendations as agreed between the project and ADB during review mission.	
16. Experience, resources & delivery capacity required	The Consultant shall meet the following minimum requirements: (i) Education: Master's degree in any discipline or B.Sc. in Engineering. (ii) Project-related experience: • More than 5 years of practical experience in the field of monitoring and evaluation position in Bangladesh. • Knowledge of Computer based monitoring and evaluation systems and direct working experience with infrastructure implementation project is an advantage. • Must be familiar with the monitoring and evaluation system and procedure and financial rules and regulations of the Government of Bangladesh. • Knowledge and experience in IBAS++ • Experience in working with international organizations preferred.	
17. Other details (if applicable)	The consulting service will be implemented from February 2022 to December 2026, with intermittent person month inputs of 35 person months. The Monitoring and Evaluation Expert will work under direct supervision of the Project Director (PD), RHD, S/He will report directly to the Project Director, or a senior official designated by the PD and will work with close collaboration with other officials/subject matter specialists deployed at the Project Implementation Unit (PIU). Consultants will be selected using the Selection of Individual Consultant (SIC) method in accordance with the Public Procurement Rules 2008. Interested Consultants are required to submit their application in accordance with the Standard Application Form (PS4) which may be obtained from the office of the undersigned during normal office hours or from the notice board of RHD website (rhd.portal.gov.bd). The application shall be delivered in sealed envelope by 2.00pm on 13 January 2022 to the Office of the Project Director, SASEC Dhaka-Sylhet Corridor Road Investment Project, Sarak Bhaban, Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208 and be clearly marked the name of the Consultant Category applied on the envelope. Applicants who are already in employment shall have to send their application through proper channel, otherwise their applications will not be considered.	
18. Association with foreign firms is	N/A.	
PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS		
19. Name of the official inviting EOI	A K Mohammad Fazul Karim.	
20. Designation of the official inviting EOI	Project Director (Additional Chief Engineer, RHD).	
21. Address of the official inviting EOI	Part 3, Level 2, Sarak Bhaban, Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208.	
22. Contact details of the official inviting EOI	Phone: +8801321168601, E-mail: pd.dhakasyshet.rhd@gmail.com	
A K Mohammad Fazul Karim Project Director (ACE, RHD) SASEC Dhaka-Sylhet Corridor Road Investment Project		
GD-2412		

Russel topple Abahani in marathon shootout

SPORTS REPORTER



Centre-back Nasir Chowdhury sealed the 30-shot marathon shootout as Sheikh Russel KC emerged Group B champions of the Bashundhara Group Federation Cup with an entertaining 13-12 win over Abahani Dhaka in a tiebreaker after they came from behind twice to play out a

2-2 draw in group final match yesterday.

With Uttar Baridhara Club having declined to participate in the tournament, both teams had equal three points before the match in the three-team group. And after a stalemate in yesterday's regulation time, the match entered into the penalty shootout to separate both sides at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium.

Sheikh Russel goalkeeper Ashraf Islam Rana was the eventual hero of the match, having denied two shots from Sohel Rana and Emon Mahmud in the tiebreaker.

Sheikh Russel will play the quarterfinal against Group D runners-up -- either Sheikh Jamal DC or Rahmatganj, who are scheduled to play today to decide the group standings, while Group B runners-up Abahani will battle against Group D champions in the last-eight battle.

Independence Cup champions Abahani took the lead in the eighth minute with Brazilian forward Dorielton



Gomes putting Abahani ahead with a nice placing-shot by capitalising on a defensive fumble from Sheikh Russel.

Five minutes later, local forward Mannaf Rabbi brought Sheikh Russel back into the match by sending a rebound home from inside the box after a close-range header from Portugues Esmal Ruti was parried by Pritom.

Sheikh Russel then almost took the lead when Ruti danced past two defenders to release a defense-split pass through for Brazilian Thiago Eduardo, whose shot ended up missing the far post narrowly.

After resumption, both sides fought on level terms to seize midfield control but Abahani dominated the first 15 minutes of the second half proceedings, generating two-three good chances but Iranian defender Iran Sheikh and Costa Rican forward Daniel Colindres failed to convert.

The sustained pressure finally paid off for Abahani in restoring the lead on the 75th minute when Augusto presented a well-judged cross for Dorielton and the Brazilian forward guided the ball home with a glancing header from inside the box.

Abahani looked on course to register their first win in the Federation Cup. However, Sheikh Russel were not meant to go down without a fight. The equaliser arrived in the 84th minute from a goal-mouth melee when Ailton brilliantly threaded the ball in the near post with substitute Hemanta Vincent Biswas providing the assist with a header.

In the stoppage time, Abahani could have sealed the game in their favour had goalkeeper Rana not thwarted a close-range shot from Colindres. The match then proceeded to roll into the marathon tiebreaker, the likes of which has been a rarity in the domestic circuit.



Bangladesh fielders at slip keep their eyes on the ball as a New Zealand XI batter tries to negotiate a delivery during their two-day warm-up game at Mount Maunganui yesterday.

PHOTO: NZC TWITTER

U-19s take on India in semis today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh U-19 will be taking on their Indian counterparts in the semifinal of the ongoing ACC Under-19 Asia Cup at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium today.

According to skipper Rakibul Hasan, Bangladesh will have the upperhand in the semifinal. "We are hopeful that we can do well if we give our best against India tomorrow [Thursday]. Having won our two previous games [against Nepal and Kuwait] by big margins, we will be confident against India. We also won a series against India and that will also help us mentally. That's why we think we will have the upper hand," said Rakibul in a video message to the media yesterday.

The young Tigers have been rampant in the tournament so far, beating Nepal and Kuwait by 154 and 222 runs respectively before their final group stage match against Sri Lanka was abandoned after an official tested positive for Covid-19.

Tigers warm up for first Test

SPORTS REPORTER



Following a prolonged quarantine and isolation period since landing in New Zealand on December 10, the Bangladesh cricket team finally had the opportunity for a proper game scenario in the two-day warm-up match against New Zealand XI which ended in a draw yesterday.

The first day of the warm-up game was mostly washed out due to rain, with seamers such as Taskin Ahmed and Abu Jayed shining bright with the ball. After New Zealand XI declared the innings on 146 for seven, the Bangladesh batters got an opportunity to spend time in the middle on the second day.

Experienced Mushfiqur Rahim led from the front with 66 runs while young Mahmudul Hasan Joy, who opened the innings, also had a good outing as the right-hander also scored a fifty.

More importantly, the youngster who had a disappointing Test debut against Pakistan being dismissed for a duck and six in two innings, will gain some confidence ahead of the first Test, starting from January 1 at Mount Maunganui.

"It's been a long time since we came here and we have done 10 days of quarantine (actually 11 days) and tried to utilise once we had the opportunity to train. We batted well on the second day of the warm-up game and our preparation has been really good. We only had one practice match and we are hopeful that we can do something good."

BANGLADESH BATTER
MAHMUDUL HASAN JOY

However, it wasn't a great outing for the majority of the batters with Liton Das looking good until he was dismissed for 41. Another opener, Shadman Islam, was dismissed for a duck while the likes of Mominul Haque, Najmul Hossain Shanto and Yasir Ali were also unable to stay long in the middle as the visitors posted 269 for eight.

Batting will remain the centre

attention for the Tigers and despite having few individual performances from Tamim Iqbal, Mushfiqur, Shakib Al Hasan, Mahmudullah Riyad and Soumya Sarkar in the previous tours, Bangladesh went on to lose all nine Test matches in New Zealand without putting up a fight.

Regardless of the condition, Bangladesh's batting approach has remained questionable in the longest format of the game with their inability to tackle quality bowlers and lack of patience often exposed brutally.

In the last four Tests in New Zealand, 74 of the 76 Bangladesh wickets fell against pace bowling. The likes of Kyle Jamieson, Trent Boult, Tim Southee and Neil Wagner are once again expected to test the Bangladesh batters in the upcoming series.

Apart from the one-off Test win in Zimbabwe, the Tigers had a miserable 2021 in the longest format, suffering 2-0 series defeat against West Indies at home, a 1-0 loss in Sri Lanka and a 2-0 defeat at home against Pakistan.

In the absence of Shakib, Tamim and Mahmudullah, there is no easy beginning for Bangladesh in the new year as an inexperienced Tigers' unit will be desperate to change their fate down under.

South, Central in final after expected draw

SPORTS REPORTER



Despite a draw in their third-round fixture at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday, both BCB South Zone and Walton Central Zone made it into the final of the ongoing Bangladesh Cricket League (BCL).

Having resumed the day on 381 for five in their first innings, a century from Zakir Hasan saw South Zone pile up 494 all out in 158.3 overs and take a 13-run lead on the final day of their encounter. In reply, Central Zone reached 99 for the loss of four wickets in their second innings before stumps as the game grinded to an expected draw.

With one win and two draws, South Zone topped the table having accumulated a total of 12 points. Meanwhile, Central Zone remained second in the four-team table with 11 points. The two teams are to square off in the final on January 2 next year at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium. However, unlike the group stage matches, the final in Mirpur will be a five-day affair.

Going back to the game yesterday, South Zone had lost their skipper Forhad Reza to pacer Mukidul Islam Mugdho in the third delivery of the day. Mukidul went on to scalp two more wickets in quick succession, removing Ziaur Rahman and Nasum Ahmed for single digit scores.

Jolted early in the day, overnight batter Zakir brought some stability as he stitched a 52-run stand with tailender Rishad Hossain. Leg Spinner Rishad, after bagging a fiver with the ball in hand, also showed grit and patience with the willow as the right-hander played a 61-ball 21-run knock.

Zakir, who resumed the day unbeaten on 36, brought up his 10th first-class ton, smashing nine boundaries and two maximums during a 109-run knock before he was the final South Zone wicket to fall.

In reply, Central Zone lost four wickets in their second innings but that did not affect the game's outcome.

Final round of National Youth Kabaddi begins

SPORTS REPORTER

The final round of the IGP Cup National Youth Kabaddi Championship got underway yesterday at the Paltan Outer Stadium in Dhaka through a glamorous ceremony.

A total of 16 teams each will compete in boys' and girls' sections (u-19) in the final round of the event which will conclude on January 2.

A total of 58 teams in boys' section and 51 teams in girls' section participated in the preliminary round of the championship at the district level, with total number of 50,052 boys and 46,764 girls taking part, according to a press release from the media committee of the championship.

The press release also added that the selected players from these championships will be trained for the upcoming Youth Kabaddi World Cup, with two coaches from India already roped in for the purpose.



A Brahmanbaria raider tries to win a point against Dhaka during a girls' section match of the IGP Cup National Youth Kabaddi Championship at the Paltan Outer Stadium yesterday. Brahmanbaria won the match by 36-25 points.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Warner eyes one more crack at England

AFP, Melbourne



David Warner has hinted he is keen for one last Ashes tour in 2023 to make amends for his failed campaign in England two years ago, drawing inspiration from veteran seamer Jimmy Anderson.

The explosive Australian opener would be approaching 37 should he retain his place that long and in all likelihood would have joined the 100-Test club. He currently has 89 caps.

Winning in India is also on his bucket list before pulling up stumps on a Test career that has so far yielded 7,551 runs at 48.40.

"Winning the Ashes here was obviously a big one," Warner said after Australia crushed England in the third Test in Melbourne to retain the Ashes.

"We still haven't beaten India in India, that would be nice to do. And England away -- we had a drawn series (in 2019) but hopefully if I manage to get that opportunity, I might think about going back."

England hasn't been a happy hunting ground for Warner, who had a horror tour in 2019, when he managed just 95 runs at 9.50 from five Tests with Stuart Broad dismissing him seven times.

"In terms of 2019 it was obviously in England so he (Broad) was able to get the ball to come back into us and away from us," said Warner, who has been a mainstay at the top of the Australian order for a decade.

"For me it was one of those tours where I didn't back my game plan and I went too defensive and I didn't attack. That was my fault, and he bowled really well."

Whether Warner can still be competitive into 2023 remains to be seen, although he has been written off previously and come roaring back, most recently at the Twenty20 World Cup.

'Everyone has to look in the mirror'

AFP, LONDON

Liverpool captain Virgil van Dijk says he and his team-mates need to "look in the mirror and improve" after the 1-0 loss to Leicester dealt a blow to their Premier League title prospects.

Van Dijk did not look for excuses for the loss on Tuesday despite Leicester's goal scored by Ademola Lookman coming from their only shot on target after Mohamed Salah missed a first-half penalty for Liverpool.

Liverpool -- who failed to score for the first time in 29 league matches -- will look to strike back in the title race at Chelsea on Sunday.

However, Van Dijk says the players need to reflect on why they under-performed against a Leicester side who were beaten 6-3 by Manchester City at the weekend. "Everyone has to look in the mirror and improve," the Dutch defender told Amazon Prime.

However, Van Dijk said it was no time to give up hope as other factors may still play a role in who is crowned champion. We're in December. The season is so, so long," he said. "You have seen it with Covid and injuries -- lots of things can change. There's no point looking at (Manchester) City or Chelsea or the other teams around us. We should look at our performance today and improve."

Liverpool will also have to cope without Salah and another key player, Sadio Mane, for what could be as long as a month with both heading off for the Africa Cup of Nations in Cameroon after Sunday's match.

Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp, though, is more concerned that his side rediscover their brio for the Chelsea match. "It's a big gap," Klopp told the BBC. "To top that, Chelsea and us play against each other. "It was not our plan to give City the chance to run away. If we play like tonight we cannot think about catching up with City."



India pacer Mohammed Shami celebrates with teammates after the dismissal of South Africa's Aiden Markram during the fourth day of the first Test at SuperSport Park in Centurion yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

India smell victory

REUTERS, PRETORIA

South Africa scored 69 for 2 in their second innings against India as they chased a record victory target of 305 on a spicy wicket on day four of the first Test at Centurion Park on Wednesday.

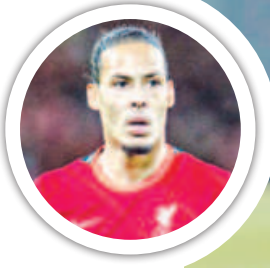
The wicket is a treacherous one for the batsmen, and perfect for the Indian seamers to exploit.

There is sideways movement, but also variable bounce with some deliveries staying low and others spitting off the surface with exaggerated bounce. That is not unusual for the ground.

The highest fourth innings chase at Centurion Park is 251 for eight by England in 2000, an infamous test where both teams agreed to forfeit an innings after rain to force a result.

The next highest is 226 for four by South Africa against Pakistan in 1998.

There is some rain predicted for the final day on Thursday, though if it does come it will likely be in the afternoon, leaving plenty of time for a result.



Dortmund eager to settle Haaland's future

AFP, BERLIN

Erling Haaland is one of the hottest properties in European football and his Bundesliga club Borussia Dortmund are eager to learn if they will lose their star striker in 2022.

The 21-year-old has scored a phenomenal 76 goals in 75 games for Dortmund since his arrival from Red Bull Salzburg in January 2020.

A release clause in his Dortmund contract, valid until 2024, could allow Haaland to leave in 2022 and club CEO Hans-Joachim Watzke wants to know what the player's agent Mino Raiola has planned. "We will talk in the next few weeks," Watzke said in early December, "and we will all make sure that we don't wait until March or April to know the decision."

In March of this year, Haaland became the fastest player to reach the milestone of 20 Champions League goals in a record 14 games. By comparison, Cristiano Ronaldo needed 56 Champions League games to reach the same goal tally. Lionel Messi took 40 matches.

At the same age as Haaland (21 years, six months), Ronaldo -- the Champions League's all-time top-scorer with 140 goals -- had yet to score in Europe. Haaland has a contract at Dortmund until 2024, but a release clause, reportedly for around 80 million euros (\$90 million) becomes active next year. Haaland's agent Mino Raiola fuelled speculation recently by claiming there is "a strong chance Erling will leave Dortmund, maybe this summer, maybe next summer".

No 'Big Three' would be disaster, says Kyrgios

AGENCIES

Nick Kyrgios has urged Rafael Nadal and Novak Djokovic to play at the Australian Open, saying Wednesday it would be a "disaster" if the 'Big Three' were missing.

Swiss ace Roger Federer has already pulled out as he recovers from a knee injury and Nadal's plans are unclear after contracting Covid-19.

Novak Djokovic has pulled out of this week's ATP Cup in Sydney, organisers said on Wednesday, heightening doubts over whether he will defend his Australian Open title.

Djokovic is on the entry list for the first Grand Slam of the year, which begins in less than three weeks, but has refused to confirm if he has been vaccinated, casting doubt on whether he will turn up.

Djokovic, the nine-time Australian Open champion, could win a record 21st Grand Slam title if he plays at Melbourne Park next month, but to enter Australia he and members of his entourage have to be vaccinated.

He has previously expressed his opposition to the vaccine and his father Srđjan said in late November that Djokovic would probably not play the first Grand Slam of the year, accusing the organisers of "blackmail".

The dominant 'Big Three' have won 20 Grand Slam titles each and Kyrgios said tennis still needs them, starting in Melbourne next month.

"I honestly don't know Novak's current situation with anything Covid-related or what he needs to play," the colourful Kyrgios told the Melbourne

Age newspaper.

"I hope he's had a good Christmas and I hope he's able to play in the sport for as long as possible because I've voiced before I think Federer, Nadal and Djokovic need to be (playing)."

"If all three aren't there, it's a disaster. It's an absolute disaster for the fans and the people that enjoy tennis."

"Yes, it's obviously a good opportunity for some of the younger

Wimbledon semi-finalist Denis Shapovalov are also recovering from coronavirus, casting a shadow over their preparations.

The Australian Open starts at Melbourne Park on January 17.

Australia's Kyrgios, who has slipped to 93 in the world, has not played since the Laver Cup in late September, citing a knee injury, and said he was looking forward to performing again in front of his home fans.



guys to come through and make an impact, but as a whole, we do need them to be part of the sport."

Adding to the Australian Open woes, Dominic Thiem, who lost to Djokovic in a five-set classic in the 2020 final, said late Tuesday he would miss the event with a wrist injury.

Meanwhile, Russian world number five Andrey Rublev and Canada's

"My knee is something that has been hindering my career for a while now, it's just something I had cleaned up last year and it feels good," he told the newspaper.

"I want to enjoy myself; I want to be happy, and that is it."

He is set to kickstart his 2022 campaign at the Melbourne Summer Set event from January 4.



Mbappe staying at PSG

AFP, PARIS

Want-away striker Kylian Mbappe said Tuesday he would finish the current season with Paris Saint-Germain, at which time he becomes a free agent.

The brilliant 23-year-old striker was asked if he would be joining Real Madrid any time soon in an interview with CNN, and he had a sharp response. "Not in January," said Mbappe, who Madrid tried to buy in July with an audacious bid of 180 million euros (\$209 million).

PSG had just signed Lionel Messi from Barcelona, but turned down Madrid's hefty offer. But with the transfer market about to reopen, Madrid are expected to make another move.

Mbappe poured cold water on that a day after picking up "Best Men's Player of the Year" from Globe Soccer at a ceremony at the Burj Khalifa in Dubai.

"I'm with PSG and I'm happy. I'll finish the season here 100 percent," he said. "I'll be giving everything to win the Champions League, the championship and the French Cup," he added before refocusing on Madrid, who his club meet in the next round of the Champions League.

"The main thing I have in mind is beating Real Madrid in February and in March," he said. Mbappe said he had no regrets over revealing his desire to join Madrid. "I was being honest, saying what was in my heart," he said.

In October Mbappe confirmed he had told Paris Saint-Germain last July he wanted to leave the club. The French World Cup winner has declined a contract extension as the clock ticks down. Mbappe joined PSG from Monaco for a deal worth a total of 180 million euros in 2017.

বাংলাদেশ কৃষি গবেষণা ইনস্টিটিউট
Bangladesh Agricultural Research Institute
সংগ্রহ ও ভান্ডার শাখা
গাজীপুর

Memo No. 12.21.0000.073.03.05.641 & 656.21.3488 Date: 27 December 2021

e-GP: Tender Notice No. 17 (2021-2022)

e-Tender is invited in the e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of the following goods. Details are given below:

Sl No.	Package No.	Tender ID & Ref No.	Description of goods	Tender documents last selling (date & time)	Tender closing date & time	Tender opening date & time
1.	PN: GD-05	641729 & IRN: 641	Office Equipment 06 items	10.01.2022 17:00	11.01.2022 12:00	11.01.2022 12:00
2.	PN: GD-06	637292 & IRN: 665	Office Furniture 13 items	10.01.2022 17:00	11.01.2022 15:00	11.01.2022 15:00

The interested person/firm may visit the website www.eprocure.gov.bd to get the details of the tender. This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and e-GP help desk (helpdesk@procure.gov.bd).

Project Name: "Research, Development and Extension of Cashew nut & Coffee" Project.

Md. Younus Ali
Deputy Director (In-Charge)
On behalf of Director General

GD- 2415

প্রধান প্রকৌশলীর দপ্তর
ঢাকা বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়
ঢাকা-১০০০

মোমো নং-২৫২৮(২)/প্রকৌঃ তারিখঃ ২৯/১২/২১

INVITATION FOR TENDER (OTM)

01.	Invitation for	Supply & Manufacturing 07 Nos. Lab Table & 60 Nos. Lab Tool for Inorganic and Analytical Chemistry Lab, Department of Chemistry, Mokkaom Hossain Khandaker Biggyan Bhaban (North Block, 4th Floor), University of Dhaka.
02.	Tender closing date and time	Date: 13/01/2022 Time: 12.00 Noon.
03.	Tender opening date and time	Date: 13/01/2022 Time: 12.30pm.
04.	Website address	Detail information and tender document will be available in the website of (http://e-tender.univdhaka.edu).

Mohammad Zaved Alam Mridha
Superintending Engineer
University of Dhaka

GD-2414

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THERE'S ONLY 1 EXPERT
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WHO warns of 'very high' Omicron risk

Covid cases surge 11pc in a week globally

AGENCIES

Omicron still poses "very high" risk and could overwhelm healthcare systems, the WHO warned yesterday, as the highly transmissible coronavirus variant fuelled record outbreaks in many countries.

Almost two years after China first reported a cluster of "viral pneumonia" cases in the city of Wuhan, the regularly mutating coronavirus is wreaking havoc in many parts of the world, forcing governments to rethink quarantine and test rules.

Case numbers have shot up 11 percent globally in the last week, forcing governments from China to Germany and France to find a difficult balance between anti-virus restrictions and the need to keep economies and societies open.

The Netherlands and Switzerland said Omicron had become the dominant strain in their countries, and while some studies suggested it causes milder Covid-19, the World Health Organization urged caution.

"The overall risk related to the new variant of concern Omicron remains very high," the UN health agency said in its Covid-19 weekly epidemiological update.

"Consistent evidence shows that the Omicron variant has a growth advantage over the Delta variant with a doubling time of two to three days."

SEE PAGE 5 COL 2



Hasan Ali attaching an earthen pot to a palm tree to extract date juice in Khulna's Batiaghata upazila yesterday. The process requires one to shave the bark and some pith of tree trunks very delicately to make the juice or sap flow. Hasan has been working for date juice extraction over 30 years and earns Tk 70-80,000 per year by extracting juice from almost 400 trees.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

TREATMENT ABROAD Khaleda needs to reapply

Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

If BNP Chairperson Khaleda Zia refuses her conditional bail and returns to jail, she would be able to reapply seeking permission for going abroad, said Law Minister Anisul Huq yesterday.

"There is no provision in the Criminal Procedure Code that we can make arrangements for her to go abroad based on the previous application," the minister said.

"Section 401 of the Criminal Procedure Code does not provide the scope to reconsider an application once disposed of," he added.

The minister made the statements while addressing a programme at Shegunbagicha in the capital.

He said the Evercare Hospital was treating Khaleda with the latest technologies. "As far as I know, her condition has improved a bit."

He said, "She is getting the best possible treatment there. The government has no interference in it. They are receiving treatment as they wish."

Meanwhile, about the formation of the Election Commission, he said Article 118 of the constitution states that the president would form the EC.

He said an act to form the EC is needed and the law will be enacted, but due to the Covid-19 situation, all parliament members are not called in parliament.

"I was told to issue an ordinance. It would not be right to issue an ordinance in this regard, bypassing the parliament," the law minister said.

Girl confined, raped for a month

Another kills herself after public harassment

STAR REPORT

A case was filed on Tuesday over a teenager being held hostage and raped for a month in Barguna, while an eighth grader died by suicide on Saturday after being publicly harassed by a group of youths in Kishoreganj.

In Barguna's Amtali upazila, AKM Mizanur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Amtali Police Station, said the case was filed under the Women and Child Repression Prevention Act.

Police have already launched an operation to nab the five accused -- Mahbubur Rahman, 65, a resident of Amtali, his wife Shefali Begum, 58, their son Maruf Hossain Jisan, 25, Zahidul Islam Shaon, 35, and his wife Mahmuda Akter Nipa, 30.

According to the case statement, Jisan had been making advances on the victim for long and trying to force her into a relationship with him.

As she refused, Jisan and his accomplices on November 21 used

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4

SECONDARY, HIGHER EDUCATION DIRECTORATE 184 allegations, action zero

ACC now summons director general

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission has received over 100 allegations of anomalies, mostly related to recruitment and admission, against officials of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education in the last three years.

The ACC has dealt with 184 such allegations and asked the DSHE to carry out investigations into those. The ACC also urged the DSHE to take departmental actions if anyone was found guilty.

Yesterday, the anti-graft watchdog summoned the DSHE director general as the latter organisation did not comply with the directives.

A six-member team of DSHE, led by its Director General Syed Md Golam Faruk, met the ACC at the latter's headquarters in the capital's Shegunbagicha area yesterday.

In the meeting, the ACC asked the DSHE to submit the updated reports on the 184 allegations by February 2022.

Talking to The Daily Star, ACC Secretary Anwar Hossain Howlader said not all the 184 allegations were beyond the jurisdictions of the ACC.

"Many allegations came against many officers. Most of these are related to the appointment of teachers and admission charges," he said.

After primary enquiries, the ACC decided not to pursue some cases and ordered the DSHE to take necessary measures into these matters and apprise the anti-graft watchdog from time to time.

The commission also asked the DSHE to submit their findings in some other cases.

"We have given the directives at different times but they did not give any feedback. That is why the commission gave the directives again at the

SEE PAGE 5 COL 4

MV ABHIJAN-10 FIRE Locals blame staffers for loss of lives

HABIBUR RAHMAN, Pirojpur

Locals, who rescued many passengers after MV Abhijan-10 caught fire early on December 24 in Jhalakathi, said most of the lives perished in the tragedy could have been saved had the launch staffers acted responsibly.

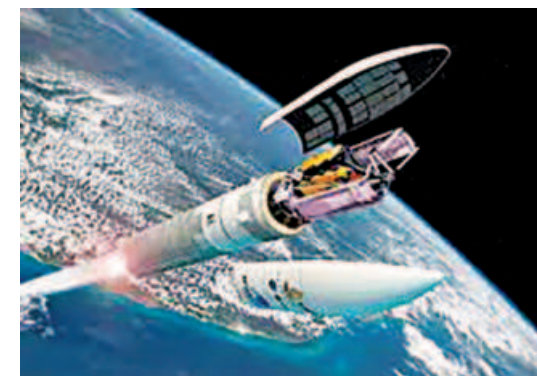
They said after the fire broke out, the driver anchored the launch in Char Bhatarakanda around 2:45am, but the staffers did not tie it with any trees although there were plenty of them within 10 yards. They abandoned the vessel right there, leaving all passengers in danger.

Due to currents, the launch then drifted back into the river and the fire spread.

It happened so fast that only a few passengers could get down or swim ashore, locals of the char told The Daily Star yesterday.

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New space telescope gets surprise breakthrough



INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Nasa's new James Webb Space Telescope, the most powerful in the world, has seen its first major breakthrough, with the agency announcing it will last "significantly" longer than previously expected.

The provision of the launch last week, and its flight since, mean that it will have enough fuel to "allow support of science operations for significantly more than a 10-year science lifetime", Nasa said. The minimum timeline for the mission is five years.

The science work of the space telescope is

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PRAYER TIMING DECEMBER 30

Fazr Zohr Asr Maghrib Esha
AZAN 5:30 12:45 4:00 5:27 7:00
JAMAAT 6:05 1:15 4:15 5:30 7:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



A signboard at Cox's Bazar Laboni Point demarcates a "reserved area for women and children", inaugurated by the district administration yesterday. The measure drew criticism from certain quarters and later at night it was cancelled. On December 22, a woman visiting the town with her husband and small child was raped after being abducted by a gang, raising serious security concerns for tourists.

PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ALI JINNAT

No turning back now

AFP, Paris

Across a quarter century of UN climate conferences tasked with saving humanity from itself, one was deemed a chaotic failure (Copenhagen/2009), another a stunning success (Paris/2015), and the rest landed somewhere in between.

This year's COP26 inspired all these reactions at once.

Swedish activist Greta Thunberg, leading a 100,000-strong march through the streets of Glasgow, dismissed the two-week meet as a "greenwashing festival".

But dedicated experts in the negotiating arena hailed solid -- even historic -- advances in beating back the existential threat of global warming.

More often than not, observers vacillated between approval and criticism, hope and despair.

"The Glasgow Climate Pact is more than we expected, but less than we hoped for," Dann Mitchell, head of climate hazards at Britain's Met Office, said with haiku-like economy.

Gauging the efficacy of measures announced at the COP26 summit largely depends on the yardstick used to measure them.

Compared to what came before, the first-ever call by 196 countries to draw down coal-fired power, or a promise to double financial aid each year -- to roughly \$40 billion -- so poor nations can brace for climate impacts, are giant steps forward.

Likewise a provision obliging countries to consider setting more ambitious targets for reducing carbon pollution every year rather than once every five years.

But all these hard-won gains at COP26 shrivel in significance when stacked up against hard science.

An unbroken cascade in 2021 of deadly floods, heatwaves and wildfires across four continents, combined with ever more detailed projections,

SEE PAGE 5 COL 2

