



P3 **A hospital only on paper**
Dhaka Mahanagar Shishu Hospital is hit by crises



P7 **Leave Ukraine**
US tells diplomats' families; weighs troop options



B1 **\$1.58b FDI in the offing**
Govt plans shipbuilding facility in Payra



P11 **Shakib in 400-wicket club**
He achieves the feat in a BPL game

DIGITAL BIRTH REGISTRATION

New system brings forth new hassles

MD SHAHNAWAZ KHAN CHANDAN

If you don't have a 17-digit birth registration certificate, get ready for a complex and stressful task to obtain one.

You just cannot do without it because having this certificate is now mandatory for every individual to be entitled for over a dozen citizen services.

Sharmin Islam and her husband have 16-digit certificates. But when Sharmin tried to fill in an application form online for her daughter's birth certificate last month, their numbers were not accepted as the valid ones must be of 17 digits.

She needed the certificate to get her daughter admitted to a school.

"No educational institution will enroll my daughter without a birth registration certificate. Now, my husband and I are desperately trying to get our birth registration certificates. Having those is a prerequisite for getting our daughter's certificate," Sharmin told The Daily Star recently.

The government made registration of birth online mandatory since January 1 last year to avail 18 citizen services, including enrolment in educational institutions, registration for secondary school certificate exams, applying for passport, and driving licence.

Besides, children aged 12 and above, who are entitled to Covid-19 vaccine, also require a digital birth registration certificate.

However, thousands of people like Sharmin are suffering delays due to the slow and complicated delivery process of the vital document.

"The new application system has been designed in a way that it will not accept any birth registration number which is less than 17 digits," said Sharmin.

She alleged that a group of opportunist staffers are profiting from this chaotic situation.

The birth register portal now logs around one lakh applications every day.

Visiting some regional offices of Dhaka north and south city corporations recently, this correspondent found many brokers promising people prompt delivery of the certificate in exchange for money.

In front of Khilgaon regional office of Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), a city resident gave Tk 7,000 to a middleman to get three birth certificates within a week.

"If you don't use these brokers, the city corporation staffers would ask for a lot of documents and find 'errors' in all those. To avoid such harassment, I had to spend the money," he said requesting anonymity.

The certificate delivery receipt mentions a date 15 days from submitting of related documents. But people have to wait for over a month to get it.

The application process to get a 17-digit certificate is so complex that many often make mistakes and are compelled to go for a time-consuming and expensive correction procedure.



Six-month-old Akhil fast asleep in a hanging basket next to his mother Ratna, who is busy dressing fish at Meradia kitchen market in the capital's Banasree area. Ratna's husband does not work, so she has to toil the entire day to feed her family, including her three children. She barely earns Tk 350 daily by cutting and cleaning the fish that people buy from the market. The photo was taken recently.
PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

EC FORMATION LAW

JS body suggests cosmetic changes

'All professionals can be eligible'; it's a law for search panel, not commission: BNP MP

RASHIDUL HASAN

The parliamentary standing committee on the law ministry yesterday finalised the Election Commission bill after recommending some changes, including in the criteria for appointment of the chief election commissioner and other commissioners.

The final report will be placed in parliament tomorrow, and the Jatiya Sangsad is likely to pass the bill on Thursday, said chief of the committee Shahiduzzaman Sarker, who is an Awami League MP.

The report was finalised during a two-hour meeting at the JS Bhaban.

Talking to reporters after the meeting, Shahiduzzaman said one of the sections of the bill says any person convicted for a criminal offence involving moral turpitude and sentenced to at least two years' imprisonment will not be eligible for the post of CEC and other commissioners.

"We have recommended removing the words 'two years' from that section. We want no person convicted in a criminal case involving moral turpitude to be appointed as the CEC or other

commissioners," he said.

Besides, the bill says in order to hold the EC posts, one should have at least 20 years of work experience in any important government, judicial, semi-government or private posts.

"The committee has recommended to add 'autonomous and other professions' besides the words 'government, judicial, semi-government or private posts' in that section," he said.

"If the amendments are acknowledged and then the bill is passed, people from

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Positivity rate second highest since outbreak

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Covid situation in Bangladesh is fast taking an ominous turn with the infection rate spiralling tenfold in three weeks.

Yesterday, the positivity rate was 32.37 percent, the second-highest since the outbreak of the novel coronavirus in March 2020. On January 3, it was only 3 percent.

In the 24 hours to 8 am yesterday, the health directorate reported 14,828 cases of Covid-19 – the highest since August 3 last year, when 15,777 cases were registered.

The government is monitoring the situation, and if necessary, would extend the existing embargoes, Farhad Hossain, the state minister for public administration, told journalists at the secretariat yesterday.

In the past week since Sunday, the weekly case detection has increased by about 181 percent.

The caseload may swell even more in February, Hossain said.

"Everyone needs to be aware. We want to get over the third wave as early as possible. That is why everyone

SEE PAGE 2 COL 8

Display fares on digital boards

HC asks BRTA

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday directed the authorities concerned to take effective steps to stop overcharging of passengers on public transport.

In response to a writ petition, the court ordered Bangladesh Road Transport Authority to ensure the display of lists of fares on electronic boards at every stop across the country within a month.

The authorities have also been asked to submit a report to the HC after complying.

The HC also issued a rule asking the authorities to explain in four weeks why their failure to stop bus owners and their employees from charging passengers extra should not be declared illegal.

In the rule, the court asked the authorities to

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



One of the fasting students of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology gets intravenous rehydration yesterday, on the sixth day of their hunger strike demanding resignation of their VC Prof Farid Uddin Ahmed.
PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

President now 'our only hope'

Sust students say

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Protesting students of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology are waiting for President Abdul Hamid's response to their open letter sent to Bangabhaban on January 18.

As their discussion with the Education Minister Dipu Moni early Sunday failed to bring a solution and no further meeting was called in till Monday afternoon, the students now say the president, who is also the chancellor of the university, is their only hope.

During a press briefing yesterday afternoon, a spokesperson for the students said, "After the first formal virtual meeting, we tried to communicate with the education minister. But we could not as she urged us to withdraw the hunger strike before the meeting."

"We wrote an open letter with signatures we collected to support our demand, to the president and sent it to the Bangabhaban. Now, we await his response."

Another protester said, "Our protest is logical and there is no involvement of any vested interest. People in responsible sectors are being given wrong information about our protests."

Over the last few days, Dipu Moni, Hasan Mahmud, minister for information and broadcasting, Dhaka University Teachers Association and Bangladesh University Parishad in different programmes and statements have said vested quarters might be involved with the students' movement.

However, University Teachers' Network also expressed solidarity by observing a symbolic hunger strike

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

1 killed, another hurt as truck hits vans

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A man died while another was injured after a truck hit their rickshaw vans on Bailey Road in the capital.

The incident happened around 4:00am yesterday when they were delivering eggs to a shop in Keraniganj from a wholesale market in Tejgaon.

Quoting witnesses, Firoz Ahmed, owner of an egg shop in the market, said a truck of a cement factory hit the vans from behind, leaving Nure Alam, 40, and Tuhin Hossain, 38, injured.

Pedestrians took them to Dhaka Medical College Hospital, where Alam died around 7:00am. Tuhin broke his leg and was undergoing treatment at the hospital, he said.

Mohaiminul Hasan, a sub-inspector of Ramna Police Station, said they seized the truck, but the driver managed to flee.

Father of a six-year-old daughter, Alam used to live beside the wholesale market along with his family. The family took the body to their village home in Dinajpur for burial.



People swarm the gate of the Mugda City Corporation Hospital to get their Covid vaccine yesterday. The coronavirus situation in the country is worsening every day with around 15,000 cases reported yesterday. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Don't want to be in news for bad deeds: IGP

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Inspector General of Police Benazir Ahmed yesterday warned police members that any immoral act by anyone in the force would not be tolerated.

"We are committed to ensuring fair and equitable welfare for every member of the force. We don't want to be in the news for bad deeds; we want to be in the news for doing good deeds," he said.

The police chief was speaking at a programme in Rajarbagh Police Lines organised on the second day of Police Week 2022 to award various units for their success in recovering drugs, arms, and smuggled goods in 2020 and 2021.

"... We think policing is not just a job; it is a service. We want the police to serve the people of the country without any discrimination."

Benazir said rules regarding appointment of constables, sub-inspectors, and sergeants were amended after 40 years.

Referring to the PM's declaration of zero tolerance against militancy and drugs, he said they were implementing the policy.

Mentioning the role of police during the pandemic, the police chief said 106 police personnel sacrificed their lives and 27,000 others fell sick.

Inmates run illegal arms trade from jail

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

His name is Ali Akbar Prokash. But he is known as "Akbar the Great" among his cohorts for his expertise and innovative techniques used in illegal arms trade.

He along with three others was arrested by the Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit from the capital's Jatrabari on October 31 last year with five arms and 301 bullets, including those of AK-47 assault rifles.

Akbar has been in Kashimpur jail since then. He is now running illegal arms trade with the help of his wife. He is communicating with her via mobile phone.

The CTTC unit's arms enforcement team claimed to have learnt this recently after analysing communication details of some illegal arms traders.

Officials shared some details of their findings with The Daily Star yesterday.

According to them, Akbar is now in Jamuna-1 cell of Kashimpur jail with his associate Md Hossain, a legal arms trader from Chattogram, who was arrested with him over illegal

arms trade.

Around 11:00am on Sunday, Akbar called his wife Shahida Begum from a mobile phone.

"Go and check the area under the water tank on our roof. You will find a small [arms] one. Deliver it to Bachcha [a person] in Chattogram's Muradpur and collect Tk 3 lakh in cash," a CTTC official quoted Akbar as saying to his wife.

In the previous two days, Akbar called his wife from two other mobile phones.

This newspaper found all three numbers switched off around 4:30pm yesterday.

Police said they were investigating how Akbar got mobile phones and against whose names those SIM cards were registered.

"Apart from calling his wife, Akbar called three others and called them 'Bachcha', 'Manzur' and 'Mita'. We are trying to get details of the three," a high official of the CTTC unit told The Daily Star, requesting anonymity.

Contacted, Akbar wife's Shahida admitted having been contacted by her husband over phone and claimed to have discussed family matters with her husband.

Asked about delivery of arms, Shahida suddenly said, "I am not Shahida. I am her younger sister Sanjida. My sister became sick last night and I do not know anything."

Abdul Jalil, senior jail superintendent of Kashimpur jail (part-2), said inmates are not allowed to use mobile phones. They are allowed to communicate with their families using a phone from the jail authorities once a week.

Asked about Akbar's communication with his wife, Jalil said they would conduct an enquiry.

Investigators said Akbar used to work for Hossain, the owner of Mofizur Rahman Arms Co in Chattogram. The shop's sales records show that Hossain did not sell a single piece in the last four years, despite being a legal arms dealer.

Akbar was mainly responsible for smuggling 9mm pistols and AK-47 rifles from a hill district and deliver those to Hossain, said a CTTC high official.

He said Akbar has a network of around a dozen people, including a Rohingya from a Cox's Bazar camp, for running the illegal arms trade.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Five policemen injured in attack

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

At least five policemen were injured after they were attacked by criminals in Thukiakhali area in Cox's Bazar's Chakaria upazila early yesterday.

The incident occurred when the law enforcers raided a spot in the area to arrest some people accused of murder.

3 killed as train hits three-wheeler

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chapainawabganj

Three people were killed after a train hit a locally-made three-wheeler at a level crossing in Chapainawabganj's Alinagar yesterday.

The dead were identified as fish traders Fulchand, 55, Meher Ali, 44, and driver of the three-wheeler Naimul Islam, 35.

Saber Ali, deputy assistant director of Chapainawabganj Fire Service, said the Ishwardi-bound train, coming from Chapainawabganj Railway Station, hit the three-wheeler around 8:40am and dragged it for about 25 yards.

Station Master Shahidul Alam said the level crossing in Alinagar is unauthorised and there is no guard there to ensure no one enters.

UP member candidate's body found

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenaidah

Police yesterday recovered the body of a UP member candidate, from near a waterbody of Nalbhanga village in Jhenaidah's Kaliganj upazila.

Md Pir Ali, 37, was defeated in a recent UP polls to Khatshabanga union.

Police sources said his body bore rope marks on the throat.

Proceedings against teachers must finish in 180 days: HC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court in the full text of a verdict has ruled that proceedings against a teacher of any recognised non-government secondary school must be concluded in 180 working days.

The days will be counted from the date of suspension or initiation of a proceeding.

The certified copy of the verdict, which the court has asked the education ministry to circulate, was released yesterday.

Earlier on September 7 last year, an HC bench delivered a shorter verdict following a writ filed by Md Badsha Miah, a high school teacher in Magura, challenging the legality of his 14-year-long suspension.

New system brings forth new hassles

FROM PAGE 1

For instance, rickshaw puller Abdul Gafur from Rayer Bazaar slum cannot apply for his certificate as staffers refused to accept "slum area" as a permanent address.

"According to my national ID card, my permanent address is 15, Madhubazar [Rayer Bazaar slum]. But they asked me to go to my village and get a citizenship certificate from the local union parishad," said Gafur while waiting in front of the DSCC zonal office in Azimpur.

He said his village in Kurigram's Razibpur union was devoured by the Brahmaputra due to erosion in the river a long ago.

"I have been living in the capital's Madhubazar area for nearly two decades. All my children are born here. It's ridiculous that I cannot get my birth certificate just for my address despite having my NID," added Gafur.

Banesa Begum produced her citizenship certificate. But her application was rejected on the ground that the citizenship certificate did not mention her husband's name.

Like Gafur, she was also asked to go back to her village and get that document corrected.

"I produced my NID card which has my husband's name printed in it but they did not accept it. They said I must have the citizenship certificate corrected to get a birth certificate," said Banesa.

Correcting information in the birth certificate is

even more complicated.

Touhid Ur Rahman, a private company employee, wanted to correct her daughter's date of birth. But officials refused to comply saying that the correction option in the server was disabled at that moment (last month).

He then filed an application with the Dhaka district commissioner's office stating that he wanted to cancel his daughter's birth registration and file an application for a new one.

"Almost a month has passed since then, but I'm yet to get any response. The delay is putting my daughter's admission to a school in jeopardy," said Rahman.

Shahadat Hossain (not his real name) and his wife applied for birth registration certificates at the DNCC zonal office at Karwan Bazar a couple of months ago. They refused to hire a broker and completed their applications diligently.

On the delivery date, Shahadat noticed that his mother's name was wrongly spelt in the printed certificate although the spelling was correct online.

In her wife's certificate, the name of her mother was wrongly spelt both in print and online.

"I think they misspelled the names deliberately as we followed the due process without hiring a broker. Now we shall have to face difficulties to get those names corrected."

Md Mahbul Alam, councillor of DSCC ward-1, said hundreds

of people apply for birth registration certificates in his ward every day as there were several renowned educational institutions in Khilgaon area.

"They are suffering gravely because of a lack of coordination between city corporation officials and the office of the registrar general of birth and death registration."

Md Sajjad Hossain, councillor of DNCC ward-2, echoed Mahbul's views.

Mustakim Billah Faruqui, immediate past registrar general, said they were receiving at least 100,000 applications for birth registration every day.

"We cannot deny that people are facing some difficulties as many of them have to apply for birth registration online despite having certificates prepared manually. But once the online registration is done, the entire nation will benefit. This would enable us to deliver all types of citizen services quickly and efficiently. So, we should encourage our citizens to apply for the digital birth registration certificate as soon as possible," he said.

"Birth registration is the vital legal step to identify a citizen's name and nationality. It is the first recognition from the state which certifies that this child is our citizen. We are asking all to complete birth registration immediately after the birth of a child," said Mustakim.

Regarding lengthy, complicated process, the former registrar general said their manpower

was very limited. "We are trying to involve public representatives in the process to speed it up. We are hoping that the situation will be stable within next six months."

Denying allegations of irregularities, he said since applications are filed online and people need to submit some documents, there is no scope of irregularities.

UK orders probe into Muslim ex-minister's claims

AFP, London

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has ordered an inquiry into claims by a Muslim former minister that she was sacked from his government because of her faith, a spokesperson said yesterday.

The claims by Nusrat Ghani, a former junior transport minister, have stoked fresh controversy for Downing Street as Johnson awaits the findings of a different inquiry into "partygate" revelations.

"The prime minister has asked the Cabinet Office to conduct an inquiry into the allegations made by Nusrat Ghani MP," the spokesperson said.

Johnson had initially urged Ghani to file a formal complaint through the Conservative party. But she declined.

Positivity

FROM PAGE 1
needs to follow the health guidelines to combat it," he added.

On Sunday, the government asked all public and private offices to halve the physical presence of officers and staffers.

However, there was a good number of officials and staffers in the secretariat.

Since the order was issued late in the day, the concerned offices could not issue any orders in this regard to their officials, said an official of the cabinet division.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Bank asked banks to run their operation with 50 percent of their employees and introduce an alternate duty roster immediately.

The banking regulator, however, said banks could decide to fix the number of employees as per their requirement to operate essential banking services.

Customers will have to wear facemasks on a mandatory basis while taking service from banks.

On the other hand, all functions of lower courts and tribunals will run with half of their officials and staff members until February 6. The judges will have to work as normal.

The other half of the officials and staffers cannot leave their respective work station as they will have to work by rotation, Supreme Court's Spokesperson Md Saifur Rahman told The Daily Star.

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- Place of Posting: Anywhere in Bangladesh
- Candidature of an applicant shall be cancelled, if any discrepancy is found between online resume and original documents (which will be verified at the time of confirming academic credentials)


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A 100-bed facility only on paper

Dhaka Mahanagar Shishu Hospital grappling with crisis

DIPAN NANDY

Even when it's afternoon, one can barely see anything inside. Many beds are worn-down, while others don't have any covers.

From outside, the condition of the yellowish structure is not faring any better either. The colour coating is coming off, moss has started to take root as well, which is surprising for a building constructed as soon as in 1990.

This is the present condition of Dhaka City South Corporation-run 100-bed Dhaka Mahanagar Shishu Hospital. This four-storey hospital is located at Lalbagh's Goura Sundar Roy Lane.

The hospital's surgery department has remained shut



Without the 40 beds assigned to the hospital's inactive surgery department, the DSCC-run facility is virtually reduced to only 60 beds. But the condition of these beds are horrific, with most of them either worn-down or lacking even the most basic bedding items, like sheets and covers.

PHOTO: STAR

Dhaka South City Corporation has two hospitals and a Matri Sadan under its management. Recent investigations by The Daily Star has brought to the fore their shambolic state. On today's second report, we take a look into **DHAKA MAHANAGAR SHISHU HOSPITAL.**



for the last 13 years. As a result, 40 of the 100 beds at the hospital are also unavailable. The condition of the other 60 beds aren't very well either, which means the hospital is a 100 bed facility only on paper.

According to DSCC health department data, 2,005 outpatients took service at the hospital in 2020-21 fiscal year. The indoors served 678 patients, while the emergency served 442. As the surgery department is closed, not even a minor operation has taken place in this time.

The ground floor of the premises hosts the emergency and outpatient departments. To avail medical service at a cheap rate, people from the lower-income segment crowd the place every day. As the hospital is also a Covid-19 vaccination centre, there's an additional pressure of visitors.

Among them, Al-Amin Mia, came here from Chawkbazar. He told this correspondent that he was there with his six-year-old child.

"I'm a van-puller by profession. My son has had a fever for the last two days. I can't afford to take him to costlier hospitals, which is why I've come here," he said.

The same was echoed by Asma Khatun, a resident of Lalbagh who came to the hospital with her daughter Parul. "It's way cheaper here. For those of us who live by the day, this is the only place we can afford."

Meanwhile, the hospital's paediatric surgery department has remained shut since 2008. Hospital sources said this can be attributed to the lack of a surgery consultant, which is why the department stays closed even after having an operation theatre.

Moreover, this means the 40-odd beds dedicated for this department are also out of bounds for patients.

The second floor of the hospital hosts a 40-bed ward, but the entire space is dirty. Almost half of the beds, most of which were dilapidated, did not have patients in them. Even the bed covers reeked of dirt, while moss was visible on the ward's walls.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

PRAYER
TIMING
JAN 25



	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	5-35	12-45	4-15	5-46	7-15
Jamaat	6-10	1-15	4-30	5-50	7-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

SAGAR RUNI MURDER

85 dates, still no end to probe

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday again asked Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) to submit the probe report of a case filed over the murders of journalist couple Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi by February 23.

With yesterday's date, the investigation officer has so far taken 85 dates to complete the investigation.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Tariqul Islam passed the order after Rab's Additional Superintendent Khondoker Shafiqul Alam, also the case's investigation officer, failed to submit the report.

Sagar, news editor

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



After street safety movements started flaring up in parts of the city, DMP personnel were found checking vehicles for driver's license, fitness and other documents yesterday. This photo was taken from Farmgate.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

'Where do we complain?'

Anti-sexual harassment cell in JU almost non-functional for 10 years

SHEIKH TAJUL ISLAM TAJ

The anti-sexual harassment cell at Jahangirnagar University remains almost non-functional even after a decade of inception.

The cell has no office or visible activities, and the cell authorities too have declined to reveal any information regarding its operation.

"It is a sensitive issue. I cannot disclose any information regarding complaints about sexual harassment, including the number of cases reported," said Dr Jebunnessa, president of the cell and a professor of public administration at JU.

On March 10, 2010, the university authorities formed the cell following a High Court directive, aiming to address cases of sexual harassment in the university.

A seven-member committee, headed by Prof Jebunnessa, was also formed to keep the cell functional. The anti-sexual harassment cell was the first of its kind in any public university in Bangladesh.

The cell was also supposed to raise awareness and conduct counselling among students against sexual harassment. But most students are still unaware of its existence due to no visible activities in the last decade.

This correspondent talked to over 50 students from January 21 to 23. At least 20 of them said they don't even know of any such cell existing on the campus. The rest said they have heard about it, but did not notice any activities.

"I have been a student here for around five years. But I never saw any poster, leaflet or any other form of presence of the cell," said Khadizatul Kubra, an anthropology major.

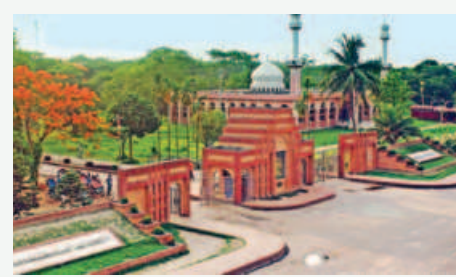
"I don't know of any such cell on the campus. If it exists, it should come up with massive awareness campaigns," Naftisa Sharmin, a student of urban and regional planning.

Some female students, who have been victims of sexual harassment on the campus, claimed to not get any assistance from the cell.

"I was sexually harassed by a classmate who also

threatened to rape me three years ago. I filed a complaint with the proctor's office, but did not get any support from the authorities," shared a female student from the arts and humanities faculty.

Contacted, the then proctor Sikder Md Zulkernine said he could not recall whether he received any written complaint. "If a complaint was filed, it must have been forwarded to the anti-sexual harassment cell," he said.



AT A GLANCE

- ▶ No on-campus office
- ▶ No activities or campaigns in 10yrs
- ▶ No data available on reported cases
- ▶ No knowledge among students of its existence

Dr Jebunnessa said, "I have taken charge very recently. I will definitely take necessary measures to have a separate office and make students aware of its operations."

Contacted, JU pro-VC (administration) Dr Sheikh Md Munjurul Haq admitted that students are not much aware of the cell due to lack of publicity. "We will take immediate steps to make the cell more functional," he added.



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

If only time was on their side Covid positive man dies in daughter's embrace on way to DMCH

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Sixty-two-year-old Anwar Hossain, a resident of Old Dhaka's Hazaribagh, had tested positive for Covid-19 four days back. He was receiving treatment at home.

Yesterday morning, when he was complaining of severe breathing issues, his daughter Jhuma Akter decided to take him to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH).

She, along with her father, started for DMCH in a CNG-run auto-rickshaw. Jhuma was holding her father all the way to DMCH.

Upon reaching the hospital around 12:00pm, she carried Anwar down from the three-wheeler with the help of people in front of the hospital and took him to the emergency department.

But apparently it was too late. Doctors on duty declared Anwar "brought dead", our photojournalist Anisur Rahman reported from DMCH.

Around 2:00pm, Jhuma started for home with her father's body in an ambulance.

Anwar had contracted Covid-19 for the second time, Jhuma said.

BNP opposing EC law to embarrass govt: Hanif

UNB, Dhaka

Awami League joint general secretary Mahbul Ul Alam Hanif yesterday said BNP is opposing the proposed law to form an Election Commission to embarrass the government.

He said this in response to BNP's remark that the government was hastily setting up an EC to include people loyal to it.

Hanif said this while paying homage at the memorial of Shaheed Matiur Rahman on the premises of Nabakumar Institute at Bakshibazar, marking the Mass Uprising Day.

Mentioning that BNP never wants fair politics, he further said their aim is to create an unstable situation in the country.

'Must resist syndication'

Recruiting agencies voice concerns over sending migrants to Malaysia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Voicing concerns over syndication, different recruiting agency platforms yesterday said sending migrant workers to Malaysia like the way it was done before will harm the image of the sector and the country.

Organising a press conference under the banner "Owners of general recruiting agencies" at the capital's Dhaka Reporters Unity, they alleged that earlier, a "syndicate" of 10 agencies was involved in sending workers to Malaysia, but the process led to market closure.

Those agencies are trying to create a similar situation again, they added.

They also voiced concerns over excessive airfare and demanded government intervention in this regard.

Bangladesh and Malaysia signed a memorandum of understanding in December last year on labour cooperation.

In September 2018, Malaysia suspended hiring

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Display fares

FROM PAGE 1
explain why their failure to frame specific rules on increasing transport fares – under section 122 of the Road Transport Act 2018 – should not be declared illegal.

The HC bench of Justice Mamnoon Rahman and Justice Khandaker Diluruzaman came up with the directives and issued the rule following a writ petition filed as public interest litigation by Supreme Court

lawyer Md Abu Taleb. During the virtual hearing on the petition, Taleb told the HC bench that the transport owners arbitrarily increase and collect extra from passengers as there was no specific rule in this regard.

Lawyers Mokhesur Rahman and Muntasim Tanjir accompanied Taleb during the hearing, while Deputy Attorney General Bepul Bagmar represented the state.

President now

FROM PAGE 1
yesterday from 12:00pm to 3:00pm in front of Dhaka University's Aparajeyo Bangla.

On January 13, a group of resident students began demonstrations alleging that their dormitory's provost, Zafrin Ahmed Liza, misbehaved with a student.

On January 16, police fired rubber bullets and threw sound grenades on the agitating students, triggering a clash that left over 30 students injured.

The students that night started their protest demanding the resignation of VC Prof Farid Uddin Ahmed.

Twenty-four students on January 19 started a fast-unto death programme. Five more joined them over the last two days.

Of them, one left the hunger strike due to his father's cardiac arrest, while 15 others have been hospitalised. The rest are still continuing the programme in front of the

vice-chancellor's residence. Meanwhile, utility resources at the VC's residence are running out as the students have barred general entry and cut off power connection since Sunday afternoon.

Seeking anonymity, a staffer of the residence said water supply and power generator fuel are running out.

They also informed that the VC is still physically well and an assistant proctor, who was confined with the VC, has also fallen ill.

VC Farid Uddin Ahmed could not be contacted over phone.

According to a press release from the JU public relations office yesterday, Farid apologised to Jahangirnagar University students and teachers for his earlier remarks on female students of JU.

He also apologised to JU VC Prof Dr Farzana Islam, over phone saying that his remark "had been edited and disseminated on social media".

Tonga eruption equivalent to 'hundreds of Hiroshimas'

AFP, Nuku'alofa

The Tonga volcanic eruption unleashed explosive forces that dwarfed the power of the Hiroshima atomic bomb, Nasa scientists have said, as survivors yesterday described how the devastating Pacific blast "messed up our brains".

The Nasa Earth Observatory said the Hunga Tonga-Hunga Ha'apai volcano spewed debris as high as 40 kilometres (25 miles) into the atmosphere during the January 15 eruption that triggered huge tsunami waves.

"We think the amount of energy released by the eruption was equivalent to somewhere between five to 30 megatonnes (five to 30 million tonnes) of TNT," Nasa scientist Jim Garvin said in a press release.

Nasa said the eruption was hundreds of times stronger than the US atomic bomb dropped on the Japanese city of Hiroshima in August 1945, which was estimated to be about 15 kilotons (15,000 tonnes) of TNT.

Inmates run

FROM PAGE 2

Ahamedul Islam, additional deputy commissioner of CTC unit, said they were carrying out drives to arrest the absconding members of the syndicate.

"Once a member of the syndicate is arrested, his family members take over the trade. We are working to get details of the syndicate's activities," the official told this newspaper.

Risky dwelling

FROM PAGE 12
causalties," the report said about Camp 21.

Regarding Camp 22, the report said it is spread over 112.56 acres with around 22,200 Rohingyas of 3,339 families living there. Among them, some 500 are living on the slopes of hillocks that are vulnerable to landslides.

"In Camps 21 and 22, around 6,000 Rohingyas of 1,267 families are living riskily on the hillock slopes and need to be relocated

to a safer place," the report said in its opinion portion.

Around 74,70,000 litres of water are required every day in the two camps built on forest department land.

"Opinion of the Department of Public Health Engineering is required on the groundwater layer," it said.

The report mentioned that during the inspection they did not find any sewage treatment plant (STP) in those camps.

Slap sanction

FROM PAGE 12

over the years, specifically with reference to the killing of Akramul Haque, a municipality councillor in Teknaf, in May 2018".

Human rights organisations and several US Senate bodies have repeatedly called for sanctions against Rab for years, he wrote to Borrell.

Stefanec said there is a lot of corruption in Bangladesh and that the government controls the police.

"Unfortunately, another alarming statistic is the number of missing Bangladesh citizens. The numbers are in the hundreds, just over 500. This number has been documented by a group of citizens.

"It is also sad that a significant number of the missing are found later, but unfortunately, without any signs of life. The UN is conducting an investigation into this," he said.

The European Parliament member said the UN and EU earlier criticised human rights abuses within Bangladesh, including Digital Security

Act, which stifles free speech, criminalises online dissent, and violates international law.

He quoted the International Federation for Human Rights statement that violations have included extrajudicial killings, 1,134 of which took place between January 2018 and June 2021 and that torture has also been routinely used as a tool against political opponents as well as ordinary citizens.

He said Bangladesh will graduate out of the LDC in 2026 and outperformed its neighbouring countries in numerous benchmark areas.

"Unfortunately, the country's development is largely marked by human rights violations as well as corruption... must sadly note that democratic values have been suppressed since the ruling party took power. For example, the press faces fear. Political opponents are insulted and bullied.

"This situation is very serious and that is why I am asking for your help in re-establishing democracy," Stefanec said.

Must resist

FROM PAGE 3

Bangladeshi workers on allegations of forced labour, high migration costs, and syndication.

Mostafa Mahmud, secretary general of Sammilita Samannay Front Baira, alleged the previous syndicate is on the prowl again following the MoU signing.

He said a clause of the MoU that cites a "selection process" for Bangladeshi recruiting agencies has created room for syndication. He demanded making the MoU public.

The front's president Md Faruque said they will continue to stage protests against syndication and will seek justice in the court if required.

Voicing concerns over a syndication of 25 agencies this time, M Tipu Sultan, president of Recruiting Agencies Oikya Parishad, said every valid recruiting agency should be given the opportunity to send workers to Malaysia.

On the airfare hike, Tipu said ticket price was between Tk 20,000 and 25,000 but has now increased to more than Tk 1 lakh.

including suspects Rafiqul Islam, Bakul Miah, Masum Mintu, Kamrul Hasan alias Arun, Abu Sayeed, and two security guards of the couple's house, Palash Rudra Paul and Enamul Hoque, and the couple's "family friend" Tanveer Rahman, had been arrested in connection with the murder. Later, Tanveer and Palash got out of jail on bail. The others are now behind bars.

Several injured in German shooting

AFP, Frankfurt

A gunman injured several people in a shooting inside a lecture hall at Heidelberg University in southwestern Germany yesterday, police said, adding that the perpetrator was now dead.

"A lone perpetrator injured several people in a lecture hall with a long gun. The perpetrator is dead," Mannheim police said in a statement.

A horrifying journey by bus

FROM PAGE 12

the city.

The doctor said the robbers took his three mobile phones, two wallets, two ATM cards, and PIN numbers for his ATM cards and mobile bank accounts.

"The bus stopped near different ATM booths in the city and they withdrew Tk 1.28 lakh from two accounts," Shafiqul told this newspaper.

Even after he gave them all he had, the robbers did not stop torturing him.

"The robbers slapped me at least 80 times over that night."

They were also smoking cannabis and having yaba inside the bus, he added.

The bus eventually stopped for a long time.

A man came up and took off his blindfold and untied his hands and legs. It was almost 8:30am then and the bus had stopped on Dhaka-Chattoogram highway.

The man told Shafiqul that he was the helper of the bus and that the bus had been hijacked by the robbers, disguised as passengers, around 8:30pm on Thursday. He said he and the driver had been tied at the back of the vehicle.

Shafiqul went to Jatrabari Police Station and told policemen there everything.

Officer-in-Charge Mazharul Islam of Jatrabari Police Station told The Daily Star, "Someone came with a complaint of robbery. As the spot was in Abdullahpur area, we suggested he goes to the police station concerned."

As he was feeling sick after the nightlong torture, Shafiqul called the duty officer at Uttara West Police Station over the phone. The officer told Shafiqul that the complaint should be lodged where the bus finally stopped.

However, Uttara West Police Station OC Shah Mohammad Akhtaruzzaman Elias said that he did not know anything about the complaint but heard about the robbery from journalists yesterday.

"I understood that no one wants to take responsibility. I came back with my life," Shafiqul told this correspondent over the phone from his Tangail home.

He said two top officials of DMP including one from DB, contacted him yesterday for details after he had made a Facebook post on Sunday.

"An inter-district bus roamed Dhaka for around 12 hours and carried out a robbery, but it was not stopped at any checkpoint. It's a matter of great concern," a frustrated Shafiqul wrote on Facebook.

JS body suggests

FROM PAGE 1

different professional bodies – autonomous and others – will be eligible for the posts of CEC and other commissioners," the AL MP said.

BNP MP Rumeen Farhana, a member of the standing committee, strongly criticised the proposed law, saying it was prepared hurriedly without taking opinions from political parties, experts and other stakeholders.

Talking to The Daily Star, she said she told the meeting that the law was not meant for forming the EC, rather it was for forming the search committee.

"There are no differences between the gazette issued by the president in 2017 on formation of the search committee and the proposed bill. That's why different quarters are terming it a law for a search committee," she added.

She suggested including a provision in the bill that will make it mandatory for the search committee to disclose the names of people it will recommend to the president for the EC appointments.

Those persons will also have to disclose information on their wealth, she suggested.

The suggestion, however, was not considered.

Law Minister Anisul Huq placed the "Appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners Bill-2022" in parliament on Sunday seeking to give a legal shield

to the current and previous Election Commissions formed through search committees, amid opposition from BNP lawmaker Harunur Rashid.

The bill was later sent to the parliamentary standing committee on the law ministry for scrutiny. The committee was asked to submit its report before the House within seven days.

Once passed, the law will provide legal cover to all activities of the search committees.

Sources said the Awami League-led government wants to pass the bill as quickly as possible so that the upcoming Election Commission can be constituted through a search committee in line with the act.

The tenure of the incumbent commission, led by CEC KM Nurul Huda, expires next month.

Replying to a question from reporters, Shahiduzzaman said, "No, the law is not being framed for giving any indemnity."

Talking to reporters, the law minister refuted the allegations of trying to give "impunity" to the current and previous Election Commissions through the proposed law.

He said there are two issues in laws – one is indemnity while the other is legal coverage. "The two things are different," he said.

"If you go through section 9 of the proposed law, you will understand that no one would be given indemnity under it," he added.

Call of the wild

FROM PAGE 5

during a camera trapping by a team of researchers led by Muntasir Akash, lecturer of zoology at DU.

Several critically endangered animals have recently been spotted in the 243-hectare Satchhari forest for the first time, according to Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, DFO of Sylhet's wildlife management and nature conservation department.

A 100-bed facility

FROM PAGE 3

A hospital staffer said every time it rains, water seeps into the ward through the walls. Meanwhile, there's also a crisis of physicians.

As per the hospital's organogram, it is supposed

to have 22 doctors. But along with medical officers, it currently has 16.

An official said despite writing to DSCC authorities to solve the crisis, they're yet to take steps.

Contacted, DSCC Chief

Health Officer Dr Fazle Shamsul Kabir said, "We've contacted the health ministry and asked them to resolve the doctors' crisis," mentioning that recruitment for nurses is currently under process.

ফ্লোর ভাড়া হবে
মতিঝিলের প্রাণ কেন্দ্রে ২২টি কারপার্কিং সহ অফিস স্পেস ভাড়া হবে। প্রতি ফ্লোর-৩১০০ বর্গফুট, মোট- ৮টি ফ্লোর। যোগাযোগ: ০১৯১১১৯৪২৬৭

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0247120210 Email: info.aabhaban@gmail.com

Date: January 25, 2022

Save the Children
Save the Children is the world's leading, independent organisation for children

Invitation for Tender
Save the Children International (SCI) is hereby inviting the tender from interested, experienced and bona fide vendors for Medical Gas Plant Feasibility Study. For details please see the IFT schedule, which is available on <http://procurement.scibd.info/> under tender notification. Downloaded copy is acceptable for tender participation.

Description, submission time & date:				
SL	Name of IFT	Reference No.	Pre-Tender Meeting Schedule and Place	Last date of Tender Submission
1	Medical Gas Plant Feasibility Study	IFT/SCI/BD/CO/FY-22/(Manual)/01	27/01/2022 at 3:00 PM https://zoom.us/j/92024343 5661pwd=OGV3R0xYOE92 Q1pYeVncldzSTFIz09	February 03, 2022 at 3:00PM

Special Instruction: (a) All activities in connection with the said procurement of Goods/Services will be guided as per the SCI's Procurement Policies. (b) If it is not possible to receive & open the tender on the scheduled date for any unavoidable circumstances, the same will be received and opened on the following working date at same time and same place.

Senior Manager, Procurement & Supply Chain

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
শেখ হাসিনার নির্দেশ
অলবায়ু সহিত্ব বাংলাদেশ

Office of the Divisional Forest Officer
Social Forest Division, Faridpur

Memo No. 22.01.2900.361.29.002.22.127 Dated: 24/01/2022

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. No.	Tender ID, Package No, Name of packages	Last selling date and time	Closing and opening date and time
1	Tender ID: 649123 (Re-Tendered ID: 637019) (Package#Farid(S)FD/SUFAL/2021-2022/GD-1), Supply of Poly-propylene Bags	06-Feb-2022, 05:00PM	07-Feb-2022, 2:00PM
2	Tender ID: 649171 (Re-Tendered ID: 641505) (Package#FaridSFD/SUFAL/2021-2022/GD-2), Supply of Nursery and Plantation Materials for VF, Nursery Materials for Strip Plantation and Model Upazila	06-Feb-2022, 05:00PM	07-Feb-2022, 3:30PM
3	Tender ID: 649456 (Re-Tendered ID: 641353) (Package#FaridSFD/SUFAL/2021-2022/GD-3), Supply of Plantation Materials for Strip Plantation and Model Upazila	06-Feb-2022, 05:00PM	07-Feb-2022, 3:30PM

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-148

85 dates, still no end

FROM PAGE 3

at private TV channel Maasranga, and his wife Rumi, a senior reporter at ATN Bangla, were killed in the early hours of February 11, 2012 in their rented flat in the capital's West Razabazar.

After Sher-e-Bangla Nagar police and the Detective Branch of police, Rab was tasked with the probe on April 18, 2012.

At least eight people,

including suspects Rafiqul Islam, Bakul Miah, Masum Mintu, Kamrul Hasan alias Arun, Abu Sayeed, and two security guards of the couple's house, Palash Rudra Paul and Enamul Hoque, and the couple's "family friend" Tanveer Rahman, had been arrested in connection with the murder. Later, Tanveer and Palash got out of jail on bail. The others are now behind bars.

USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Position Vacancy Announcement
Position: Financial Analyst, FSN – 11
The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Bangladesh is seeking applications from qualified Bangladeshi nationals for the position of Financial Analyst, FSN – 11 in the Office of Financial Management (OFM).
Location: USAID/Bangladesh, Deadline for application submission: February 27, 2022.
For a complete job description, required qualifications and detailed information on how to apply please visit USAID/Bangladesh website: <http://www.usaid.gov/bangladesh/work-with-us/careers> and www.bdjobs.com

D-06

Biman Bangladesh Airlines
H.S. INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT, KURMITOLA, DHAKA-1229, BANGLADESH. PHONE: 8901500-19, 8901640-54, www.biman-airlines.com

PROCUREMENT & LOGISTIC SUPPORT DIRECTORATE
REF: DACPP/INTL TENDER/ 017 & 019/2021-2022 DATE: 24-JAN-2022

INTERNATIONAL TENDER
Sealed tenders are hereby invited for supplying following items to Biman Bangladesh Airlines Ltd.

S/N	TENDER NO.	DESCRIPTION	QTY
01.	DACPP/INTL TENDER/ 017/2021-2022 Date: 24-JAN-2022	THERMAL BAGGAGE TAG (As Per Specification)	30,00,000EA
02.	DACPP/INTL TENDER/ 019/2021-2022 Date: 24-JAN-2022	1/1 NON-SKID TRAY MAT (As Per Specification)	2,40,000EA

Tender schedule with detailed specifications, terms & conditions will be available at price of BDT. 2,500.00 (BDT Two thousand five hundred) only or equivalent US Dollar per set (Non-Refundable) from Manager Accounts, Cash & Banking, Belaka, Head Office, Kurmitola, Dhaka and from Biman's outstation in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Dubai & London on cash payment during all working days up to 14-FEB-2022. A formal application in bidder's letter head pad mentioning Tender Number and date shall be required for purchasing the tender schedule. Tender schedule and other related information may also be viewed at Biman's website www.biman-airlines.com
Last date for submission of tender/offer is: 15-FEB-2022 at 11:00 hrs (LT).

(Swapan Kumer Dey)
Manager (Commercial Purchase)

GD-146

এলপি গ্যাস লিমিটেড
(বাংলাদেশ পেট্রোলিয়াম কর্পোরেশন এর অঙ্গ প্রতিষ্ঠান)
উত্তর পতেঙ্গা, চট্টগ্রাম-৪২০৪।

বাক্স এলপিগিজ বিক্রির দরপত্র সংশোধনী বিজ্ঞপ্তি

কোভিড-১৯ জনিত কারণে বাংলাদেশ পেট্রোলিয়াম কর্পোরেশন এর অঙ্গ প্রতিষ্ঠান এলপি গ্যাস লিমিটেড কর্তৃক সিলেট গ্যাস ফিল্ডস লিমিটেড এর আওতাধীন হবিগঞ্জ জেলার রশিদপুরস্থ ক্যাটালাইটিক রিফর্মিং ইউনিটে (CRU) মজুতকৃত/উৎপাদিত এলপিগিজ বিক্রয়/সরবরাহের জন্য আহবানকৃত দরপত্র গ্রহণ ও খোলার তারিখ ২৫/০১/২০২২ তারিখের পরিবর্তে ০৭/০২/২০২২ তারিখ নির্ধারণ করা হলো এবং দরপত্রসমূহ ০৬/০২/২০২২ তারিখ পর্যন্ত ক্রয় করা যাবে। গত ২৮/১২/২০২১ তারিখে 'দৈনিক কালের কণ্ঠ', 'দি ডেইলী স্টার' এবং 'দৈনিক আজাদী' পত্রিকায় প্রকাশিত দরপত্রের অন্যান্য সকল শর্তাবলী অপরিবর্তিত থাকবে।

জিডি-১৪৯



The never-ending Bhabadah waterlogging saga continues, with stories of negligence, mismanagement and even alleged corruption piling up. Beyond just people of the area, rivers such as Teka and Hari are victims to the whole situation as well. As excavated earth is dumped back onto them, both of the rivers suffer from siltation, which is raising the riverbed as well as choking the rivers' width.

PHOTO: MOKAMMEL SHUVO

Short-term fix, long-term trouble?

WDB excavation project dumps earth, that too back into the rivers



MOKAMMEL SHUVO

On one hand, it's good news that the government has taken up a river excavation project at Hari and Teka rivers to recede water from the waterlogged Bhabadah region.

On the other, locals are complaining of a brand new woe, as they say the contractor is dumping the sediment back into the river just a feet away from the excavation spot.

The projects are being implemented by Jashore Water Development Board (WDB), with the aim to enhance navigability of the rivers, along with receding stagnant water in Bhabadah region, which has inundated lakhs of people.

During a recent visit and another in mid-April last year, this correspondent found truth to the locals' astonishing allegations.

According to Bhabadah Pani Nishkashan Sangram Committee, a citizens' body demanding mitigation of the longstanding waterlogging issue, the Teka and Hari rivers have shrunk and become divided into three canals due to the dumping of excavated earth into

them.

"WDB is clearly violating the foreshore law of 2013, by doing this," said Iqbal Kabir Zahid, an adviser of the committee.

Contacted, Executive Engineer of Jashore WDB Tauhidul Islam said they are implementing the 3.7 kilometres

The Teka and Hari rivers have shrunk and become divided into three canals due to the dumping of excavated earth into them.

river excavation works along a 12-metre wide spot in Teka River, upstream from the Bhabadah sluice gate.

In Hari River, the department is implementing 5 kilometres of emergency excavation works at a three-metre wide spot, downstream from the gate, the engineer said.

The total cost of the project is Tk 3.18 crore, he added.

He offered an explanation for dumping the earth back into the river,

saying this is because works for the Hari river works are being undertaken in an emergency basis to drain out the stagnant water.

However, he had no explanation for why the same was being done for the Teka river works, which is not an emergency project.

Ronojit Bauali, convener of the Sangram Committee, alleged that rather than solving the waterlogging problem, the Water Development Board only wants to prolong it so that they can pocket some money by capitalising on the never-ending crisis.

"Come rainy season, the deposited earth is going to clog the river again," he said.

Zahid cited another Jashore WDB project that aimed to reduce waterlogging in the region but allegedly ended up contributing to it.

He was speaking of Water Development Board's installation of 20 pumps at Bhabadah sluice gate which pump out water from the waterlogged areas.

But this only ends up depositing sediment and elevating the riverbed, clogging the drainage system of the

area and inundating numerous villages, according to Zahid.

Due to the project, the river has become silted up to Khulna's Dumuria upazila, around 50 kilometres downstream from the Bhabadah sluice gate, he said.

Meanwhile, using the Bhabadah Pani Nishkashan Sangram Committee's preferred tidal river management (TRM) method for eight years till 2013, the river was made around 15 to 20 feet deeper, said Iqbal Kabir Zahid.

According to WDB sources, the level of the river was zero at sea level when the tidal river management project was run, while it is now silted and thus raised up to around 2.5 metres.

Zahid said WDB's apathy to TRM, a proven natural method to solve waterlogging, is contributing to killing the stream.

Supporting the elevated flow project, WDB Jashore Executive Engineer Tauhidul Islam said around a metre of silt has been washed away due to the flow of water created by the water pumps.

However, activists and locals have rejected his claim.

Home for Harijans

BCC provides flats for 92 families



PHOTO: TITU DAS

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Barishal

A section of the Harijan community has received modern residential flats from Barishal City Corporation (BCC).

BCC Mayor Serniabat Sadiq Abdullah was present during the hand-over programme last week in the city's Kawnia area.

The recipients, who work as BCC cleaners, said they have been cleaning the city for many years but did not have standard accommodation where they previously lived.

To ensure their better standard of living, 92 families were given flats in the six-storey "Kawnia Harijan Sebak Colony" building, according to BCC.

Dulari Rani, one of those who received a flat, said, "We couldn't believe that we would ever live in a modern flat, but at last, our dream has come true."

Joyanta Kumar Das, secretary of a Harijan colony said so far, 136 families got flats from BCC, but around two-third of families working under BCC are yet to get them. "We demanded flats for all community members," he said.

Uttam Kumar Bhakta, a Harijan community leader, said, "There are at least around 4,000 Harijan and Dalit people living in the city's five Harijan colonies. Their lives are harsh. We also demand such flats for them."

"Each Harijan family will get a 550-square-foot flat with two bedrooms, one dining room, one kitchen and toilet as well as a common space cum community centre. All families will live here without having to pay for utilities," he added.

According to BCC, 390 Harijan cleaners work under its conservancy department, said BCC Conservancy Officer Dr Rabiul Islam.

Speaking at the programme, the BCC mayor said, "Every Harijan family living here [in the city] will get flats, not only BCC staffers."

The mayor then announced increasing the salary scale for Harijan people working for BCC.

He distributed keys to the flats among the families through a lottery.

Celebrating the country's rivers



OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A cultural show on the country's rivers was held at Mymensingh Zila Shilpakala Academy auditorium on Sunday evening.

Initiated by Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, the local Academy organised the event titled "Tero Shoto Nadi Sudhay Amake" as part of a countrywide programme.

Artists of Swakhhor, a local cultural group, and Shilpakala Academy performed on the occasion.

Reciter Dwipshikha Khan also performed in the event.

A discussion was also organised, where district cultural officer Hamidur Rahman spoke, among others, anchored by Surya Khan.

Speakers at the event called for united efforts to save the country's rivers.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Mayor
Goalanda Pourashava
Rajbari District

Invitation for e-Tender Notice

Memo No: Goal/Pou/BMWSSP/2022/237/006; Date: 16/01/2022

1	Ministry/Division	Local Government Division.
2	Implementing agency	Department of Public Health Engineering.
3	Project/program name	Bangladesh Municipal Water Supply and Sanitation Project (30 Pourashavas).
4	e-Tender IDs and package No.	647585 and Package No.: BMWSSP/WD-17
5	Description of works	Installation of Distribution Pipeline and House Connection of Goalanda Pourashava.
6	Name, designation & address of official inviting tender	Name: Md. Fardous Alam Khan Executive Engineer Office of the Mayor, Goalanda Pourashava, Rajbari District. Tel. No.: 06-42356244
7	Information	This is online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the national e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. Interested persons/firms can see details in the website: www.eprocure.gov.bd.

GD-147

Executive Engineer
Goalanda Pourashava
Rajbari District.



A new endangered species of wild dogs has been spotted at Satchhari National Park in Habiganj's Chunarughat recently, during a camera trapping by a team of researchers. Earlier, locals claimed to have heard of its distinct whistle-like calls in the area.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

Call of the wild

Endangered wild dogs found for first time in Satchhari

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A new species of wild dogs has been spotted at Satchhari National Park in Habiganj's Chunarughat. The species is listed as endangered under the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, according to IUCN Bangladesh official Simanta Dipu.

Satchhari range officer Mahmud Hossain informed that the wild dogs were recently spotted

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



I have sacrificed a lot for the association

Misha Sawdagor

Misha Sawdagor, primarily known as a prominent 'villain' on-screen, is a polar opposite in real life, having served twice as the President of the Bangladesh Film Artists' Association.

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Contesting for the same position in the election on January 28, he shared his expectations and future plans with the organisation.

What are you expecting from the upcoming election?

I believe that people are remembered through their work, and I wholeheartedly try to work on the welfare of the association. I have sacrificed a lot for the association, and I know that the members will choose my panel based on our hard work for the last four years.

According to you what were your accomplishments?

During the pandemic, we actively helped artists in need. We provided them financial support, alongside everything that they might need.

We have done these 18 times from the association, which is a record. We have also sent our plea to the government to allocate funds for the artists. The Ministry of Cultural Affairs supported us

Our biggest achievement was the implementation of the Artistes' welfare trust, approved by our honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Everyone from the association will be benefited by this.

wholeheartedly in this regard.

At the same time, we have lobbied to increase the amount of government grants, which was taken into account. Our biggest achievement was the implementation of

the Artistes' welfare trust, approved by our honourable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. Everyone from the association will be benefited by this.

Upon winning, what changes would you like to bring?

We want to improve the association's fund. We will request the government to allocate lands for the landless artists. Even if we can make two houses for two artists, we will consider it a victory. We will also try to get the voting rights back for some members who really deserve it.

Ilias Kanchan is your opponent, are you hoping for a tough contest?

Ilias Kanchan is a good soul. I consider him my elder brother.

It does not matter if we win or lose.

We are all a family and we aim to work together. I believe his participation has made the election livelier.

'I am directing from home, despite testing positive'

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR



"Aynabaji" famed director Amitabh Reza has tested positive for Covid. "I took the test this Friday and the reports came out to be positive," he said.

However, this did not stop him from shooting. The director has finished shooting for an advertisement, starring Bidya Sinha Mim, from his house while maintaining social distancing. "Nothing keeps me away from my work, and I will always ensure that my team, who are very supportive and efficient, is safe and sound," he adds.

The filmmaker is now feeling better, and is in constant communication with his doctors. "I just have a fever now and hope to get well soon," he concludes.

"Badhaai Do" poster stirs excitement, trailer to drop today

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK



The poster of the much-awaited film "Badhaai Do" was released yesterday, while the official trailer is set to be made public today. Starring Rajkumar Rao and Bhumi Pednekar, the film is being directed by Harshvardhan Kulkarni.

The film is the spiritual sequel of 2018's smash hit, "Badhaai Ho".

The poster features the lead pair, covering each other's mouths.

While Bhumi is seen draped in a beautiful red stole, Rajkumar is seen flaying his sehra.

While Rajkumar will be seen in the role of a cop in a 'Mahila' police thana, Bhumi will play the character of PT teacher in the film. The film also casts Seema Pahwa, Sheeba Chadha, Lovleen Mishra, Nitish Pandey, and Shashi Bhushan among others.

COUNTRYWIDE

Good days for Jhenidah potters

Winter means business for them

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

With the arrival of winter sale of earthen pots sees a sharp rise in different upazila of the district, famous for date juice.

As a result, around 5,000 potter families of the district are now earning a good bucks selling the pottery item to the farmers.

Usually, sale of earthen pots, used for collecting and storing date juice, sees a rise during the winter.

While talking to this correspondent, potters Ramesh Kumar Paul and Robin Kumar Paul of Shibnagar village in Kaliganj upazila said they used to make a good profit by selling earthen pots over two decades ago.

But, the demand for the pottery item is declining now due to availability of attractive plastic jars in the markets, they said, adding that they sell each pair of earthen pots at Tk 70 to Tk 80 in the winter, while it is being sold for Tk 50 to Tk 55 in the other time of the year.

In the winter, earthen pots are sold hugely as date juice cannot be collect or store in plastic jars, another potter Dilip Kumar Paul of Solaimanpur village in Kotchandpur upazila said.

Currently, about 5,000 people in Jhenidah are engaged with the profession, he added.

Farmer Arman Ali of Enayetpur village in Kaliganj said he has 85 date trees.

Every year, he purchase 120 earthen pots for collecting the sap from his trees, he said.

Each pair of the pots costs him Tk 70 to Tk 80 in the winter, while the price remains almost half in the rest of the year.

Bharat Mondal, another farmer from Beleghat in Shailakupa upazila, said he has 40 date trees and needs 60 earthen pots every year.



Earthen pots are kept for sale at a potter's house in Jhenidah's Kaliganj upazila. PHOTO: STAR



Tea workers hit hard by cold spell

MINTU DESHWARA

Bone-chilling cold and thick fog hit the poor tea workers hard in Sylhet division as hundreds, mostly children and elderly, have been suffering from different cold-related diseases due to the cold spell for the last few days.

At least four of them have reportedly died due to cold-related complications recently.

Tea workers have said they are not able to buy enough warm clothes due to low income.

The minimum temperature recorded in Sreemangal was 11 degrees Celsius in the last one week, said Anisur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Sreemangal met office.

Rajendra Madraji, 63, of Madraji Line, died on January 15, Jamuna Shukla Vaidya, 48, of Puran Line also died on the same day and Manddari Balmik Das, 59, died on January 16, said Rajkumar Kunjo, an assistant compounder of the tea garden dispensary.

Meanwhile, Sitaran Bin, a former UP member, said Aarti Riqiasion, 60, of Kanihati Tea Garden also died on January 15 due to cold wave.

Local village doctors said various diseases including cold, fever, cough, pneumonia and breathing complications are prevailing among the children and elderly in tea gardens due to extreme cold.

Visiting different tea gardens recently, it was found that many tea workers had been passing a hard

time in the bone-chilling cold due to a lack of warm clothes.

Rajdeo Kairi, a tea worker in Alinagar Tea Garden, said they try to save themselves from the biting cold by making fires with straw.

Adarmoni Mridha, a worker of Shamsheernagar Tea Garden, said she could not afford to buy warm clothes with her daily wage of Tk 120 with which she has to run a five-member family.

"The winter has just added to our misery," she said.

Shankar Rabidas, president of Deochhara Tea Garden Panchayat, said the garden authorities or the government have not distributed any winter clothes among the tea workers. Moreover, medical facilities at the tea gardens are also inadequate, he added.

Kamalganj Upazila Health and Family Planning Officer Dr Mahbulul Alam Bhuiyan said, "I have no information on whether anyone died due to cold."

Contacted, Arnab Malakar, relief and rehabilitation officer (additional duty) in Moulvibazar, said they received a total of 33,200 pieces of warm clothes and Tk 3 lakh cash from the ministry concerned.

There was no allocation for the tea gardens workers, he said.

Makhon Lal Karmaker, central president of Cha Sramik Union, said around 7 lakh workers and their families live in 156 tea gardens. Workers are suffering in the cold for lack of warm clothes.

15 kids die of pneumonia

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bandarban

At least 15 children died of pneumonia at the government hospitals in Khagrachhari, Rangamati and Bandarban in the last two weeks, doctors at the hospitals said.

"Seven children died of pneumonia at Khagrachhari Sadar Hospital in the last fourteen days," Resident Medical Officer (RMO) at the hospital Dr Ripon Bappi said.

They all were aged between one-month to two years, the RMO said, adding that almost all the beds at the Children Ward of the hospital are filled with minor patients.

Although, they referred the dead children to Chattogram Medical College Hospital for better treatment, their parents couldn't shift them due to financial problem, the doctor said.

Most of the children who have recently

been hospitalised are from different remote areas of the hill district, he further added.

Dr Sanjida Afrin, medical officer at Dighinala Health Complex in Khagrachhari, said recently a three-month-old child from a remote village was brought dead to the hospital.

The number of patients, infected with cold and respiratory complications, have increased significantly at the health complex in the last couple of days, she said.

Away in Rangamati, at least six children died of pneumonia and cold-related diseases at Rangamati Sadar Hospital in the last two weeks," RMO of the hospital Showkat Akber Hossain said.

Meanwhile, RMO at Bandarban Sadar Hospital Ziaul Haider said recently an infant, aged around two months, died of pneumonia at the children's ward of the hospital.

JOB VACANCY - MCCI

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Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka (MCCI) is looking for an experienced and qualified person for appointment to the post of **Additional Secretary-General** which in the organisational set-up is just below that of the **Secretary-General and CEO**.

Potential candidates are requested to apply for the position by post to the **Secretary-General & CEO by 15 February 2022**. Details of the job description is posted in MCCI website (<https://mccibd.org/>), LinkedIn (<https://www.linkedin.com/company/metropolitan-chamber-of-commerce-and-industry-dhaka-mcci->) and Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/mcci.dhaka>).

Secretary-General & CEO
Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Dhaka
Chamber Building (4th Floor)
122-124, Motijheel C.A., Dhaka-1000

World now at 'critical juncture' in pandemic

Says WHO chief, urges countries to work together

AGENCIES

The head of the World Health Organization yesterday urged countries to work together to bring the acute phase of the pandemic to an end, saying that they now have all the tools available to do so.

"The Covid-19 pandemic is now entering its third year and we are at a critical juncture," said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus at a press conference alongside Germany's development minister Svenja Schulze.

"We must work together to bring the acute phase of this pandemic to an end. We cannot let it continue to drag on, lurching between panic and neglect."

Tedros also said that Germany had become the agency's largest donor, without giving details. Historically, the United States has made the biggest financial contribution among member states to the organisation.

Schulze said that the top priority of Germany, which took over the G7 Presidency, is to end the pandemic worldwide and called for a "massively accelerated, truly global vaccination campaign" in order to do so.

The coronavirus has killed at least 5,593,747 people since the outbreak emerged in China, according to an AFP tally compiled yesterday.



(L-R) Mahbouba Seraj of the Afghan Women's Network, Ismail Ghazanfar and Heda Khamoush attend a meeting with international special representatives and representatives of Afghans with a background from civil society in Oslo, Norway yesterday. A Taliban delegation is visiting Oslo for meetings with Norwegian officials and Afghan civil society representatives focused on the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan and human rights.

PHOTO: AFP

RUSSIA'S MILITARY BUILDUP NEAR UKRAINE

US weighs troop options

Tells diplomats' families to leave Kyiv; UK withdrawing embassy staff

REUTERS, Washington

The US State Department announced Sunday it was ordering diplomats' family members to leave Ukraine, as US President Joe Biden weighed options for boosting America's military assets in Eastern Europe to counter a buildup of Russian troops.

The order, which also allowed US diplomats stationed at the embassy in the Ukrainian capital Kyiv to leave voluntarily, was one of the clearest signs yet that American officials are bracing for an aggressive Russian move in the region.

"Military action by Russia could come at any time," the US Embassy said in

a statement. Officials "will not be in a position to evacuate American citizens in such a contingency, so US citizens currently present in Ukraine should plan accordingly," it added.

The British Embassy in Ukraine said yesterday some staff and dependants were being withdrawn from Kyiv in response to "a growing threat from Russia".

Meanwhile, Nato said yesterday it was putting forces on standby and reinforcing eastern Europe with more ships and fighter jets in response to the Russia's military build-up.

Tensions in Ukraine have been increasing for months after the Kremlin massed some 100,000 troops near Ukraine's

borders, a dramatic buildup the West says is preparation for a war to prevent Ukraine from ever joining the Nato Western security alliance.

The Kremlin has repeatedly denied planning to invade, but the Russian military already tore off a chunk of Ukrainian territory when it seized Crimea and backed separatist forces who took control of large parts of eastern Ukraine eight years ago.

The US State Department's announcement comes a day after British authorities said they had information the Russian government was considering a former Ukrainian lawmaker as a potential candidate to head a pro-Russian leadership in Kyiv.

Soldiers detain Burkina president

AFP, Ouagadougou

The president of Burkina Faso was arrested yesterday and detained by soldiers along with members of his cabinet, security sources said, one day after troops staged a mutiny in the jihadist-wracked country. Soldiers rose up at several army bases across the West African state on Sunday, demanding the sacking of the military top brass and more resources to fight the Islamist insurgency that erupted in 2015. President Roch Marc Christian Kabore, in power since 2015 and who won re-election in 2020 vowing to prioritise the fight against the insurgency, has faced rising public anger about failure to stop the bloodshed. "President Kabore, the head of parliament and the ministers are effectively in the hands of the soldiers" at the Sangoule Lamizana barracks in the capital Ouagadougou, a security source said. The situation was tense and confused in the capital, where mobile internet had been cut on Sunday, making it difficult to verify rumours of a coup in progress.

Assange can take extradition case to UK's top court

REUTERS, London

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange was yesterday given the chance to challenge a decision allowing him to be extradited to the United States to face 18 criminal charges including breaking a spying law to Britain's Supreme Court. US authorities are seeking Australian-born Assange, 50, to face trial on 18 counts relating to WikiLeaks' release of vast troves of confidential US military records and diplomatic cables which they said had put lives in danger. In December, the High Court in London overturned a lower court's ruling that he should not be extradited on health ground. While judges refused him permission for a direct appeal to the Supreme Court on their decision, they said his case raised an issue of legal importance that he could ask the UK's top court to rule on.



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The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

Credible data vital for road safety

Why is police data on road accidents and casualties still so unreliable?

THE World Bank, in a recent appraisal report prepared for financing a road safety project in Bangladesh, observed that unreliable and poor-quality data on road accidents, deaths and injuries impede road safety management in Bangladesh. The report also mentioned that our current system of recording and analysing data on road accidents is error-prone, cumbersome and time-consuming, and thus unfit for analysis and benchmarking. We should take these observations made by the World Bank seriously, especially given the alarming rise in road accidents across the country.

There are many reasons for the persistence of road accidents—including non-implementation of the road safety law, absence of proper traffic management, and the lack of accountability in the transport sector, to name a few. But a fair assessment of the danger we face is not possible without reliable data. Reportedly, while governments in developed countries rely mainly on police data on road accidents, in Bangladesh we can't really depend on such data since, as per World Bank, the data prepared by police is irregular and incomplete. These are not recorded following a consistent procedure either.

Whenever we want to check the numbers of crashes and fatalities on a year-on-year basis, we need to look at different sources rather than relying on police data, which is unfortunate. While police mainly record road accident data from the First Information Reports (FIRs) or General Dairies (GDs), road safety campaigners source their information from media reports. So, there is a significant gap in the numbers recorded by them. In both cases, many incidents remain unrecorded.

For example, the World Bank has compared the fatalities recorded by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the police from 2010 to 2015, and found 90 percent discrepancy between their data sets. While, according to police data, 2,463 people were killed in road accidents in 2016, the WHO estimate put the number at 24,954. Such a shockingly huge difference in numbers is concerning, because without the real numbers, the authorities cannot take informed decisions and make policies to improve road safety.

Therefore, to make our roads safer and remove the chaos in the transport sector, we need to make changes in every step of the process. Having proper data should be the first step. To ensure this, our police force should develop an effective system of recording and analysing the data. As people in the rural areas do not often report incidents of road accidents, they must be made aware to do so. In fact, the law must specify how and where to report the cases.

We think the World Bank has expressed some valid concerns here. The authorities should look into them and take necessary steps, so we can have authentic data and proper planning for better road safety management.

A hospital sans essential services

DSCC-run hospital in urgent need of overhaul

IT is unfortunate that an important hospital like the Dhaka Mahanagar General Hospital, one of the two hospitals run by the Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC), is struggling to provide essential services to the large number of patients who visit it every day. Based in Old Dhaka, the public hospital is a major destination for local healthcare seekers, and as such, is expected to be sufficiently staffed and equipped to handle the patient load with all sections functioning properly. But in reality, it has one-third of the beds missing and suffers from an acute shortage of doctors, nurses and general staff. The shortage of beds is due to its surgery department remaining closed for the past six years. Given how important a surgery department is in any hospital, one cannot help but wonder why a replacement could not be found in all these years.

According to our report, the 150-bed hospital is supposed to have 50 beds for medicine, 50 for gynaecology and 50 for surgery. After the closure of the surgery department in 2015, following the departure of its designated doctor, it is essentially a 100-bed facility now. Its ailment does not end here, however. It was declared a Covid-dedicated facility during the peak of the pandemic, and the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) had given some ICU beds in 2020 to meet the growing demand. But the facility could not utilise those beds because of a shortage of physicians and other required healthcare workers. At the moment, almost half of the doctors' posts in the hospital are vacant. This explains why patients seeking medical attention have to wait long hours before they can find a doctor.

It is quite surprising that, although the hospital authorities have reportedly sent several requisition letters to the higher authorities for necessary manpower for the ICUs and HDUs, they received no concrete reply till date. The hospital authorities admitted that because of the doctor and staff crisis, they were not able to deliver the services expected of them. It goes without saying that the urgency of having all the departments functioning with the required number of doctors and healthcare workers has become more prominent as the country goes through the third wave of the pandemic.

The sordid pictures coming from a major hospital like the Dhaka Mahanagar General Hospital, run with taxpayers' money, is not only unfortunate; it is totally unacceptable as well. We hope the relevant authorities will take all necessary measures to sufficiently equip the hospital and improve its services without further delay, so that patients can get necessary treatment in time.

198TH BIRTHDAY OF MICHAEL MADHUSUDAN DATTA

Michael Madhusudan Datta: Resistance, Rebellion, Rupture



Dr Azfar Hussain is interim director of the graduate programme in social innovation and associate professor of integrative, religious, and cultural studies at Grand Valley State University in Michigan, U.S. He is also the vice-president of the U.S.-based Global Center for Advanced Studies (GCAS).

AZFAR HUSSAIN

I shall come out like a tremendous comet.

—Michael Madhusudan Datta

MICHAEL Madhusudan Datta (1824-1873) is widely regarded as the first modern Bangla poet. Well before Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899-1976), Madhusudan is even reckoned as the first rebel poet in Bangla literature, although he is by no means a revolutionary like Nazrul. A relentless experimenter with both indigenous and Western poetic forms—and a veritable polyglot with a command over not only Bangla and English, but also Sanskrit, Persian, Urdu, Tamil, Telugu, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, French, German, and Italian—Madhusudan introduced the sonnet in Bangla poetry, while he is also considered the first modern playwright and the first successful writer of a tragedy in Bangla. Best known for his magnum opus called "Meghnadbadh Kabya" (The Poem of the Slaying of Meghnad)—the first Bangla literary epic that inaugurates a rupture with all preceding poetic and metrical traditions while introducing the famous *amritrakshar chhanda* (unrhymed meter) that blasts open the continuum of the traditional *payar* cadences and couplets—Michael Madhusudan Datta exemplarily enacts the dialectics of tensions and transactions between colonial modernity and indigeneity.

In fact, Madhusudan's entire oeuvre—produced in the 19th-century colonial Bengal—encompasses and yet creatively ranges beyond the three stages of anticolonial struggle that the Caribbean revolutionary Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) spells out in his major work called "The Wretched of the Earth" (1961): assimilation, self-discovery, and rebellion. And Madhusudan's own rebellion—including his uncritical assimilationist approaches, his mimetic modes, and even his colonial mindset that one encounters in his early life—can all be seen in aesthetic, architectonic, in even metrical, and, of course, political terms. Now, before I dwell on the character and content of Madhusudan's literary and political rebellion, let me trace a few significant trajectories of his life and work.

Michael Madhusudan Datta was born on January 25, 1824 (1230 by the Bengali calendar), in the village of Sagard(n)ri—located by the Kapotaksha River—in the district of Jashore in present-day Bangladesh. He deeply loved his village and the river of his childhood, both of which continued to figure in his oeuvre. They also appeared in the very epitaph Madhusudan wrote for himself, thereby underlining his identity while also attesting to his rootedness. His father Rainarayan Datta was a lawyer by profession. And Madhusudan's mother Jahnnabi Devi was well-versed in ancient epics and Hindu mythologies. He was their only living child. Madhusudan went to a primary school in Sagard(n)ri. During his childhood, he enjoyed the stories of the two ancient Sanskrit epics—the "Ramayana" and the "Mahabharata"—that his mother used to tell him. She also entertained her son with the stories from Mukundaram's "Chandimangal" (1590) and Bharatchandra Roy's "Annada Mangal" (1732)—the great verse narratives that were produced in precolonial Bengal.

Those stories his mother had told him remained with Madhusudan in profound ways—ones that would later come to inform and inflect his literary productions at more levels than one. In 1832, Madhusudan's entire family moved from their village to Kolkata (then known as Calcutta), where he attended the famous Hindu College (now Presidency College)—the best college at the time—an institution where Madhusudan studied Latin, Greek and English languages and literatures. And, indeed, that college played a crucial role in Westernising Madhusudan. True, he was then heavily under the spell of not only the Western literary canon and classics as such, but also the Western way of living. Madhusudan rejected Hinduism and converted to Christianity. This angered his father, who eventually disowned Madhusudan.

It was also during that period that Madhusudan fully devoted himself to writing poetry in English. In 1849, he published his first book called "The Captive Ladie"—consisting of a tale in two cantos and a verse narrative—a poetic production that surely evinced Madhusudan's command of English and even his artistry and poetic sensibility. But that work did not prove to be a success by any means. The Anglo-Indian educationist JED Bethune went to the extent of suggesting that Madhusudan should

"employ his time to better advantage than writing English poetry" and that he should do well to write in his mother tongue.

Probably the most well-known stories of Madhusudan's life are that of his gargantuan ambition to become a great poet in the English language and that of his eventual glorious return to his mother tongue, although this return does not simply come to mean an

significant rewriting of the ancient Sanskrit epic "Ramayana." This tradition of rebellious rewriting is also seen in so-called "postcolonial" literature—say, from the Caribbean poet Aimé Césaire to the Dominican British novelist Jean Rhys to another Caribbean poet Derek Walcott, to mention but a few. Now, in Madhusudan's epic, to put it bluntly, Ram—who is otherwise considered the supreme being in many Hindu traditions—is not the real protagonist, but the *Rakshasa* monarch Ravana is. In fact, Madhusudan's epic decidedly zeroes in on the slaying of Meghnad, Ravana's eldest son. In Madhusudan's hands, Ravana—customarily and religiously demonised in dominant Hindu narratives—morphs into a real and even powerful human being, one who is capable of grieving, while Ram is depicted not as a god, but as an average human being with his frailties and even aberrations.

Now influenced and inspired by Shakespeare's versions of both humanism and anti-humanism—exemplified in that famous "Hamlet" passage starting with "What a piece of a work is a man!"—Madhusudan surely and epically stages his own humanist and even insurrectionary sensibility that enables us to question, distrust, disobey, resist, rethink, even recreate. Indeed, in more senses than one, Madhusudan's epic is nonconformist, and, by extension, antifeudal and anticolonial—the first epic that fiercely mobilises the liberationist and emancipatory impulses in the era of high colonialism, while unsettling the existing order of things and thoughts. And Madhusudan's deep, active intertextuality that cross-fertilises Homer-Virgil-Dante-Shakespeare-Milton with the ancient Sanskrit epics is not politically neutral either; it means that making connections across geographic, linguistic, literary, and textual boundaries amounts to combating the colonially sanctioned and spatially imprisoned modes of becoming and being in the world.

True, Madhusudan and his works were always supported by Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891), and, later, even by Bankimchandra Chattopadhyay (1838-1894), one who even ardently advocated the need for inscribing Madhusudan's name on the so-called "national flag" of India. But, as my own reading of "Meghnadbadh Kabya" reveals, Madhusudan never endorsed the kind of communally motivated, Hindu-centric Bengali nationalism Bankim promotes. But Bankim deeply admired Madhusudan not because of his rebellion, but because of his genius. Later, even Rabindranath Tagore, Pramatha Chaudhuri, and Buddhadev Bose—all



Michael Madhusudan Datta (January 25, 1824-June 29, 1873)

PHOTO: COLLECTED

orthodox, indigenist rejection or negation of English and European literatures as such—literatures on which he, however, continued to draw in most creative ways, attesting to an unprecedented literary internationalism in colonial India.

Madhusudan did not live a long life. He died when he was only 49. And the actual period of his literary productions in Bangla spanned about seven years—indeed a brief period during which he, however, produced five substantial volumes of



In more senses than one, Madhusudan's epic is non-conformist, and, by extension, antifeudal and anticolonial—the first epic that fiercely mobilises the liberationist and emancipatory impulses in the era of high colonialism, while unsettling the existing order of things and thoughts.

poems in almost headlong succession: "Tilottomasambhab Kabya" (1860), "Meghnadbadh Kabya" (1861), "Brojangan Kabya" (1861), "Beerangana Kabya" (1862), and "Chaturdashpadee Kabitabolee" (1866). According to one authoritative account, between 1858 and 1862, Madhusudan published five plays, three narrative poems, and a volume of lyrics encompassing the variations on the Radha-Krishna theme. During the same period, Madhusudan also translated three plays from Bangla to English; among them was Dinbandhu Mitra's famous play called "Nil Darpan."

Let me now return to "Meghnadbadh Kabya"—Madhusudan's epic poem in nine cantos—which is a trailblazing intervention in the domain of Bangla poetry. Its staggering amplitude, its breathtaking intertextuality, its sonorous music coupled with the everydayness of the prosaic language that it poetically mediates, its polysemous vectors and valences, its relentless metaphorical imagination and its novel metrical adventures, and, above all, its reversal of hegemonically structured epistemologies and ontologies—including the Hinduism-sanctioned hierarchies—call for an extended discussion. But, owing to space constraints, I can only touch on a few aspects of Madhusudan's epic here.

To begin with, "Meghnadbadh Kabya" is a politically and aesthetically

of whose anti-epical positions and characteristic lyrical proclivities are well-known—denigrated "Meghnadbadh Kabya", although, later, it was only Rabindranath who revised his position vis-a-vis Madhusudan's epic while moving in the direction of commending "Meghnadbadh's" thematic and stylistic innovativeness and élan.

Madhusudan's social farces—"Buro Shaliker Ghare Ron" (1860) and "Ekei Ki Bole Sabhyata" (1860)—are also unprecedented, groundbreaking interventions in the history of Bangla literature—works that significantly foreground the questions of justice and rebellion as well as the woman question with full force, although Madhusudan was not a feminist *stricto sensu*. But Madhusudan later wrote some brilliant plays, decisively focused as they are on the woman question, such as "Sermista" (1859) and "Krishnakumari" (1860)—plays that also mobilise emancipatory impulses, even if Madhusudan couldn't transcend his own male and class limitations in the final instance.

In this short piece, I could only scratch the surface of Madhusudan's work. But reinventing his work at the contemporary conjuncture amounts to reconceptualising the political value of an aesthetic that can enable us to stage our resistances to all forms and forces of colonisation and dehumanisation—direct and indirect—to say the least.

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF BANGLADESH-RUSSIA DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

The prospects of Bangladesh-Russia cooperation



Igor Morgulov is the deputy minister of foreign affairs of the Russian Federation.

IGOR MORGULOV

ON January 25, 2022, the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Russian Federation celebrate a remarkable date: on this day 50 years ago, less than a year after the declaration of Bangladesh's independence, our countries established diplomatic relations.

The recognition of Bangladesh by the Soviet Union made direct bilateral political dialogue possible. In March 1972, the founder and the first president of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, paid a visit to Moscow, where he met with Secretary General of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Leonid Brezhnev, Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet Nikolai Podgorny, Chairman of the Council of Ministers Alexei Kosygin, and other officials. During the trip, the intergovernmental agreements were concluded on economic and technical cooperation, on providing free assistance for restoring navigation in the seaports of Bangladesh, and on air services, trade, agreements on the USSR trade representation in Bangladesh, as well as on cultural and scientific cooperation. Some of the treaties signed then are still in force.

Upon the request of the Bangladesh government, in April 1972, the Special Expedition 12 of the Soviet Navy was sent to the Bay of Bengal. It was entrusted with the task of clearing the port of Chittagong from mines and sunken ships left there after the Liberation War ended in December 1971. In spite of the extraordinary technical complexity, it was accomplished, enabling the local authorities to promptly ensure the vital supplies of food and other necessary goods to the war-torn country. Unfortunately, it was not without the losses: on July 13, 1973, a senior sailor of the floating workshop PM-156 of the Kamchatka flotilla, Yuri Redkin, was killed in the line of duty. He was buried in Chittagong with military honours in the territory of the Naval Academy.

It is gratifying that after half a century, the Bangladeshis friends continue to cherish the memory of the feat of the Soviet sailors. Such a delicate attitude towards our common history deserves respect.

In 1971-1975, the USSR provided Bangladesh with significant economic assistance. In particular, the Soviet specialists participated in the construction of Ghorashal TPP, which still remains one

of the largest in the country. On December 29, 1991, Bangladesh recognised the Russian Federation as the successor state of the USSR. A new impetus to the bilateral cooperation was given by the advent of the Awami League government in Dhaka in 2009, headed by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who followed her father Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's policy for cooperation with Russia.

In 2010, on the sidelines of the International Tiger Conservation Forum, a meeting was held between Sheikh Hasina and Vladimir Putin, then the chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation. In 2013, the prime minister paid an official visit to Moscow. In 2016, she met Dmitry Medvedev, chairman of the Government of the Russian Federation, during the summit of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) in Ulaanbaatar. These contacts outlined key directions of our bilateral cooperation for years ahead.

The heads of our foreign ministries have conducted a number of meetings as well. The recent talks between Sergey Lavrov and Dr AK Abdul Momen, minister of foreign affairs of Bangladesh, were held in July 2021 in Tashkent, on the sidelines of the international conference "Central and South Asia: Regional Connectivity, Challenges and Opportunities." The two ministries also have the mechanisms of bilateral consultations on international issues and counterterrorism.

The contacts have been established between our supreme legislative bodies. The participation of Dr Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury in the 2nd International Forum of "Development of Parliamentarism" in June-July 2019 and the 3rd Eurasian Women's Forum in October 2021 are the most notable recent events in this area. Since November, a parliamentary friendship group on relations with the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation has been functioning in the parliament of Bangladesh.

Our countries share commitment to the fundamental principles of international cooperation set forth in the UN Charter. Proximity and often similarity of the approaches towards the topical issues of global and regional agenda ensure successful coordination of our efforts within the UN and other multilateral structures. For instance, Bangladesh and Russia are jointly opposing glorification of Nazism, placement of arms in outer space, and use of ICTs for criminal purposes.

The Rosatom State Corporation is significantly contributing to the development of the Bangladeshi energy sector. It is taking part in implementing the largest joint project—construction of the Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) in Pabna, which is financed through the state



Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in a meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin during her visit to Moscow in January 2013.

SOURCE: KREMLIN.RU

The existing experience of cooperation in peaceful use of atomic energy may serve as a basis for further collaboration, if the Bangladeshi side decides to start construction of the second NPP.

credit extended by Russia. Last October saw installation of the reactor pressure vessel of the plant's Unit 1. In general, two units with the total capacity of 2,400 megawatt are to be put into operation. The existing experience of cooperation in peaceful use of atomic energy may serve as a basis for further collaboration, if the Bangladeshi side decides to start construction of the second NPP.

The bilateral trade turnover is growing steadily. In 2020, despite the negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, it reached USD 2.4 billion. Statistical data for the first half of 2021 gives hope that this mark can be exceeded. The supplies of wheat (in 2021, 400,000 tonnes) and fertilisers (180,000 tonnes), metals, machinery and equipment constitute the basis of our exports, while garments, knitwear and seafood are the major items of the Bangladeshi imports.

The Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation, established in 2017, streamlined our economic ties.

Russian-made military hardware is in service with the Bangladesh Army and the Bangladesh Air Force. Our partners have procured the Yak-130 combat-training aircraft, the Mi-17 and the Mi-171 helicopters, the BTR-80 armoured personnel carriers, the MiG-29 fighter aircrafts and other special equipment.

More than 6,000 citizens of Bangladesh have graduated from Soviet and Russian universities. Now, they are employed in almost all spheres of their country's economic and social life, and hold senior positions in government agencies, private companies and cultural associations. Our bilateral cooperation in education is still valid today, especially due to the ongoing training of qualified personnel for exploitation of the Rooppur NPP. In 2021, Russia provided 70 scholarships under its government quota for Bangladeshi

students.

The Peoples' Friendship University of Russia, also known as RUDN University, is a traditional partner of foreign educational organisations. In March 2021, RUDN University and the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) signed a memorandum of understanding aimed at promoting cooperation in humanities and natural and social sciences. The negotiations between the Tyumen State University and the Institute of Modern Languages of Dhaka University on cooperation in teaching Russian as a foreign language through advanced educational methods have reached the final stage. It is worth mentioning that the Bangladeshi people are showing increasing interest towards learning Russian. For example, around 200 students annually attend the Russian language courses at the Russian House in Dhaka.

Bangladesh and Russia have similar positions on inter-faith dialogue and combating religious extremism, which is manifested in our cooperation under the auspices of the Group of Strategic Vision "Russia-Islamic world."

Cultural exchanges, more than anything else, promote affinity and better mutual understanding between our peoples. Unfortunately, over the last two years, the Covid-19 pandemic has hampered activities in this area. Nevertheless, this work is still underway. On November 4, 2021, the Embassy of Russia in Dhaka hosted a concert of the Moscow Cossack Choir timed to the National Unity Day, as well as the 50th anniversary of independence of Bangladesh and the 100th anniversary of the birth of its founder Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

The People's Republic of Bangladesh is an important partner of Russia in South Asia. Our relations are strong and their potential is immense. All conditions are in place to harness it to the full.

Time for RMG makers to think globally



Mostafiz Uddin is Managing Director of Denim Expert Limited, and Founder and CEO of Bangladesh Apparel Exchange (BAE) and Bangladesh Denim Expo.

RMG NOTES

MOSTAFIZ UDDIN

WHEN it comes to the geography of apparel production, the rules are changing, and this is something all Bangladeshi RMG manufacturers need to be aware of.

The first issue to consider is nearshoring. There are growing calls in some quarters for fashion retailers to shift production closer to their key markets in order to reduce the carbon emissions associated with moving clothing around the world.

Talk of nearshoring has been around for many years, but is yet to take off significantly, with the vast majority of clothing still being produced in Asia. Most recently, however, German apparel retailer C&A commenced the production of jeans in Germany. C&A sells around 12 million pairs of jeans annually, so if the business hits its 800,000 target after 2022, this would constitute 6.6 percent of total annual production.

Should we, as manufacturers, feel threatened by this? Yes and no. On the one hand, this is the kind of production we would like to see in Bangladesh. Although small by comparison to the huge volumes produced in our country, 800,000 is still a significant amount. It would also be a concern if other retailers followed suit.

On the other hand, C&A has stated very clearly that its German jeans production will be very bespoke, with a focus on sustainability and use of the latest cutting-edge production technology.

In fact, whenever a fashion retailer moves production closer to home, it is often with a focus on niche production and high added value. This way, the business is not so dependent on the economies of scale that can be gained by moving to low-cost countries in Asia.

However, reading the story about C&A also got me thinking about whether Bangladeshi garment-makers should be taking a more global view when it comes to

apparel production.

Ours is a specialised industry, and therefore efforts to nearshore textile production have proven difficult in the past. When the likes of the US and UK sent production abroad, they decimated their respective textile industries and waved goodbye to a lot of skilled workers in the process.

As such, why don't we, as clothing producers, take our expertise abroad and produce closer to our main global markets? This offers us, as manufacturers, an excellent opportunity to leverage our brand as manufacturers and is also a great marketing exercise.

In fact, some of our competitors are already adopting this approach, opening up exciting new business opportunities in the process. Last year, Pakistani denim specialist Artistic Milliners, a vertically integrated producer with spinning, weaving, dyeing and garment manufacturing capabilities, purchased a garment factory in California under a new name, with a declared output capacity of 100,000 units per month. Meanwhile, the Vietnamese sustainable denim producer, Saitex, last year announced the opening of Saitex USA, a "factory of the future" which is said to be equipped with state-of-the-art manufacturing technology and energy and resource-efficient machinery. This is Saitex's first facility outside of its Vietnam base.

Will the manufacturers mentioned above establish more facilities abroad? And what can Bangladeshi RMG businesses learn from this? My hunch is that such facilities are branding and marketing exercises first and foremost—for now, anyway.

We have to remember that investments in foreign markets do constitute a high risk, given one has to adapt to local customs, the logistical costs of setting up and so on.

Perhaps a more pragmatic approach in the short term is to initially establish one-off "showcase" facilities, and then look at the possibility of setting up consortiums or "virtual supply chains." This way, manufacturers can join together across multiple locations to provide a single virtual manufacturer offering made up of different segments of the garment supply chain, all complementing each other. This

can offer the opportunities of nearshoring without financial risk and uncertainty.

Is there an opportunity for Bangladeshi manufacturers to establish mutually beneficial connections with like-minded supply chain actors in other markets? Surely, we would have nothing to lose by taking initiative and making a few connections with similarly progressive

businesses. These partnerships also provide the benefits of vertical integration, economies of scale, and joint sales and marketing opportunities.

It's a win-win all round, which is why I think our own manufacturers need to adopt a more flexible, open and responsive approach when it comes to the geography of where clothing is made.

Why don't we, as clothing producers, take our expertise abroad and produce closer to our main global markets? This offers us, as manufacturers, an excellent opportunity to leverage our brand as manufacturers and is also a great marketing exercise.

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শহিদ দিবস ও আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা দিবস ২০২২
উপলক্ষে রচনা প্রতিযোগিতা।

"শহিদ দিবস ও আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা দিবস ২০২২" উদযাপন উপলক্ষে গণগ্রন্থাগার অধিদপ্তরের সুফিয়া কামাল জাতীয় গণগ্রন্থাগার, ঢাকা এবং বিভাগীয়, জেলা ও উপজেলা সরকারি গণগ্রন্থাগারসমূহে নিম্নোক্ত বিষয়ে রচনা প্রতিযোগিতা অনুষ্ঠিত হবে। এ উপলক্ষে অগ্রাহী সকলকে যোগ্যতা অনুযায়ী প্রতিযোগিতার অংশগ্রহণের জন্য আহ্বান জানানো যাচ্ছে।

রচনা প্রতিযোগিতা:

ক্রমিক নম্বর	গ্রুপ	শ্রেণি	রচনা প্রতিযোগিতার বিষয়	শব্দসীমা
১.	ক	পঞ্চম-অষ্টম	আন্তর্জাতিক মাতৃভাষা দিবস	১০০০
২.	খ	নবম-দ্বাদশ	সর্বস্তরে মাতৃভাষার প্রচলন	১২০০
৩.	গ	স্নাতক-স্নাতকোত্তর	অনুবাদ সাহিত্যে বাংলা ভাষা	১৫০০
৪.	ঘ	সর্বসাধারণ	বাংলা ভাষা প্রতিষ্ঠায় ভাষা শহিদদের অবদান	১৮০০
৫.	ঙ	বিশেষ (প্রতিবন্ধী)	বাংলা ভাষা প্রতিষ্ঠায় জাতির পিতার অবদান	১০০০

রচনা প্রতিযোগিতা বিষয়ে জ্ঞাতব্য: রচনা প্রতিযোগিতার ঢাকা মহানগর ও ঢাকা জেলার প্রতিযোগীকে স্বহস্তে লিখিত রচনা সুফিয়া কামাল জাতীয় গণগ্রন্থাগার, ১০, কাঙ্গালী নজরুল ইসলাম এডিনিউ, শাহবাগ, ঢাকা এবং অন্যান্য বিভাগ, জেলা ও উপজেলার প্রতিযোগীকে সংশ্লিষ্ট বিভাগীয়, জেলা ও উপজেলা (কেবলমাত্র দেওয়ানগঞ্জ ও বকশীগঞ্জ উপজেলা, জেলা-জামালপুর এবং টুঙ্গিপাড়া উপজেলা, জেলা-গোপালগঞ্জ) সরকারি গণগ্রন্থাগারে জমা দিতে হবে। রচনা ১৫.০২.২০২২ খ্রি. তারিখের মধ্যে ডাকযোগ্য/সরাসরি পৌঁছাতে হবে।

শর্তাবলি:

১. রচনা A4 আকারের সাদা কাগজে স্বহস্তে প্রতি পাতার একদিকে লিখতে হবে, রচনার শব্দসংখ্যা নির্ধারিত সীমার মধ্যে থাকা আবশ্যিক।
২. ছাত্রছাত্রীদের ক্ষেত্রে স্টুডেন্ট আইডি কার্ড/৯ শ শিকা প্রতিষ্ঠান প্রধান কর্তৃক প্রত্যয়নপত্র এবং অন্যান্য প্রতিযোগীর ক্ষেত্রে জাতীয় পরিচয়পত্রের ফটোকপি অথবা প্রথম শ্রেণীর কর্মকর্তা কর্তৃক প্রত্যয়নপত্র জমা দিতে হবে।
৩. রচনার অবশ্যই জমাদানকারীর নাম, পিতা ও মাতার নাম, ঠিকানা, স্টুডেন্ট আইডি কার্ড এবং মোবাইল নম্বর উল্লেখ করতে হবে।

(স্বাক্ষর)
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(স্বাক্ষর)
মহাপরিচালক (অতিরিক্ত সচিব)
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জিডি-১৪৫



Ummay Hafsa Rumky won a gold medal in women's high jump, setting a national record of 1.81m in the Sheikh Kamal 45th National Athletics.

PHOTOS: KHANDAKAR TAREK
COURTESY OF: UMMAY HAFSA RUMKY



YOUNG ACHIEVER

RUMKY'S great leap forward

SHANIZ CHOWDHURY

Ummay Hafsa Rumky won a gold medal in women's high jump, setting a national record of 1.81m in the Sheikh Kamal 45th National Athletics.

She is equally proficient in cricket, football, volleyball, and badminton. She started training professionally in high jump from 2015.

From 2017 to 2019, she practiced rigorously for the South Asian (SA) Games, and ended up winning a gold medal. However, the overload of training led to her feet suffering the blow. After four months of treatment, her injuries still persisted, so there were no other options but surgery.

"24 rods were inserted in my shin bones. Doctors said that even after the surgery, my feet won't be completely fixed. I had

low expectations, but I still plucked up the courage to participate in the SA Games, because I didn't want anyone to think I am weak," she said.

Hailing from Sirajganj, Rumky is one of five daughters. Since her childhood, people scorned her for wearing jerseys, and engaging in sports. "My parents tried to convince me to give up. However, I knew I had to keep playing, no matter what. When I started performing well, I earned praises, but some people continue to bad-mouth me and my family," shared Rumky.

According to her, high jump needs more exposure. "Only a handful of people on the field know I made a record because it was not nationally televised. The games need to be shown live and profiles of players should be publicised by the media," she said.

With the hope of participating in the Southeast Asian Games, Rumky continues to make Bangladesh proud.

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"The games need to be shown live and profiles of players should be publicised by the media," said Rumky.

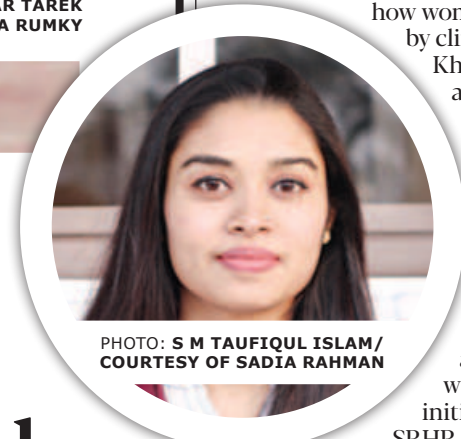


PHOTO: S M TAUFUQUL ISLAM/
COURTESY OF SADIA RAHMAN

NURTURING DREAMS

Sadia Rahman wins Gates Institute's 2021 Ingenuity Fund

ZAREEN NAWAR

Sadia Rahman, Program Director of Light to Life, was the only Bangladeshi among the six voted winners of the 2021 Ingenuity Fund, developed by the Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health's Bill & Melinda Gates Institute for Population and Reproductive Health (Gates Institute), and supported by Pathfinder International and Bayer.

Each winner received \$10,000 to lead innovative projects on reproductive health. All applicants to the Ingenuity Fund, including the six award winners, are part of the 120 Under 40: New Generation of Family Planning Leaders programme.

Light to Life is a youth-led organisation leading different programmes around reproductive health, mental health, and climate change. Sadia merged the ideas to focus on how women are physically impacted by climate change, targeting Khulna, Barishal, Chattogram, and Cox's Bazar.

She aims to initiate an online platform titled, "School of (Im)Possible", where teachers will teach different art techniques, connecting climate change and environment.

Focusing on behavioural change efforts and awareness on SRHR issues within climate change, her initiative will promote inclusive SRHR and climate education through play-based learning and participatory experience. It will reach adolescents and youths aged between 13 to 30 years from all over Bangladesh. Sadia recently initiated courses on climate education for around 14 institutions and 700 students.

Furthermore, Light to Life organised an art festival, where government policymakers and researchers were in attendance alongside youngsters, to create a synergically engaged dialogue.

During the festival, participants conjured up their discussions or thoughts via mediums of art. Last year, Light to Life organised a hybrid festival for their pilot project, which was well received.

"I received advice from professors of Johns Hopkins University on how to garner more traffic and engagement online," said Sadia.

Presently, Sadia is working on mental health first aid to help young people identify whether they or the people they are close to, need professional help for their mental health.

Ingenuity Fund winners and their projects will be spotlighted during the 2022 World Contraception Day and the 6th International Conference on Family Planning, taking place in Thailand in November 2022.

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YOUTH IN ACTION

Accessories to go with your masks

"In between the country's lockdowns - people were going out, meeting friends and family and also eating out at restaurants. I saw that everyone had masks, but they didn't know what to do with their masks when they were not wearing them," explains Tazmeri

LABIBA ANJUMI KABIR

Strap It Up Bangladesh is an online business of face mask accessories. Tazmeri Hoque Mou started the initiative in April 2021, during the pandemic.

As she lived across South East Asia for around four years, Tazmeri was quick to observe that wearing masks was a norm in Vietnam and Thailand even before the pandemic, as a way of combating pollution and viruses.

"Since Bangladesh is a highly polluted country, it should have been a norm for us too," she adds.

Nowadays, masks have



Tazmeri designs each mask strap herself, experimenting with her products every now and then.



Tazmeri Hoque Mou.

PHOTOS: COURTESY

become an integral part of our lives. The idea behind Strap It Up is to make wearing masks more fun, while maintaining safety. Although the initial idea was purely functional, there was more to it.

"In between the country's lockdowns - people were going out, meeting friends and family and also eating out at restaurants. I saw that everyone had masks, but they didn't know what to do with their masks when they were not wearing them. Some covered their chins, some left their masks hanging from one of

their ears, and some put their masks around their wrists. The mask strap simply lets you keep your mask hanging around your neck, when you don't need it," explains Tazmeri.

She researches for and designs each mask strap by herself.

Tazmeri experiments with her products every now and then. More recently, she added multi purpose eyeglass straps to her product line.

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SPOTLIGHT

The many facets of debating

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

Debating, as an extracurricular activity, requires patience, compassion, and persistence, besides strong research and presentation skills. It is crucial for debaters to be respectful towards their opponents, while presenting logical and constructive criticism.

For Wasif Amin Khan, a student of IBA, DU, and Debating Excellence Lead of Bangladesh Debating Council (BDC), one of the best ways to prepare for tournaments is to read up on different topics, especially current global affairs.

BDC aims to make English debating more common among students through their different programmes.

Surodip Paul, former Debate and Development Lead at BDC, and a student of IBA is motivated by debating to analyse different issues critically, and empathise with others. "If a debater is speaking after their teammate, they must listen carefully in order to ensure consistency," he further added.

Shirsha Songshoptak, a student of BUET, was always fascinated by art, history, economics, and international affairs. However, it was tough for him to find a push to learn more about these topics, especially as they did not directly coincide with his academic path. Debating gave him that push.

Meanwhile, Jumana Tanuja, a student of BUET and Equity Officer at BDC, shared that most of her lab classes and debate tournaments usually clash with one another. Once offline classes resume, it will be tough for her to dedicate enough effort behind debating.

Many debaters face discrimination on the basis of their accents. "Being a woman of colour whose first language is not English is difficult at international tournaments because judges have a bias for clean and polished accents," shared Nayara Noor, a student of BRAC University and Equity and Compliance Lead at BDC.

Acquiring visas for international tournaments is difficult for many debaters, and tickets are quite expensive. Most institutions cannot support their students in these endeavours.

However, online tournaments, owing to the pandemic, have made debating more accessible. "Students from across the world are embracing online debates, appearing regularly in prestigious tournaments worldwide, and proving that there is very little correlation between one's debating prowess and background," concluded Shudipto Ahmed, a student of DU, and Vice Chair of BDC.

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ILLUSTRATION: OISHIK JAWAD

'Assessing tacky BPL pitches is key'

SPORTS REPORTER

Low totals and slow pitches have hogged the spotlight right from the start of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), especially in the day games.

After ending on the losing side following a low-scoring thriller against Comilla Victorians in their opening game, Sylhet Sunrisers are eyeing a comeback against Minister Dhaka in today's first game.

Sylhet's Caribbean wicket-keeper batter Lendl Simmons, who missed out on the first game but expected to return to the side, informed that assessing the pitch will be the key for the teams in the ongoing eighth edition of the



Shakib Al Hasan (C), Andre Russell (L) and Dwayne Bravo enjoy their time in the middle during Barishal Fortune's BPL match against Minister Group Dhaka in Mirpur yesterday. They had reason to be jolly – Shakib getting into the 400-wicket club in T20s while Russell and Bravo both making their mark both with bat and ball. (Bottom) Andre Fletcher's nasty injury though, during the second match of the day between Chattogram Challengers and Khulna Tigers, left everyone concerned.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Dhaka off the mark

SPORTS REPORTER

BPL. "I'm not injured, just a little bit jet lagged. Just wanted to rest for the first game. It's a long tournament so I wanted to keep myself fresh. From watching a couple of games, I think the wicket is a little tacky. The ball isn't coming on as much. These aren't really high-scoring games. I think it's just about assessing and seeing how things go," Simmons told the media yesterday.

Meanwhile, Shakib Al Hasan's Fortune Barishal faced their first defeat of the tournament by four wickets in their second game against Dhaka after posting a modest total of 129 runs yesterday.

While the pitch remains at the heart of discussion as Comilla takes on Barishal in today's second fixture, South African Cameron Delport of Comilla is hopeful that the surface will play better as the tournament progresses.

"I'm sure it [pitch] will improve as it's early in the tournament. We can't choose what wickets we get," said Delport.

Mahmudullah Riyad's Minister Group Dhaka, touted as one of the favourites to win the tournament, lost their first two matches but were able to grind through a difficult match. All of their bowlers chipped in to restrict title aspirants Fortune Barishal to a lowly total. Mahmudullah played a captain's knock, ably supported by Shuvagata Hom's resilient 29, to get the team out of trouble before Andre Russell's carnage late on saw Dhaka notch their first win of the tournament.

Shafiqul shows promise

Left-arm seamer Shafiqul Islam had impressed in domestic tournaments such as the Dhaka Premier and the National Cricket League. The 24-year-old did not disappoint after being given an opportunity by Barishal to play his first-ever BPL match.

While the surface did not provide seam movement, Shafiqul used the conditions well to get the ball to talk. An outswinger beat Tamim Iqbal in the first over and made the left-hander ponder over the length and he went down the pitch next delivery only to get castled for a duck. Then the young pacer got one to tail in to Mohammad Shahzad, as the ball swung in air before disturbing the off stump. Barishal head coach Khaled Mahmud was impressed.

"I'm very impressed with that boy. Last year when I was with Khulna, he was there and I have seen him improve a lot over the last five-six years. He did well at the nets and I wanted to play him in the first match but due to the combination it didn't happen. He bowled really well but a long way to go for him. A good prospect for Bangladesh



cricket in the future," Mahmud said.

Shakib in 400-wicket club

Bangladesh's star performer Shakib Al Hasan scaled yet another record, becoming only the fifth bowler in history to bag 400 T20 wickets, only behind his Fortune Barishal teammate Dwayne Bravo, South Africa's Imran Tahir, Windies T20 star Sunil Narine and Afghan leggie Rashid Khan.

Shakib notched his 400th scalp by picking up the wicket of his counterpart Mahmudullah Riyad. The dismissal came too late for Shakib and Barishal as Mahmudullah's run-a-ball 47 had already seen the scores levelled before Dhaka notched a four-wicket win. The all-rounder accomplished the feat in 352 matches, at an

average of 21.17 and a strike rate of 18.6.

Shuvo's unwanted record

The match between Chattogram Challengers and Khulna Tigers saw the latter's left-arm spinner Sohrawordi Shuvo attain an unwanted record, conceding the most expensive first over of an innings in a BPL match. Chattogram's Kennar Lewis and Will Jacks tore into the spinner, picking up two fours and two sixes in a 23-run over. The record previously belonged to Kamrul Islam Rabbi, who conceded 22 in a BPL game in 2019 while playing for Rajshahi Kings against Chittagong Vikings.

Chattogram went on to post 190 for seven before restricting Khulna to 165 for nine for a 25-run victory.

Papal gift for Messi

AFP, VATICAN CITY

Football superstar Lionel Messi has bagged himself a shirt signed by fellow Argentine soccer fanatic Pope Francis, the Vatican's sports association said Monday.

Paris Saint-Germain forward Messi, who returned to action on Sunday after a bout of Covid, had given the pontiff a signed piece of kit in October, via French Prime Minister Jean Castex.

In an unusual shirt swap, the yellow jersey of the Athletica Vaticana – the tiny state's multi-sport team – was then given to Messi by French bishop Emmanuel Gobilliard.

"A man of faith, Messi told me how important this step was for him. We prayed together," Gobilliard, who will be the Holy See's delegate to the Olympic Games in Paris in 2024, said on Twitter.

The scrawled signature in black pen by the 85-year-old head of the Roman Catholic church was a "blessing" for the seven-time Ballon d'Or winner, Athletica Vaticana said on Facebook.

Francis – a huge fan of the Buenos Aires team, San Lorenzo – first met Messi in 2013, shortly after being elected



pope.

The pontiff shared memories last year of playing football as a child in the streets with makeshift balls, which he said sufficed to bring him and his childhood friends pleasure.

TIGRESSES fall short

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh women's cricket team failed to cross the final hurdle on road to 2022 Commonwealth Games as they lost the final match of the Commonwealth Games Qualifiers by 22 runs against Sri Lanka at the Kimrara Academy Oval in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

In the virtual knockout game for qualification with both teams on equal points and aiming for the top position in the group, Sri Lanka rode on an all-round show from captain Chamari Athapaththu to land on the winning side. Athapaththu first struck a 28-ball 48 as an opener to set the tone for a strong total of 136 for six in 20 overs.

Athapaththu went on to demonstrate brilliance with the ball as well, picking up three wickets which included the key dismissals of Murshida Khatun and Nigar Sultana as Bangladesh faltered in their chase of 137 and ended up on 114 for five after 20 overs.

The Tigresses finished second in the five-team points table with 6 points, two points fewer than Sri Lanka, and will not be taking part in next year's tournament in Birmingham.

'Not gonna stop now'

AFP, Melbourne

French veteran Alize Cornet declared "I'm not gonna stop now" after upsetting Simona Halep in brutal heat at the Australian Open Monday to make her first Grand Slam quarter-final on her 63rd attempt.

Both players struggled as the temperatures hit 33 Celsius (91 Fahrenheit) on Rod Laver Arena, but it was the 32-year-old who prevailed 6-4, 3-6, 6-4 in a gruelling 2hr 33min. She will now play 27th-seeded Danielle Collins for a place in the semis after the American outlasted Elise Mertens 4-6, 6-4, 6-4 in a near three-hour epic.

The breakthrough has been a long time coming for Cornet, who made her Grand Slam debut at the French Open in 2005 but had never been past the fourth round before.

Thailand's Tamarine Tanasugarn previously held the record for most appearances before reaching a quarter-final at this level, achieving the feat on her 45th try at Wimbledon in 2008.

"After 16 years on the tour, I never give up. Today I realised this goal that was very important to me for a while," said Cornet, who upset world number three Garbine Muguruza in round two.

"After beating a few big names, Muguruza, today Halep, they are all players that I admire a lot. I don't know what happened in the past, and really, honestly, right now I don't care."

Asked what her goals were now after reaching a first quarter-final, Cornet replied:

"Going further."

"I mean, I'm not gonna stop now.

"I'm still ambitious. I just have to soak it in, you know, take time to appreciate the moment and be proud of what I did today.

"But definitely from tomorrow I will have to think about my next match and how I can go farther in the tournament.

"The sky's the limit. For the first time of my life, I really believe I can go till the end."

The pair traded breaks in an attritional opening set before Cornet sealed it in 48 minutes that took their toll.

She needed an ice bag on her head, drank as much fluid as she could at the changeover and her hand appeared to be shaking.

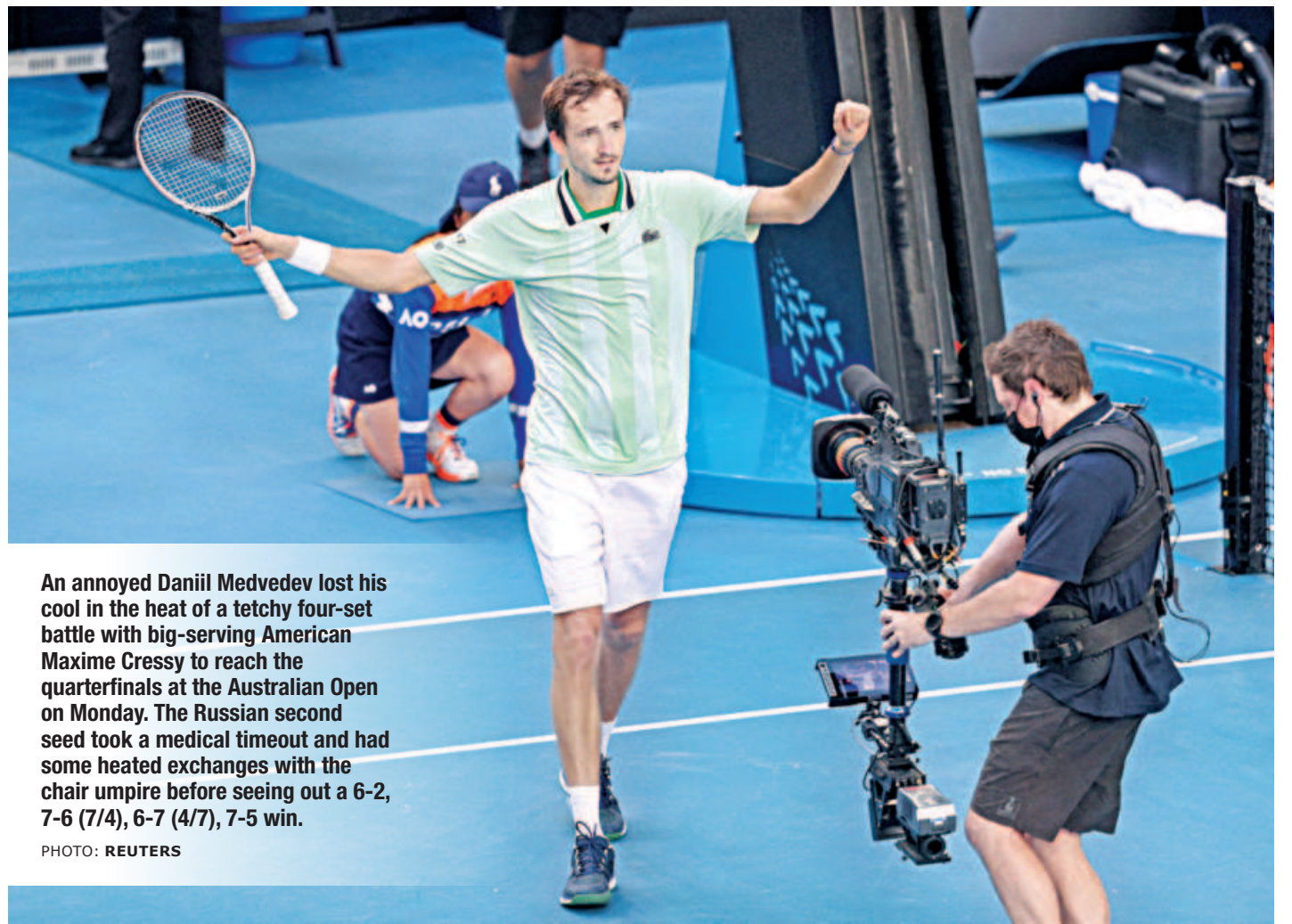
Halep was also distressed in the heat, constantly bending over to catch her breath, but somehow persevered to take the second set as Cornet berated the umpire: "It's insane, it's inhuman."

The Romanian worked a break point at 3-2 in the final set but failed to convert and tossed her racquet away in disgust.

Instead it was Cornet who struck to move a break up at 4-3 as Halep netted a backhand with the Frenchwoman dropping to her knees in exhaustion three games later after clinching victory.

"It was definitely very hard conditions to play. I could see that Simona was also struggling, like me," said Cornet.

"We were both fighters on the court out there, and really giving everything we had."



An annoyed Daniil Medvedev lost his cool in the heat of a tetchy four-set battle with big-serving American Maxime Cressy to reach the quarterfinals at the Australian Open on Monday. The Russian second seed took a medical timeout and had some heated exchanges with the chair umpire before seeing out a 6-2, 7-6 (7/4), 6-7 (4/7), 7-5 win.

PHOTO: REUTERS



Labourers of a steel re-rolling mill, in the capital's Postogola Shoshan Ghat area, seen engaged in dangerous work without any proper safety gear or tools. The authorities of such mills and factories hardly pay attention to workers' safety, which often results in tragic accidents. The photo was taken recently. PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

Girl found dead in Rangpur victim support centre

2 police personnel closed; probe body formed

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

Authorities withdrew two police personnel yesterday in connection with the death of a young girl at the victim support centre of Kotwali Police Station on Sunday.

Rangpur's Deputy Commissioner of Police (Crime) Abu Maruf Hossain told reporters yesterday that he is heading a three-member body, formed on the police commissioner's directive, to probe the incident.

The other members are Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic) Menhazul Alam and Assistant Commissioner of Police (CTSB) Mahbub ul Alam.

Assistant Sub-inspector Nadira Akhter and constable Afroza Begum of Kotwali Police Station were withdrawn and attached to the police lines due to their alleged negligence of duty, the DC said.

The body of 19-year-old Ruhi was recovered from the victim support centre of the police station around noon on Sunday. It was later sent to Rangpur Medical College Hospital for an autopsy, said the DC, adding that the body was handed to family members yesterday evening, following the autopsy.

Ruhi is the daughter of Sekendar Ali of Hariyarghat village in Jhenaidah.

Maruf claimed Ruhi died by suicide.

On January 22, Ruhi had come to Rangpur to meet a boy named Akash, the DC said. Akash's mobile phone was switched off at one stage, and the girl started wandering in the area till midnight. Haragachha police rescued her and took her to the victim support centre.

RISKY DWELLING

Govt report recommends relocating 6,000 Rohingyas living on hill slopes

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Around 6,000 Rohingyas should be evacuated from two camps in Cox's Bazar to avert casualties as they are living on hilly slopes that are vulnerable to landslides, said a government report.

The Department of Environment (DoE) report said the hillocks of the camps, which have been razed by 75 to 90 degrees, are at risk of landslides, especially during the heavy rain expected in the coming monsoon.

The report, prepared after a field visit on December 21, said around 6,000 people of 1,267 families are living on the slopes of hillocks at Camps 21 and 22 in Teknaf and should be evacuated from there before the next monsoon.

Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) Shah Rezwan Hayat told The Daily Star that he was yet to receive the official order to act on the information but received a copy of the environmental assessment report.

"After receiving the copy and instructions, we will review the report and will take appropriate actions consulting with all stakeholders," he said.

Hayat said Camp 21 is one of the most vulnerable to landslide among the Rohingya camps.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the DoE report.

Md Ashraf Uddin, DoE director general, said they have already sent letters to the authorities concerned mentioning the report findings to take actions.

Local authorities and international aid agencies have long been warning about a looming natural disaster in the densely populated camps during monsoon.

According to RRRRC office sources, six Rohingya

refugees were killed due to landslides and flooding in the camps last year.

Over 7,00,000 Rohingyas, who crossed over into the coastal district fleeing persecution in Myanmar since August 2017, are dwelling in shacks made of thin bamboo and plastic sheets and too weak to stand heavy rains and storms.

The Rohingya camp in Cox's Bazar is the world's



largest refugee camp as more than one million have been living in the 34 camps in the district since 2017.

The report said the total land area of Camp 21 is around 99.86 acre and the whole camp is located on hillocks.

A total of 16,000 families are living in Camp 21 and among them some 5,500 people are living in landslide-vulnerable areas on the slopes of the hillocks.

"Due to heavy rain, there is a chance of landslide in the coming monsoon... As drainage system is not proper, there is a chance of landslide and

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

A horrifying journey by bus

Gang robs passengers; cops seem reluctant to record case

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

After completing a two-day training, Shafiqul Islam, a resident at a Tangail hospital, along with a friend got on a bus in Dhaka's Abdullahpur to go to Tangail around 12:30am on Friday.

It was not long before he realised that most of the 10-12 people on the bus were robbers. He had no clue that eight hours of torture was ahead of him.

Talking to The Daily Star on Sunday, he said he and his friend sat in the second row of the Dhaka-Rajshahi Chapainawabganj bus. The bus seemed a little dark and a little empty.

Shafiqul said after crossing Kamarpara near Uttara, the bus went to a secluded place and seven to eight people jumped on passengers with knives. They took his friend to the back of the bus.

They were slapping the passengers and hurling abuse at them.

The robbers tied Shafiqul's hands, legs, and also blindfolded him.

"I have asthma. I wanted a drag of the inhaler, but they didn't allow me," said a still traumatised Shafiqul.

He said the robbers dropped some passengers off at a place called Kabirpur ahead of Chandra around 4:30am. Among them was Shafiqul's friend.

The robbers kept Shafiqul tied and blindfolded at the back of the bus and headed back towards

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

Slap sanction against Rab

European Parliament member asks EU

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

A European Parliament member has asked the European Union to impose sanctions against the Rapid Action Battalion, saying it has been involved in numerous extrajudicial killings and disappearances.

Parliament member Ivan Stefanec in a letter to Josep Borrell, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, on January 20 said the human rights, freedom of speech, civil and political rights situation in Bangladesh is deteriorating.

He also cited the US sanctions against Rab and seven of its current and former officials.

"In view of the events mentioned above, I ask that you use the power you have to help enforce sanctions against the Rapid Action Battalion, Rab for short. I also ask you for help against the Bangladesh Police and the Government," Stefanec said.

The parliament member's office confirmed this in an email to The Daily Star, which has also obtained a copy of the letter.

Stefanec, also a member of the European Parliament Sub-committee on Human Rights, said the ruling party in Bangladesh often uses inhumane practices, which have also been reported by institutions. "These include manipulating election results or suppressing political dissent."

About US sanctions, he said the actions were taken due to "multiple extrajudicial executions

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Muhith to start foundation to fight pandemic

The former finance minister turns 89 today

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

AMA Muhith might have retired from public service but he could not stop working towards the welfare of people.

"I am now planning to start a foundation that would work to eliminate coronavirus, once and for all -- this virus is the enemy of civilisation," he said, adding that work for the foundation will begin soon.

He was struck by the rogue virus last year, leaving him hospitalised for days on end.

Muhith, who placed the national budget a record 12 times, feels the

economy he has left behind is evolving well.

During his tenure as the finance minister, the country witnessed a significant increase in budget size, steady growth and inflation in control.

He was one of the driving forces behind Bangladesh taking up mega projects and taking a significant stride towards a lower-middle-income country.

"Bangladesh's development process is well on track. The country is doing better -- a lot of work is being done. As result, development is taking place," he told The Daily Star ahead for his 89th birthday today.

Born in 1934 in Sylhet, Muhith joined civil service in 1956 after a bright academic life.

He held important positions in the public service and was the first diplomat of the Washington Embassy of Pakistan who transferred his allegiance to Bangladesh during the liberation war.

He also played a vital role in drumming up the world's support for Bangladesh. And in 2016, he was conferred with Swadhinata Puroskar, the highest civilian award, for his contribution to the liberation war.

Muhith, who joined Awami League in 2001, deems the country is being steered by the most capable person.

"Prime Minister's sister Sheikh Rehana is a very competent advisor of PM. I hope their partnership can work further. The people of Bangladesh have found the right stairs to development."

Nowadays, writing consumes him.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



A man on a rickshaw covers himself with a plastic sheet after unexpected rain hit the Kotwali area of Chattogram yesterday afternoon. With winter still lingering, sudden spurts of rainfall end up lowering the temperature, causing many to suffer further in the cold.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN