

The Daily Star

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

REGULAR NEWSPAPER INSIDE

DHAKA SUNDAY FEBRUARY 6, 2022

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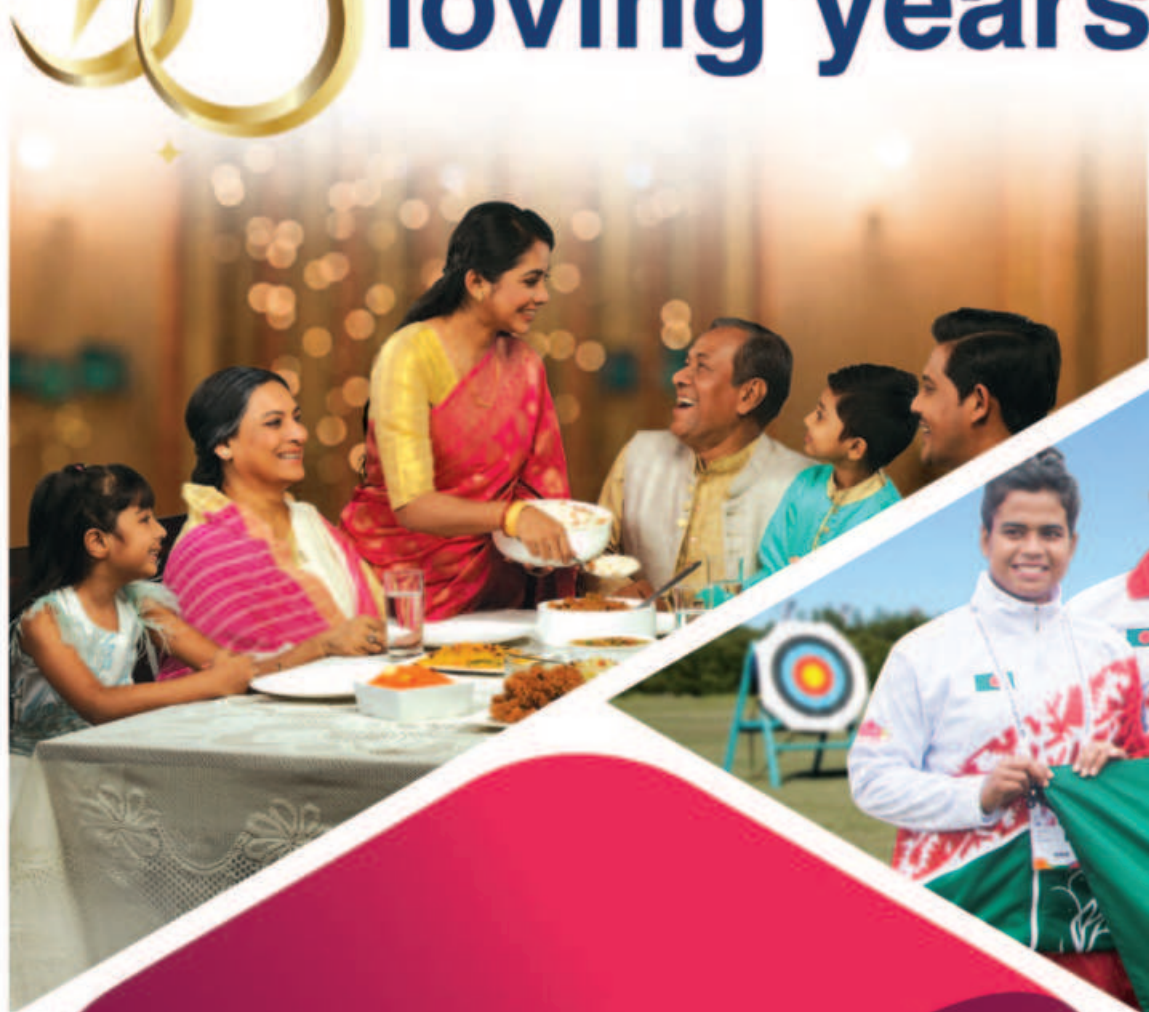
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50 loving years



This is how love gets through! When you share it, it gets back to you.
City Group, paving the way forward for 50 loving years!





Establishment of City Oil Mill

In the struggling period of post-liberation war of Bangladesh, Mr. Fazlur Rahman established his City Oil Mill on February 6, 1972 at Dhaka's Gendaria. With the support and affection of his customers, the journey that began with this oil mill has transformed into today's City Group.

Introduction of the Country's First Consumer Pack of Mustard Oil



With its promise to provide the nation with food products of the best quality with the right amount of nutritional value, City Group started manufacturing consumer packs of mustard oil for the first time in Bangladesh in 1975. In that era of unhealthy open oil, this quality product developed immense trust and love for the brand in the consumers' minds. This proved to be a pioneer in manufacturing consumer packs of oil brands. Moreover, City Group also started the process of 'Continuous Process Plant' instead of the then existing 'Batch Plant' for edible oils.

Establishment of the Country's Largest and First Ever Oilseed Crushing Plant



In 2005, City Group established the country's first Oilseed Crushing Plant. This plant has played a vital role in manufacturing animal and aqua feed at a reasonable cost. The feed is produced from the oil cake (soya cake) that is extracted after crushing imported oilseeds. As a result, there has been a sharp decline in the import of animal and aqua feed saving the country's foreign reserve. The country has also seen a rise in hygienic production methods of cost-effective quality animal and aqua feed with animal rearing for business purposes.

Establishment of the Country's Biggest Sugar Refinery Plant

In 2006, City Group also established the country's biggest stand-alone sugar refinery plant, which is the second largest in the world. Unpurified sugar is refined in this plant using European technology, followed by packaging with extra care before handing them over to the consumers. Because of its total quality management, this refinery plant is also HACCP and ISO 22000 certified like many other factories of City Group.



Introduction of Teer Whole Wheat Atta (Flour) in the Local Market



City Group introduced PesaMill technology produced whole wheat flour in Bangladesh in 2016. With this technology, all nutritional value of wheat remains intact in the flour produced. This was yet another example of City Group's efforts in giving the consumers the best quality healthy products.

Establishment of the Country's First and Largest Automated Rice & Pulse Mill

Established in 2018, this is the only mill in the country with high-tech laboratory



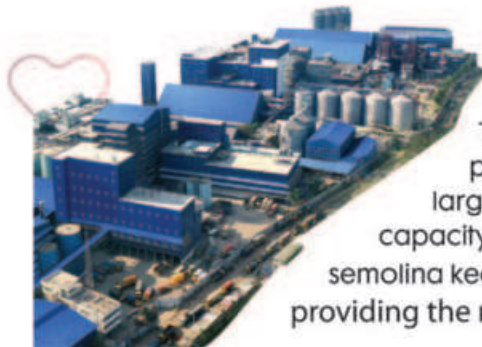
to produce rice and pulse of the best quality. State-of-the-art Swiss technology and machineries ensure fully automated production of grains with highest nutritional value and quality.

World's Largest Tea Estate



City Tea Estate started its journey in 2007 by leasing its first tea estate. In 2021, City Group took the 6500-acre Karnaphuli Tea Estate on lease. This tea estate is the world's largest tea estate in terms of single area size. Along with this latest inclusion, City Group individually owns 6 tea estates and is relentlessly working towards ensuring world class tea leaf production.

Establishment of the World's Largest Automated Flour Mill



This mill, established in 2021 with the latest Swiss technology produces wheat flour and semolina fully automatically. The largest flour mill in the world in terms of daily production capacity under one shade, this factory produces wheat flour and semolina keeping all the nutritional values intact, and contributes to providing the nation with the nutrition it deserves.

City Group's Journey of 50 years



“ I never compromised in producing pure food products, resulting in the pure love from my consumers. ”

City Group, a journey that began with the promise of best quality products and services, has turned 50 today. It's everyone's love and affection that have put the group on the global platform today to represent Bangladesh. On its 50th anniversary, I'd like to congratulate all our customers, stakeholders and the people of this beautiful nation.

Fazlur Rahman
Chairman and Managing Director
City Group

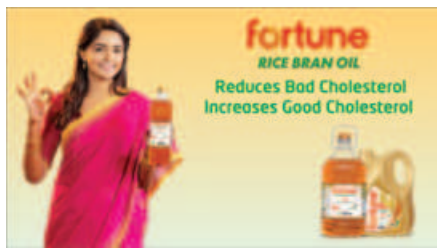


citygroup



loving years





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SECOND EDITION



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Says Indian singer Madhubanti Bagchi



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Farmers fear losses due to heavy rain

EC SEARCH COMMITTEE

Short time, tough task

Justice Obaidul Hassan at the helm of the panel under EC law

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

President Abdul Hamid has formed a six-member search committee, led by Justice Obaidul Hassan, in line with the new law on forming the Election Commission.

The search committee has six working days to recommend names to the president for the appointments of the chief election commissioner and other commissioners as the tenure of the current EC, headed by CEC KM Nurul Huda, expires on February 14.

Justice Hassan, a Supreme Court judge, was a member of the previous search committee constituted in 2017.

The other members are Justice SM Kuddus Zaman, a High Court judge, Comptroller and Auditor General Mohammad Muslim Chowdhury, Public Service Commission Chairman Md Sohorab Hossain, former election commissioner Sohul Hussain, and psychiatrist and writer Anwara Syed Haq, according to a gazette issued yesterday.

The committee will perform its duties in accordance with the "Appointments of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners Act-2022", the gazette said, adding that the Cabinet Division would provide all necessary assistance to it.

The gazette came nine days after parliament passed the law amid protests from opposition lawmakers.

Talking to The Daily Star, four members of the committee, including its head, said they would work sincerely to find out the right people for the EC appointments.

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A long tailback at the Jatrabari entrance to the capital while the flyover remains almost empty. Travellers complain that bus drivers would rather wait in traffic than pay the toll to use the flyover.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

UNDER OC PRADEEP

Teknaf shook with 'crossfire' horror

Sinha murder verdict brings up tales of torture

ZYMA ISLAM

Several victims of the suspended officer-in-charge of Teknaf police station Pradeep Kumar Das gave testimonies against him during the murder trial of Major (ret'd.) Sinha Rashed Mohammad Khan.

The prosecution observed that according to the investigation report by the administration, OC Pradeep killed 204 people in crossfires -- and none got justice. The Daily Star has a copy of the 288-page-verdict.

When the prosecution argued that if OC Pradeep had not been arrested for the murder of Sinha, more crossfires would have taken place, the court observed in response that this claim is valid, substantiated and carries weight.

Many women like Senowara Begum would lose their husbands to "crossfire" as she lost hers, a CNG driver.

On December 3, 2019, her husband, a CNG driver, came from Chattogram to Cox's Bazar at 9 am and called her to tell

her that he is in front of Cox's Bazar masjid market. His neighbour Shah Alam was with him, he said.

Shah Alam used to be an informer of OC Pradeep, Senowara told the court.

He told her that he needed to submit a document after which he would come home. An hour went by but she was unable to reach her husband.

She then called Shah Alam, who told her that OC Pradeep's men have taken her husband away to the Teknaf police station.

She went to Teknaf police station but they did not let her inside. She sat outside the station from 2 pm to 10 pm. Shah Alam had confirmed that her husband was inside, according to the verdict.

The next day she went to the station again and tried to file a general diary. But the police did not let her in.

Then Shah Alam told her that he knows where her husband is and asked her to go home. Still, she stood outside the Teknaf police station until 10 pm that day too.

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ENFORCED DISAPPEARANCES

Govt doubling down on stance

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan yesterday said the country's law enforcement agencies are not involved in enforced disappearances.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said many people listed by UN organisations as 'missing' have actually drowned in the Mediterranean.

None of the ministers, however, elaborated on these remarks.

"Whenever anyone goes missing, they return after a few days. The person may go into hiding for different reasons," Asaduzzaman said after visiting a Saraswati Puja mandap at Rajdhani High School in the capital.

"These incidents are branded as 'enforced disappearances'. We have not yet received information about a couple of 'self hiding' incidents. We think we can bring them to the fore soon."

The top ministers made these statements at a time when the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances will hold in hybrid format its 126th session from February 7-11 to examine more than 300 cases of disappearances in 24 countries.

Five independent experts will hold meetings with victims' relatives, state representatives, civil society groups and other stakeholders to exchange information on individual cases, structural issues and challenges related to enforced disappearances, according to a UN Human Rights Council statement.

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SEARCH COMMITTEE IN 2012

Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain
Justice Md Nuruzzaman
AT Ahmedul Huq Choudhury
Ataul Hakeem

CEC Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad

SEARCH COMMITTEE IN 2017

Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain
Justice Obaidul Hassan
Muhammed Sadique
Masud Ahmed
Prof Syed Manzoarul Islam
Shireen Akhter

CEC KM Nurul Huda

SEARCH COMMITTEE IN 2022

Justice Obaidul Hassan
Justice SM Kuddus Zaman
Md Sohorab Hossain
Mohammad Muslim Chowdhury
Muhammad Sohul Hussain
Anwara Syed Haq

19th Death Anniversary



Late Shah Rafiqul Islam (Titu)
Death: 6th February, 2003

This day in 2003, we lost our beloved & honorable Director **Late Shah Rafiqul Islam (Titu)**. We mourn his pre-mature death. With our distressed heart, we pray to Almighty Allah for his eternal peace. May Allah bless him. Ameen.

All Employees

ABUL KHAIR GROUP

In 2003, on this very day, you left us at the will of Almighty Allah the Beneficent. Your pre-matured departure has made us and many of your relations overwhelmed with grief. It is straining that you are not in this mundane world with us. But we are feeling your existence by remembering the tender-aged days of your life.

We pray to Almighty Allah for the salvation of his departed soul and request all friends, relatives, well-wishers to pray for him from the core of heart.

May Allah the Beneficent bless you with the eternal bliss of paradise. Ameen.

Bereaved members of the family

Journo Peer Habib no more

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalist Peer Habibur Rahman died while undergoing treatment at the Intensive Care Unit of LabAid Hospital in the capital yesterday.

The 58-year-old journalist breathed his last at 3:58pm, said Chowdhury Meher-e-Khuda, public relations officer of the hospital.

Rahman, the executive editor of Bangladesh Pratidin, was suffering from cancer and kidney diseases. He was receiving treatment at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University.

He had a stroke at BSMMU on Friday. He was then shifted to LabAid Hospital's ICU.

On January 22, he tested positive for coronavirus. He recovered from the virus but was admitted to BSMMU with kidney problems.

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina expressed profound shock and sorrow at his death.

"It is a great loss for the country's journalism," the president said.

Planning Minister MA Mannan, State Minister Dr Shamsul Alam; Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud and many

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Rifat, a fifth grader, pushes a cart full of potted flowers near Mirpur-2 intersection. With the classrooms closed due to the pandemic, he has been selling these on the streets to help out his father, whose income has shrunk in recent weeks as a result of Covid-19 restrictions.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

New Paxovir will be a game-changer

Experts hail Eskayef's Covid pills at seminar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The new Paxovir will be a game changer in treating Covid-19 patients with mild to moderate symptoms as it reduces the need for hospitalisation and risk of death by almost 89 percent, said speakers at a scientific seminar yesterday.

But physicians must ensure proper use of the oral antiviral drug to get the best outcome, they added.

Renowned physicians of 42 medical institutions from Bangladesh and 30 other countries participated at the discussion titled "An Update on Antivirals for Covid-19".

They also lauded Eskayef Pharmaceuticals Ltd for the fast-pace introduction of the world's first generic version of Paxlovid, developed by Pfizer, with the brand name Paxovir on December 30 last year.

Paxovir can be prescribed to both vaccinated and unvaccinated Covid patients aged 12 and over.

Medicine specialist Prof Robed Amin, line director of the Non Communicable Disease Control at

the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), presented the keynote paper at the event organised by Eskayef Pharmaceuticals Ltd in its office in the capital.

"The outcome is better if Paxovir is given to patients three days within the onset of symptoms. It reduces the viral load. The drug has emerged as the lifesaver during the emergence of the new [Omicron] variant," he said.

Paxovir is a combination of nirmatrelevir, which was designed to interfere with an enzyme the coronavirus uses to make copies of itself, and ritonavir, an antiviral that slows down the body's metabolism of the other medication, he said.

Pfizer's laboratory studies indicated that Paxlovid is likely to work against the Omicron variant, which has spread across the world.

Former DGHS director general Prof MA Faiz who joined via video link said, "To win over the coronavirus, effective drugs should be applied at the very beginning of the infection."

Prof Nazmul Islam, director of communicable disease control at the

DGHS, lauded Eskayef for introducing the drug in the local market, adding that misuse and indiscriminate use of the drug should be avoided.

The DGHS will soon publish updated treatment protocols for Covid-19, he informed.

Prof MA Jalil, former chairman of the medicine department at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, who also joined online, said, "Time will tell how effective the new drugs are."

Prof Khalilur Rahman, head of medicine department at Rajshahi Medical College, said some drugs to treat Covid-19 infection have been overused.

Prof MA Hasan Chowdhury, head of medicine department at Chattogram Medical College, said, "Paxovir is a groundbreaking drug for patients with mild to moderate symptoms."

Prof GKM Shahiduzzaman, head of medicine department at Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College, said he expected Paxovir

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Zayed out, Nipun in

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Terminating the candidature of Zayed Khan, an appellate department yesterday declared Nipun Akter the new general secretary of Bangladesh Film Actors' Association.

At a press conference, Sohanur Rahman Sohan, head of the department, announced that Zayed was disqualified as the GS.

"We have found enough evidence to prove Zayed Khan was bribing voters. We got written statements from two people who admitted taking money from him."

Full versions of these stories are available under the same heading at www.thedailystar.net

Man held for raping girl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

A Rab team arrested a 55-year-old man yesterday for raping a minor in Joypurhat's Khetlal upazila.

The accused, Ishak Ali was held in the upazila's Nishi Nazirpara village around 5:00am, said Jahid Hasan, commanding officer of Rab in the district.

Police said the 12-year old girl on February 1 went to Ishak's house to meet her friends. But, Ishak, who was alone there, raped her and fled.

The girl was rescued and admitted to Khetlal Upazila Health Complex. Later, her father filed a rape case with Khetlal Police Station. Ishak was sent to jail through a court yesterday afternoon.

Wildlife trafficker held in Sylhet

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Environmentalists caught a wildlife trafficker and handed him to Rab in Sylhet city's Shahi Eidgah area.

The detainee was Rasel Miah, 37.

Abdul Karim Kim, general secretary of Sylhet's Bangladesh Paribesh Andalan, said Rasel had long been illegally selling wild animals on social media.

Posing as customers, environmentalists asked him to come to Shahi Eidgah area yesterday, where he was caught red-handed.

Two EVMs vandalised

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

Criminals yesterday attacked a school, where locals were being trained on voting with electronic voting machines (EVMs) ahead of the seventh phase of the union parisha polls tomorrow.

Two EVMs were vandalised in the attack at Borobari Government Primary School in Mainamati union, said Burichang Upazila Election Officer Delwar Hossain.

The attackers also assaulted the presiding officer.

Locals said the attackers were supporters of an independent chairman candidate.

A SKETCH OF THE EC SEARCH PANEL



JUSTICE OBAIDUL HASSAN

He became a justice of the Supreme Court's Appellate Division on September 3, 2020. He was made an additional judge of the High Court Division on June 30, 2009, and he became judge of the same division on June 6, 2011. He also served as member of the International Crimes Tribunal-2 and later as the chairman of the tribunal from March 22, 2012 to September 15, 2015. Born in 1959, justice Obaidul obtained his BSS (Honours), MSS in Economic and LLB from Dhaka University. He was first enrolled as an advocate of the District Court in 1986. Later, he was enrolled as a lawyer of the High Court Division and the Appellate division of the Supreme Court in 1988 and 2005 respectively.



JUSTICE SM KUDDUS ZAMAN

He entered in the Bangladesh judicial service on 22 February 1984 as a Munsif. He worked in various district courts as

Senior Assistant Judge, Joint District Judge and Additional District Judge and was finally promoted to the apex position of the service, District Judge, on October 9, 2006. He was appointed District and Session Judge of Dhaka on February 5, 2015 and later elevated to the High Court Division on May 31, 2018. Born on August 12, 1960 in Rajbari, he passed Secondary School Certificate Examination in 1975. He obtained Bachelor of Laws (Honours) Degree in 1982 and Master of Laws degree in 1983 from the Dhaka University. He was the International Judge of United Nations in East Timor where he worked for dispensation of justice in civil and criminal cases.



MD SOHORAB HOSSAIN

He became the chairman of the Bangladesh Public Service Commission on 21 September 2020. Before that, he was the Senior Secretary in the Secondary and Higher Education Division. He obtained his Mr. Sohorab Hossain pursued his BA (Honours) and MA in Bangla Language and Literature from Dhaka University. He joined the Bangladesh Civil Service in 1986. He was born in in Chatkhil, Noakhali in 1961.



MOHAMMAD MUSLIM CHOWDHURY

He joined audit and accounts cadre of Bangladesh Civil Service in 1984 batch, and has been serving as the comptroller and auditor general of Bangladesh since July 17, 2018. He was also Finance Secretary. Chowdhury was Finance Secretary. Before his elevation to the position of Secretary to the Government of Bangladesh, he had served as Deputy Secretary, Joint Secretary and Additional Secretary in the Finance Division, Ministry of Finance. He graduated with a Bachelor degree in Commerce with Honours and Master of Commerce in Accounting from the University of Chittagong. He also holds a Master of Science (MSc) in Finance and Accounting from the University of Birmingham, UK.



MUHAMMAD SOHUL HUSSAIN

He was appointed as election commissioner on February 5, 2007 and continued till 2012.

During his tenure, then commission prepared the draft the law of appointment of the Chief election commissioner and election commissioners. He started his career as Munsif in 1967. He became the law secretary in 1997 and went on retirement on 2000. The following year, he enrolled as a lawyer of the Supreme Court. Born in Sylhet on April 27, 1942, Sohul's followers collected nomination papers for him to contest the national election from Sylhet-1.



ANWARA SYED HAQ

She is an eminent fiction writer and a psychiatrist by profession. Born in Jashore in 1940, she won the Bangla Academy Award in 2010 for her contribution to literature and in 2019 she was awarded with the Ekushey Padak for language and literature. After completing her SSC and HSC in Jessore, she enrolled in Dhaka Medical College from where she obtained her MBBS degree in 1965. In 1973 went to the United Kingdom for higher education. After having completed her post graduate degree in medical psychiatry in 1982 she returned home from the UK. She married to the eminent writer and poet Syed Samsul Haq on November 19, 1965.

Short time, tough task

FROM PAGE 1

"We will carry out our responsibilities, given by the honourable president on behalf of the nation, with utmost sincerity and fairness," said Justice Hassan.

Replying to a query, he, however, said, "I cannot say whether the new Election Commission to be formed following recommendations by the search committee will be neutral and acceptable. But we will do our job as per the law and the constitution."

The new panel will recommend two names for each of the posts of the CEC and other commissioners, who will oversee the next general election slated for late next year.

The outgoing EC and the previous one faced huge criticisms over their roles in the national elections in 2014 and 2018.

Many alleged neither of the polls was credible.

For making the recommendations, the new committee can seek names from political parties and professional bodies. It will make decisions based on the majority.

As per the EC law, the search committee can get 15 working days to recommend names to the president.

If the new EC is to be formed by February 14, when the current EC expires its tenure, the committee has only six working days to complete its task.

Based on the recommendations, the president will appoint the CEC and other

commissioners, according to the law.

Soon after the formation of the search committee, the ruling Awami League welcomed the move while its arch rival BNP said it was "very much like the previous ones".

The previous search committee was formed in 2017 by President Hamid following talks ahead of the 2018 polls.

The one before that was formed in 2012 by the then president Zillur Rahman after talks with 23 registered parties.

The Rakib-led EC drew huge flak for holding the 2014 January 5 "one-sided" election, in which 153 lawmakers were elected unopposed.

The Huda-led commission received criticisms for massive vote rigging and polls irregularities.

Asked about the new committee, Brig Gen (ret'd) M Sakawat Hossain, a former election commissioner, said, "I hope that something good will happen. I don't know much about them except Mr Sohul Hussain. I hope they will find the right people so that the current electoral crisis can be overcome."

Transparency International Bangladesh said the search committee should maintain transparency and impartiality in forming a new EC.

In a statement, it said there was no scope of deviation from the constitutional consciousness behind the formation of a neutral,

acceptable and efficient Election Commission and the fulfilment of the expectations of the people.

Dr Ittekkharuzzaman, executive director of TIB, said, "We respectfully request the members of the committee to consider the names of people who are well known for their honesty, impartiality, fairness, objectivity and sincerity in their personal and professional lives. At the same time, it is important to ensure that the nominees are not involved in any form of crime such as immorality, corruption and defaulting on loans."

TIB also hoped the committee would ensure the names recommended are made public.

Hailing the formation of the search committee, AL Joint General Secretary AFM Bahauddin Nasim said the upcoming EC would be the first under the new law.

"We hope it will strengthen democracy and the electoral system. The next Election Commission will be formed in light of the constitution. It will be more powerful and elections under it will be free, fair and participatory."

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir told The Daily Star, "The issue of search committee is not important for us. We have repeatedly said that free and fair election is not possible without an election-time neutral government."

WHAT NEW MEMBERS SAY Talking to The Daily Star

yesterday, Justice Obaidul Hassan said it has not yet been decided when the search committee would start functioning.

"The gazette on the search committee was issued around one hour back. The cabinet secretary is yet to communicate with me. I could not talk to my colleagues in the committee. However, I hope we can start working very soon."

Justice Hassan declined to make any comment on the current EC and its criticisms.

Justice SM Kuddus Zaman, another member of the search committee, said they would work with all their heart in the interest of the nation.

He hoped the next EC would be fair and neutral.

Sohul Hussain said, "This is a very important task for me. I am grateful to the president. If the right people are not picked as the commissioners, the entire electoral system will be at stake."

PSC Chairman Sohorab Hossain said, "I believe the committee chief will convene the first meeting soon, and there will be discussion on our work models there."

Asked what they would consider while recommending the names, he said, "I think the committee head will be the right person to speak on it."

The first meeting of the committee will be held at 4:30 pm at Supreme Court Judges lounge, justice SM Kuddus Zaman told The Daily Star.



In front of Shaheed Suhrawardy Medical College and Hospital, bamboo barricades have been put up to prevent people from crossing the road. But despite this, some people still choose to step over the barricade to cross the road, even though there's an over-bridge just a few feet away. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Suspension of in-person classes at DU extended

DU CORRESPONDENT

The suspension of in-person classes at Dhaka University (DU) has been extended till February 21.

Confirming the extension yesterday, DU Vice Chancellor (VC) Prof Md Akhtaruzzaman said, "We will extend the suspension of in-person classes for two weeks, following government decision."

"But our crucial exams and laboratory activities will continue in person, maintaining health guidelines," he said.

DU Pro-Vice Chancellor Prof ASM Maksud Kamal said an official announcement will be made today. On January 21, DU authorities suspended its in-person classes till February 6.

Meanwhile, leaders of Bangladesh Socialist Students' Front held a rally, protesting the government decision and demanding reopening of educational institutions.



Enact 'Clean Air Act', save lives

Say speakers at webinar

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

To regulate the country's air quality and reduce air pollution, the government should enact the "Clean Air Act" as soon as possible, after a recent study found air pollution to be a massive health crisis, said speakers in a webinar.

Even though the air is already toxic for citizens, especially city dwellers, they alleged the government is overlooking the crisis, as the draft law has been gathering dust for years.

They were speaking at a webinar jointly organised by Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), Bangladesh Lung Foundation and The Daily Star yesterday, in the wake of a recent air pollution study published by Stamford University's Center for Atmospheric Pollution Studies (CAPS).

In the welcome speech, Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bela, said due to air pollution, people's right to life, as bestowed by the constitution, is being violated. As per the constitution, the government not only must protect the environment but also work to improve it.

"According to the CAPS study, we did not experience fresh air for even one week of a year since 2015. How many years can we sit back and suffer due to such horrific health hazards? The draft of the law to regulate air quality, the "Clean Air Act", has been lying idle for a long time.



The government must enact it as soon as possible," she said.

Chief guest Saber Hossain Chowdhury, president of the parliamentary standing committee on the environment ministry, said they wanted a law to fight air pollution, but the government is framing a rule.

ISSUES

- Draft law gathering dust for years
- Govt framing rule instead of enacting law
- Air pollution behind many diseases, school absence, lost work days
- DoE can't fully enforce environment act due to "unconducive atmosphere"

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enact law immediately
- Take steps to make rules effective
- Prioritise public health in upcoming budget

"When a rule contradicts a law, the law always prevails over the rule. Hopefully, the rule will be finalised within a few weeks. The framing of rules is not enough, initiatives to make it effective must be ensured," he said.

Quoting former American vice-

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Let our stories echo in every corner of world

Foreign minister says on 'Branding Bangladesh'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen yesterday said the government wants the country's trade and economic relations with global partners to flourish more.

"We have always been open, democratic, inclusive and constructive," he said.

He added the government's priority is to pursue national developmental ambitions with prime objective to ensure people's security, dignity and well-being.

He was addressing the inaugural ceremony of Centre for Non-Resident Bangladeshi's World Conference Series-2022 held at a city hotel, on the topic "Branding Bangladesh".

He said economic and public diplomacy has been important in formulating and executing Bangladesh's foreign policy.

The foreign ministry is already working with the Bangladesh Investment Development Authority to design a solid branding initiative for the country, he added.

The minister said his ministry wants Bangladesh's stories to be echoed in every corner of the world. "When people hear the word 'Bangladesh', I want them to see a country of infinite potential."

Momen said Bangladesh's peacekeeping role has already earned the country a "brand name" in UN peacekeeping missions. He also urged Bangladeshis across the globe to uphold the country's achievements against negative propaganda.

Prime Minister's Economic Affairs Adviser Mashiur Rahman said remittance has been a significant

source of Bangladesh's foreign exchange reserve, saying its contribution is "critical" to the balance of payment. He said workers who are seeking jobs overseas should be equipped with good skills, while there should be employment opportunity for those who are returning home.

State Minister for Planning Shamsul Alam said immediately after the independence, Bangladesh was branded negatively as a "basket case", but the transformation towards development has led the international community to term the country as a "development miracle".

In his speech, Chief of Army Staff of Bangladesh General SM Shafiuddin Ahmed said, "Since April 2020, we are the number one troops contributing country in the world [for UN peacekeeping missions]."

MS Shekil Chowdhury, chairperson of Centre for Non-Resident Bangladeshi, said the centre has so far held international conferences in more than 50 countries involving Bangladeshi communities.

Physician Prof ABM Abdullah; Kazi Rafiqul Hassan, general manager of Bangladesh Bank; Shahidul Alam, director general of Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training; and Sherwan Chowdhury, a British-Bangladeshi politician and mayor of Croydon in the UK, among others, spoke. At the programme, the centre awarded institutions and organisations including the armed forces division and banks for their contribution in upholding the country's image and generating remittance.

PRAYER
TIMING
FEB 6



	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	5:30	12:45	4:15	5:52	7:15
Jamaat	6:05	1:15	4:30	5:56	7:45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Hungary keen on boosting ties with Bangladesh

UNB, Dhaka

Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Peter Szijarto has expressed his optimism to further strengthen cooperation with Bangladesh.

"I am confident that we will be able to further strengthen our mutually beneficial cooperation in the years to come," he said in a recent letter sent to Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen.

The 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between the two countries is an important milestone, said the Hungarian minister. "We can proudly declare that despite the geographical distance between our countries, during the past decades we built a strong friendship and cooperation based on mutual respect."

"It is my utmost pleasure to note that we have recently re-established our diplomatic representation in Bangladesh," he added.



PHOTO: TITU DAS

A toddler learning to write alphabets from an elderly at a temple in Barishal city yesterday, on the occasion of Saraswati Puja. This comes as part of a ritual that inaugurates the schooling of children.

Propaganda obstacle to country's progress

Says info minister

BSS, Dhaka

Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud yesterday said the country will progress further if anti-state propaganda is not spread abroad.

"It is regrettable that a former two-time prime minister wrote an article in the Washington Times newspaper where she urged the United States to stop GSP facilities to Bangladesh...", he said.

The minister said this while addressing the inaugural function of Bangabandhu Corner, Directors Lounge and a music video on Covid-19 awareness of FBCCI in the capital.

He said there will be criticism about the government's works. But propaganda against the state and for creating obstacles for the country's business, trade and export are not acceptable, he said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2

Health Insurance

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 - Diagnostic tests
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Annual premium starts from Tk. 10,785/- per person (based on Age and Package)

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To know more, please scan



Mohammad Badrul Ahsan's death anniv today

CITY DESK

Today is the second death anniversary of Mohammad Badrul Ahsan, a weekly columnist for The Daily Star for many years, and the publisher and editor of now defunct weekly magazine, First News.

He also served for a long time with Standard Chartered Bank and was stationed in Dhaka and Dubai. A passionate writer, he left his banking career to publish the country's first and only newsmagazine, "First News" in 2010.

Badrul Ahsan, the inimitable weekly author of "Cross Talk" in The Daily Star, started writing his column in 2000.

He also wrote several books – including "Grameen Bank and Muhammad Yunus" and "In Search of a Nation" published by Mowla Brothers.

"A Good Man in the Woods and other essays", "Crosstalk Essays", and "The Parallax View", were published by The University Press Limited.



Dhaka South City Corporation had declared this footover bridge at the capital's New Market as risky a couple of weeks back, prohibiting pedestrians from using it. But even though the city corporation put up a sign there, this did little to stymie business-as-usual at the bridge. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN



Rabeya Khan passes away

CITY DESK

Rabeya Khan Firoza, wife of late Sultan uz Zaman Khan (CSP 1955 batch), passed away yesterday. She was 83.

She was the eldest daughter of late Fazlul Huq Mowla, a pioneer of insurance in Bangladesh. She lived in Bangkok, Thailand for 15 years while her husband was in ESCAP from 1977-1992.

Rabeya is survived by two daughters and sons-in-law and two grandchildren. The family sought prayers from all for the salvation of her departed soul.

Propaganda

FROM PAGE 3
It amounts to treason, he added. Replying to a query over the search committee, the minister said the committee has been formed as per the law and everyone played pivotal roles as neutral persons.

"I think that the search committee is a good one. An excellent general election will be held by the Election Commission, which will be formed by the search committee," he said.

ROW OVER PARIR PAHAR

Police detain four for felling tree

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Police yesterday detained four labourers as they cut down a tree at Parir Pahar, popularly known as Court Building.

This led to a tense stand-off between Chattogram district administration and lawyers.

"It's our place, we're renovating it, that's why we felled the tree with permission. They (administration) have no right to halt it," said Chattogram District Bar Association general secretary AHM Ziauddin.

Meanwhile, Chattogram DC Mohammed Mominur Rahaman said, "They have only 12 decimals of land on the hill. Most of their buildings on the hill are illegal."

"We have filed a GD with Kotwali Police Station over this," he said.

UNION PARISHAD POLLS

Rival accuses AL candidate of threatening to shoot

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A chairman candidate of union parishad election in Chattogram has been accused of threatening to shoot his rivals.

A video went viral on social media where Akter Hossain, Awami League's chairman candidate of Khagaria Union Parishad polls, was telling his activists he always has two firearms with him, before instructing them to "do what you have to, I'll tackle the consequences."

He said this at a public meeting on Thursday night.

Rival chairman candidate Jasim Uddin

has lodged a complaint with Satkania Police Station in this connection.

However, Akter claimed that the tape was fake and his voice was doctored through editing.

"After the allegation surfaced, I surrendered my licensed guns to the police station," he said, adding, "My opponents were spreading propaganda to tarnish my image."

Abdul Jalil, officer-in-charge of Satkania Police Station, said they watched the video and were investigating it.

"We have seized the two licensed guns from Akter," he confirmed.

One killed, 3 hurt in Rajbari road accident

STAR REPORT

A man was killed and three were injured in a road accident on Rajbari-Kushtia road in Henarmor area under Pangsha upazila in Rajbari yesterday.

The deceased is identified as Arshafur Islam (30) of Mirpur upazila in Kushtia.

Quoting locals, Tarikul Islam, assistant sub-inspector of Pangsha Highway Police Station, said, "The accident took place when a Rajbari-bound three-wheeler collided head-on with a truck around 7:30am."

Arshafur died on the spot. The injured were taken of Pangsha upazila health complex. They were released soon after, said doctors at the health complex.

The body was handed over to the family.

USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

Position Vacancy Announcement
Position: Development Program Specialist (External Liaison), FSN-10
The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in Bangladesh is seeking applications from qualified Bangladeshi nationals for the position of **Development Program Specialist (External Liaison)** in the Office of Program (PRO).
Location: USAID/Bangladesh, Deadline for application submission: March 06, 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.bdijobs.com D-10

Muminunnisa Govt. Mohila College, Mymensingh
www.mgmc.gov.bd

Memo No. MGMC/CEDP/96/2021-22/(W-3, G-11) Date: 05-Feb-2022

e-Tender Notice 02/2021-2022
e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following package:

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Name of package	Last date and time of tender security submission	Tender closing date & time
1.	656479	Refurbishment and Renovation of Smart Classrooms, Computer Lab, Central Library, Student's Common Room and Exclusive Room.	23-Feb-2022 13:00	23-Feb-2022 14:00
2.	656814	Furniture and Fixtures for Smart Classrooms, Computer Lab, Central Library & Students Common Room.	23-Feb-2022 14:00	23-Feb-2022 15:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted.
To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches up to **22-Feb-2022 16:00**.
Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Principal
Muminunnisa Govt. Mohila College
Mymensingh
Phone: 091-67247
E-mail: muminunnisagovtcollege@gmail.com

GD-217

"Public health should be treated as a priority in the upcoming budget," he observed.

Prof Md Ahmed Karuzzaman Mojumder, chairperson of Stamford University's environmental science department and founding director of CAPS, delivered the keynote presentation, outlining how the air has become toxic, as well as sources and impacts of pollution.

Dr Asif Mujtaba Mahmud, secretary general of Bangladesh Lung Foundation, said one in ten deaths worldwide is attributable to air pollution.

Md Iqbal Ahmed, senior environment specialist at World Bank, also called for enacting the law soon.

পুট বিক্রয়
মিরপুর-১১ মেইন রোডে ৭.৫ কাঠার বাণিজ্যিক কন্সার পুট বিক্রয় হবে। বর্তমানে স্বপ্ন সুপারশপ ভাড়া আছে।
যোগাযোগ: ০১৭১৬-৭২৬৮৭৬

পূর্বাচলে পুট ক্রয়
রাজউক পূর্বাচল প্রকল্পে তিন, পাঁচ, সাড়ে সাত এবং দশ কাঠা আয়তনের পুট ক্রয় করতে চাই। ০১৭১১৮৮২১৯১

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Divisional Forest Officer
Wildlife Management & Nature Conservation Division, Chattogram
Sustainable Forests & Livelihoods (SUFAL) Project
Memo No. 22.01.1500.122.29.001.2022.234 Date: 02/02/2022

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

Tender ID & Package No.	Name of the package	Online notice publication date and time	Online tender last selling date and time	Online tender closing date and time
654624 (SUFAL/WDC/2021-2022/GD-06)	Supply of Decomposed Cow-dung Plantation	06-Feb-2022 10:00	22-Feb-2022 17:00	23-Feb-2022 14:00
654670 (SUFAL/WDC/2021-2022/GD-08)	Supply of Stakes for Plantation and Maintenance	06-Feb-2022 10:00	22-Feb-2022 17:00	23-Feb-2022 15:00
654687 (SUFAL/WDC/2021-2022/GD-09)	Supply of Planting Equipment & Materials for RCC Sign Board	06-Feb-2022 10:00	22-Feb-2022 17:00	23-Feb-2022 16:00

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. The fees for selling/downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches.
Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Rafiqul Islam Chowdhury
Divisional Forest Officer
Wildlife Management & Nature Conservation Division, Chattogram
Phone: 02334484420
Email: dfowildlifectg@gmail.com

GD-215

UNFPA INVITATION FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI) FROM UNFPA BANGLADESH SRHR UNIT

The United Nations Populations Fund, hereafter referred as UNFPA is in the process of identifying potential non-governmental implementing partners for its 10th Country Programme for the implementation of the Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) programme on the following interventions in selected districts to achieve three transformative goals of UNFPA which includes zero preventable maternal health, zero unmet need of family planning and zero gender based violence:

- Strengthening the National Midwifery Programme in collaboration with Director General of Nursing and Midwifery and other stakeholders (Faculty Development of MSc, BSc, diploma), functional of training institutes and facilities, capacity building, mentorship, accreditation process both public and private institutes, capacity of the professional society, leadership, deployment, service delivery, coordination)
- Improving Reproductive, Maternal, Neonatal, Child and Adolescent Health (RMNCAH) in coordination and collaboration with DGHS, DGFP and DGNM (our strategic partners) and the local authorities.
 - Improve access to SRH services among Tea Garden Workers' and Santal Communities'
 - Support to Elimination of Fistula through prevention, treatment, rehabilitation and advocacy.
 - Strengthen SRH service delivery for the marginalized community in Rangamati, Khagrachari and Bandarban districts.
- Support for knowledge management, implementation research, studies, thematic reviews on SRHR issues.
- Improve Cervical Cancer screening, detection, treatment and elimination in selected districts with a public health approach for managing and strengthening the programme.
- Support to implement national Family Planning programme with the provision of quality service delivery of all modern contraceptive methods at community, and different level of health facilities of DGFP and DGHS and in collaboration with the private sector.
- Support to integrated SRH & HIV/STI services, sex workers, transgender and gender diverse population in selected intervention areas.
- Support to develop a cadre of trained and skilled health managers and providers to offer survivor-centred clinical support and referrals to survivors of gender-based violence in the district and sub-district hospitals under health sector response.
- Support implementation of innovative Urban Health SRH/FP programmes, advocacy and capacity building works related to engaging private sector including pharmacies, climate change and SRHR, SRHR services for the slum dwellers and factory workers and system strengthening works with different Operational Plans of the MOHFW and MoLGRD.
- Strengthen SRH demand-side interventions covering all SRH programme components, with focus on the most vulnerable and marginalized using various age and gender specific Social and Behavior Change Communication approaches including interpersonal communication at facility, community level and involving different media channels, and innovative digital technologies and social networks where appropriate.

The organizations may express their interest for all or any of the above 7 areas separately. Those interested in participating in the process should forward their expression of interest to eo-bangladesh@unfpa.org by **20 February 2022, 5:00 pm** enclosing the information listed below.

- Full legal name and address of applying institution
- Copy of valid legal registration in the country
- Mandate or mission statement of organisation
- Statement of organisation's expertise in the relevant area
- Short description of the organisation's existing operations in the subject matter area, including how long the operations have been carried out.

Upon receipt of the above information from prospective implementing partners, UNFPA will review applicants for placement on a short-list of potential implementing partners. Those short-listed organizations may be invited to submit formal proposals to become an implementing partner. The Invitation for Proposal will provide a more detailed description of the scope of work.

Note: Due to the high volume of communications, UNFPA is not in a position to confirm receipt of the expression of interest.

Get the Full Announcement here:
<https://bangladesh.unfpa.org/en/submission/invitation-expression-interest-eoi-unfpa-bangladesh-srhr-unit>



The illustrious past of Aloobazar's band parties is on the wane today. With the groups getting fewer bookings by the day, their artists now find themselves in deep economic misery.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Now there's ONLY SILENCE

Overlooked and underpaid, Aloobazar's band party artists enduring tough times

SHAHEEN MOLLAH

It's a curious term. When you hear of a "band party", you know it's different from a musical band, although a band party accomplishes the same function: to provide entertainment through music.

This age-old, traditional group has been playing soundtracks for various events for close to a hundred years, from wedding events and birthdays to election campaigns.

In Old Dhaka's Aloobazar alone, there are four band parties carrying on with the craft, with over 100 artists associated with these troupes.

But for all the history and practitioners' passion, the form has been on the decline for years, especially in the aftermath of Covid-19, as economic hardship has pushed band party musicians to look for more stable incomes elsewhere.

The four band parties of Aloobazar are Bangladesh Band Party, Dhaka Band Party, National Band Party and New National Band Party.

The band parties of Aloobazar have a singular origin.

It all started with Mohammad Kha, who brought the culture to the old town in the '30s.

His four wives and five sons were band artists as well.

In 1948, his son Siraj Kha started the National Band Party. After Siraj died in 1993, it was handed down to his two sons, the younger of whom is Arman "band master".

Arman's eldest brother Mohammad Reaz founded New National Band Party in 1996.

He said business was at its peak

during and right after Pakistan period. But with the advent of portable audio players, speakers and DJ parties, band party culture in general started to diminish.

Back in the glory days, a band party used to get booked for three to four events a day, which even included playing for films at times. Nowadays, they're lucky to even get one.

Twenty years ago, they used to get Tk 5,000 for a gig, minus transportation



and costume.

But these days, they only get Tk 3,000-4,000.

New National Band Party completely shut down during 2020 due to the pandemic and only started operating at a small scale around eight months ago, he added.

Reaz said all the other band parties



in the area are run by his relatives, while some artists are from their family too. In addition, there are 20-30 regular artists, while others come in for gigs on a freelance basis.

This correspondent also spoke to Dhaka Band Party artist Mohammad Saeed.

His father was Rustam Kha, eldest son of Mohammad Kha.

The 60-year-old said he couldn't get married due to financial hardship, as his profession never paid well enough. But he persisted and continued his father's trade.

Asked why, he boldly said, "It's in our blood," mentioning that he started out at the young age of 11.

All five of his brothers used to be in

this profession, but he's the only one still at it today.

He said costs for band party include shop space rent, buying instruments and dresses and paying proprietor Arman Tk 200 per gig.

The rest of the money earned from a gig is split between the artists, he further said. Saeed said these days, they barely get one or at maximum two gigs per week, mentioning that they got no help during the hardest phases of the pandemic, when bookings ran out altogether.

Even as they bring this time-tested art form deeper into the new century, the band party artists of Aloobazar are spending their days in disappointment – dissatisfied over their economic condition and anxious about the gradual extinction of their craft.

Pineapple season comes early

Rangamati growers all smiles

A CORRESPONDENT, Rangamati

When it comes to growing pineapples, Rangamati is on the frontlines of the race. Due to the region's favourable weather, thousands of tonnes of pineapple is produced here alone.

Usually, pineapple is cultivated between June and July. But for the last seven years, its being cultivated in January and February as well.

The reason behind this early cultivation through the off-seasons is the introduction of added hormones to the process.

From the eight to 11th month, when 30-40 leaves of the seedlings have sprouted, three cups of Rifin-15 mixed with 18 litres of water is sprinkled. Later, Ethrel hormones are used to fast-track the growth.

Tapan Kumar Paul, deputy director of Department of Agriculture Extension, said, "Pineapple is cultivated across 10

upazilas of Rangamati, Naniachar being the most popular. Over 2,130 hectares in Rangamati are cultivated for pineapple, bearing a total production of 55,913 tonnes."

Nirmal Chakma, a farmer from Naniachar upazila, brings around 5,000 pineapples by boat to Banarupa Samata Ghat, selling each for Tk 13 on average. He said he cultivated around 41,000 saplings this year.

Nandini Chakma, from Naniachar, said she brings around 35,000 pineapples to the weekly market and sells each for Tk 12-15, depending on the size. Almost 17,000 saplings were grown by her family. Local trader, Md Burhan said, "We purchase each pineapple for Tk 13-15 and sell them at Tk 20-25. We make very little profit due to transportation cost."

Kamal Ahmed, a wholesale seasonal fruits trader, said prices are higher now as the pineapple season hasn't started yet, so they can make a little more profit.



Although pineapples are commonly regarded as a summer fruit, the growers of Rangamati have found a way to speed up the cultivation process and make it available to consumers even in winter. The pineapple growers board large boats with thousands of the fruit, and make their way to Banarupa Samata Ghat. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

SINHA MURDER

Pradeep, Liaqat transferred to Ctg Central Jail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The death row convicts in Maj (retd) Sinha murder case Pradeep Kumar Das and Liaqat Ali were transferred to Chattogram Central Jail from Cox's Bazar jail yesterday.

Jailer Dewan Md Tariqul Islam told The Daily Star that following the higher authorities' order, they were taken to the condemned cell at Chattogram jail around 1:30pm. "They will be kept here until further notice," he added.

A Cox's Bazar court on January 31 sentenced Liaqat Ali, inspector of Baharchhara Investigation Centre; and Pradeep Kumar Das, suspended officer-in-charge of Teknaf Police Station, to death and six others to life term imprisonment in the murder case. The court also acquitted seven others from the charges.

A case filed by ACC against Pradeep and his wife Chumki is also under trial at a Chattogram court. Chumki is on the run.

2 Russian workers die at Rooppur power plant

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pabna

Two Russian employees of Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant at Ishwardi upazila in Pabna died early yesterday.

The deceased are Chukin Pavel (59), an engineer of Russian company Trest Rossem, and Talmachev Vayachesluy (50), an employee of SMU Engineering-1, a construction firm. Paven died of cardiac arrest while Vayachesluy died after falling from the stairs of a dormitory in the Green City residential area, said OC Md Asaduzzaman of Ishwardi Police Station.

He said Pavel had chest pain for the last couple of days and was under treatment. Vayachesluy fell from the 7th floor stairs of the dormitory. He was declared dead at Ishwardi upazila health complex. The OC said both the bodies will be sent to Russia through the embassy after autopsy.

HOSPITAL AT CRB

PM to make final decision

Says railways minister; suspends 2 officials for mismanagement

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan yesterday said the prime minister will take the final decision to build a hospital in Chattogram's Central Railway Building (CRB) area.

He said this to journalists after visiting the construction site of a project – a multi-storey building for Railway Employees Welfare Trust – in Chattogram Railway Station area.

Meanwhile, the minister also ordered to suspend two officials of the project over mismanagement.

After going to the railway station around noon, Sujan expressed his displeasure at seeing parked vehicles and unplanned shops in the area.

This lead the minister to immediately direct Jahangir Hossain, general manager of railway (east zone), to temporarily suspend Shams Md Tushar, divisional railway manager, and Ratan Kumar Chowdhury, manager of Chattogram Railway Station.

Sujan also visited proposed ICD construction area at Goods Port Yard, where locals handed over a memorandum to him, demanding protection of graveyard and waterbodies on the site.

Doctor impersonator held in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chattogram

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-7) arrested a doctor impersonator from the port city's Kalshidighi area yesterday.

The arrestee was identified as Rupan Shil (52) of Patiya upazila.

He had been working as a doctor at a private chamber in the port city for a long time without a medical certificate, said a Rab press release.

Tipped-off, a team of Rab-7 caught Rupan when he was treating patients at "his chamber" in Kalshidighi area around 10pm, said Nurul Abser, assistant director of Rab-7 media wing.

He was handed over to Bandar Police Station and a case filed, the official added.



Sadhus or holy men return after taking a holy dip at Sangam, the confluence of rivers Ganges, Jamuna, and mythical Saraswati, on the occasion of “Basant Panchami” during the Magh Mela festival in Allahabad, India, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

China urges ‘flexibility’ from US on N Korea

AFP, United Nations

China’s UN ambassador on Friday called on the United States to be more flexible in its dealings with North Korea, as Beijing joined others to scrap a US-drafted Security Council joint statement condemning Pyongyang’s missile launches, diplomats said.

Kim Jong Un’s regime conducted an unprecedented seven weapons tests in January, including launching its most powerful missile since 2017 as it hinted it could restart long-range and nuclear testing.

Washington had proposed a statement decrying those launches, but China and Russia, along with other nations, refused to sign on to it.

“If they do want to see some new breakthrough, they should show more sincerity and flexibility,” China’s ambassador to the UN, Zhang Jun, said of US officials ahead of a closed-door meeting.

‘Good but not enough’

Says Tehran after US waives sanctions on Iran’s civil nuclear program

AFP, Tehran

US steps on lifting sanctions are “good but not enough”, Iran said yesterday, following Washington’s announcement it was waiving sanctions on Iran’s civilian nuclear programme.

The US action came as talks to restore a 2015 deal between Tehran and world powers over its nuclear programme reached an advanced stage, with the issue of sanctions relief a major issue.

“The lifting of some sanctions can, in the true sense of the word, translate into their good will. Americans talk about it, but it should be known that what happens on paper is good but not enough,” Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said, quoted by ISNA news agency.

The secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council also reflected Tehran’s view that the US move falls short.

“Real, effective and verifiable economic benefit for Iran is a necessary condition for the formation of an agreement,” Ali Shamkhani said in a tweet.

“The show of lifting sanctions is not considered a constructive effort,” he added.

The US State Department on Friday said it was waiving sanctions on Iran’s civilian nuclear programme in a technical step necessary to return to the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, or JCPOA.

State Department spokesman Ned Price insisted this US step is a sanctions waiver for the civilian nuclear program and not broader sanctions relief.

Former president Donald Trump withdrew from the pact in 2018 and reimposed crippling sanctions on Iran,

“Real, effective and verifiable economic benefit for Iran is a necessary condition for the formation of an agreement. The show of lifting sanctions is not considered a constructive effort.”

ALI SHAMKHANI secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council

prompting the Islamic republic to begin pulling back from its commitments under the deal.

The waiver allows other countries and companies to participate in Iran’s civilian nuclear programme without triggering

US sanctions on them, in the name of promoting safety and non-proliferation.

Iran’s civilian programme includes increasing stockpiles of enriched uranium.

Amir-Abdollahian reiterated that one of the “main issues” in the JCPOA talks is obtaining guarantees that the US will not withdraw from the 2015 deal again.

“We seek and demand guarantees in the political, legal and economic sectors,” he said, adding that “agreements have been reached in some areas”.

Iran is negotiating with the UK, France, Germany, China and Russia directly and with the US indirectly in the Vienna talks which different parties say have reached a stage where the sides have to make important “political decisions”.

Earlier on Saturday, foreign ministry spokesman Saeed Khatibzadeh said: “Naturally, Tehran is carefully considering any action that is in the right direction of fulfilling the obligations of the JCPOA”, local media reported.

Moscow’s ambassador to the UN in Vienna, Mikhail Ulyanov, yesterday welcomed the US waiver decision as “a move in the right direction”.

Talks on reviving the nuclear deal were halted last week and the negotiators returned to their capitals for consultations.

Experts say the JCPOA talks could resume next week.

‘ANTI-NATIONAL’ POSTS

India arrests Kashmir journo

AFP, Srinagar

A prominent journalist in Indian-administered Kashmir has been arrested by police and accused of “glorifying terrorism” and “spreading fake news” in the disputed territory, where a running press crackdown has intensified.

Fahad Shah, the editor of Kashmir Walla news portal, had already been questioned several times for his reporting by officers in recent years.

He had been arrested for “glorifying terrorism, spreading fake news and inciting general public”, Kashmir police said yesterday. A police statement that followed his arrest the day before added that Shah’s Facebook posts had dented “the image of law enforcing agencies”.

The Committee to Protect Journalists demanded Shah’s release and called on Indian authorities to respect press freedom in Kashmir.

Dozens of journalists in Indian-controlled Kashmir have regularly been summoned by police and questioned on their work since 2019, when New Delhi revoked the territory’s partial autonomy and brought it under direct rule.

They have also been increasingly subject to harassment, arrests, raids and prosecution on “terrorism” related charges.

Everest’s highest glacier rapidly losing ice: study

AFP, Kathmandu

Ice on a glacier near the summit of Mount Everest that took millennia to form has shrunk dramatically in the last three decades due to climate change, a new study has shown.

The South Col formation may already have lost around 55 metres (180 feet) of thickness in the last 25 years, according to research led by the University of



Maine and published this week by Nature.

Carbon dating showed the top layer of ice was around 2,000 years old, suggesting that the glacier was thinning more than 80 times faster than the time it took to form, the study said.

At that rate, South Col was “probably going to disappear within very few decades”, lead scientist Paul Mayewski told National Geographic.

The South Col glacier is around 7,900 metres (26,000 feet) above sea level and a kilometre below the peak of the world’s highest mountain.

Other researchers have shown that Himalayan glaciers are melting at an accelerating rate. As the glaciers shrink, hundreds of lakes have formed in the foothills of Himalayan mountains that could burst and unleash floods.

Himalayan glaciers are a critical water source for nearly two billion people living around the mountains and river valleys below. They feed 10 of the world’s most important river systems and also help supply billions of people with food and energy.

Journo Peer Habib no more

FROM PAGE 2

others expressed their shock too.

Rahman was born in Sunamganj on November 12, 1963. He was a student of Rajshahi University. He was arrested in 1985 in the anti-army led government movement.

He was the brother of Jatiya Party lawmaker Peer Fazlur Rahman of Sunamganj-4.

He worked at Jugantor

and Banglabazar Patrika before joining Bangladesh Pratidin. He also worked as an advisory editor of Manobkhantha.

He wrote several books including Off The Record, Exclusive, Talk of the Press, novel Mandira and Lajabati etc.

He will be buried at his family graveyard in Sunamganj Sadar’s Majbari on Monday.

His body will be taken in

New Paxovir

FROM PAGE 2

to be a breakthrough in ending the pandemic.

Prof Ismail Patwary, former head of medicine at Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College, said Paxovir would be a lifesaver for patients older than 60 and have comorbidity.

Mohammad Mujahidul, executive director (marketing and sales) at Eskayef, said the drug maker will leave no stones unturned to bring all possible Covid drugs to Bangladesh.

Murad Hossain, senior manager (medical affairs) at Eskayef, moderated the discussion.

Paxovir is the second oral Covid treatment drug rolled out by Eskayef, which recently marketed the antiviral pill Monuvir.

Paxovir appears to be substantially more effective than monuvir, which reduced the risk of hospitalisation and death for high-risk patients by 30 percent.

Cyclone Batsirai closes in on Madagascar

AFP, Vatomandry

As powerful Cyclone Batsirai closed in on eastern Madagascar yesterday people sought shelter in more secure concrete buildings while others reinforced their roofs with large sandbags.

Govt doubling down on stance

FROM PAGE 1

A Bangladesh diplomat from Geneva told this correspondent yesterday that the Bangladesh embassy has not yet received any invitation for the meetings, adding that which countries will be discussed in the meeting has not been known yet.

In a statement on December 6, the UN Working Group said 76 cases of enforced disappearances were pending in Bangladesh.

The group reiterated its concerns regarding the situation, which it has been raising in similar reports for several years, with little engagement by the Bangladesh government.

It said it has not received replies to any outstanding cases during the reporting period and that only one case has been clarified by

the government since the working group transmitted the first case to it in 1996.

The Working Group noted with concern that it has been raising similar reports regarding enforced disappearances in Bangladesh for several years, but was alarmed that it continues to receive cases, many of which relate to individuals linked to opposition political parties, and by the apparent impunity for the practice in the country.

Foreign Minister Momen said the objective of the ongoing propaganda against Bangladesh is not about human rights for its geopolitical and strategic position.

After attending an event titled “Branding Bangladesh”, organised by the Centre for Non-resident Bangladeshis, he said some

UN organisations were provided with the report on enforced disappearances by a “very biased” Bangladeshi organisation.

On the recent allegations by victim family, Momen said some people alleged being harassed after police went to talk to them about their missing family members. However, police have now stopped enquiring about them.

The minister added they have asked police to hold meetings with those families in the presence of media.

“The government does not want a single person to be a victim of extra-judicial killings or enforced disappearances. It wants to establish rule of law.

“However, sometimes various criminal groups commit such crimes, which is not unique in Bangladesh,” he said.

বাংলাদেশ জাতীয় সংসদ সচিবালয়		
প্রশাসন শাখা		
উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি		
১.	প্রতিষ্ঠানের নাম	ঃ বাংলাদেশ জাতীয় সংসদ সচিবালয়।
২.	অর্থের উৎস	ঃ জিওবি।
৩.	দরপত্র আহ্বানের বিজ্ঞপ্তি নম্বর ও তারিখ	ঃ ১১.০০.০০০০.৬০৪.০৭.০৭৩.২১/৩৭৬, তারিখঃ ০৩/০২/২০২২।
৪.	দরপত্রের ধরণ	ঃ ওপেন টেন্ডার।
৫.	অনুষ্ঠান নির্মাণের সংক্ষিপ্ত বিবরণ	ঃ সংসদ বাংলাদেশ টেলিভিশনে সম্প্রচারের নির্মিত “বিজয়ের নিশান উড়ছে ঐ” নামীয় অনুষ্ঠান নির্মাণের জন্য উপযুক্ত প্রোডাকশন হাউজ/সার্ভিস প্রোভাইডার/নটিক ও চলচ্চিত্র নির্মাণ প্রতিষ্ঠান নিয়োগ।
৬.	সরবরাহের সময়	ঃ চুক্তি অনুযায়ী।
৭.	দরপত্রাদাতার যোগ্যতা	ঃ দরপত্রের সাথে ২০২১-২০২২ অর্থবছরের ট্রেড লাইসেন্স, ২০২০-২০২১ কর বর্ষের আয়কর পরিশোধের প্রমাণক, ১১ ডিজিটের ভ্যাট রেজিস্ট্রেশন সনদপত্র/বিন, হাল তারিখের লিকুইড এ্যাসেটের প্রমাণক (সিডিউল মোতাবেক) অভিজ্ঞতার সনদপত্র (সিডিউল মোতাবেক) ইত্যাদি দরপত্রের সাথে দাখিল করতে হবে। এগুলো ছাড়াও দরপত্র সিডিউলে উল্লিখিত অন্যান্য দলিলাদী এক্ষেত্রে প্রযোজ্য হবে।
৮.	দরপত্র সিডিউলের মূল্য	ঃ প্রতিটি সিডিউলের মূল্য ২,০০০/- (দুই হাজার) টাকা মাত্র (ফেরতযোগ্য নয়)।
৯.	Tender security & tender validity period	ঃ Tender security (ফেরতযোগ্য) ৭৫,০০০/- (পঁচাত্তর হাজার) টাকা। টেন্ডার ভ্যালিডিটি পিরিয়ড ১২০ (একশত বিশ) দিন।
১০.	দরপত্র তফসিল বিক্রয়ের স্থান ও ঠিকানা	ঃ উপসচিব (প্রশাসন) (উত্তর-পূর্ব ব্লক, লেভেল-১, কক্ষ নং-১৩১, জাতীয় সংসদ সচিবালয়, ঢাকা-১২২৫।
১১.	দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের তারিখ ও সময়	ঃ ০৮ ফেব্রুয়ারি, ২০২২ হতে ২৩ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২২ তারিখ সকাল ১০.০০টা হতে বেলা ৪.০০টা পর্যন্ত অফিস চলাকালীন।
১২.	দরপত্র দাখিল এবং খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	ঃ দাখিলঃ ২৪ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২২ তারিখ সকাল ৯.৩০টা হতে বেলা ১২.০০টা পর্যন্ত।
১৩.	দরপত্র খোলার স্থান	ঃ উপসচিব (প্রশাসন-১ অধিশাখ) এর কার্যালয় (কক্ষ নম্বর-৭৪১, পূর্ব ব্লক, লেভেল-৭, জাতীয় সংসদ ভবন)।
১৪.	বিশেষ নির্দেশনা	ঃ কর্তৃপক্ষ যে কোন/সকল দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিলের ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।
১৫.	টেন্ডার আহ্বানকারী কর্মকর্তার নাম, পদবী, ঠিকানা ও ফোন নম্বর	ঃ এ এস এম হুমায়ুন কবীর, উপসচিব, প্রশাসন শাখা, জাতীয় সংসদ সচিবালয়, শেরে বাংলা নগর, ঢাকা-১২২৫। ফোনঃ ৫৫০২৯০০৭, ৯১৩১১০০-২৭৯৪/২১৮৮/২৩০৬।
❖ আগ্রহী দরদাতাগণকে অবশ্যই তাদের প্রতিষ্ঠানের লেটারহেড প্যাডে সিডিউল ক্রয়ের জন্য ২ (দুই) কপি আবেদনপত্র সংগে নিয়ে আসতে হবে। তন্মধ্যে ১টি আবেদন সংসদ ভবনে প্রবেশের জন্য অভ্যর্থনা কক্ষে এবং অপর আবেদনটি সিডিউল ক্রয়ের জন্য প্রশাসন শাখায় জমা দিতে হবে।		
২।	দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি বাংলাদেশ জাতীয় সংসদ সচিবালয়ের www.parliament.gov.bd ওয়েবসাইটে পাওয়া যাবে।	
এ এস এম হুমায়ুন কবীর উপসচিব ফোনঃ ৫৫০২৯০০৭		
জিডি-২১৬		

UK Queen marks 70 yrs on throne

REUTERS, London

Queen Elizabeth marks 70 years on the British throne today, a milestone never reached by any of her predecessors over the last 1,000 years, and one which only a few monarchs across the globe have ever achieved.

Elizabeth, 95, became the queen of Britain and more than a dozen other realms including Canada, Australia and New Zealand on the death of her father King George VI on Feb 6, 1952, while she was in Kenya on an international tour.

The news was broken to her by her husband Prince Philip, who died last year aged 99 after more than seven decades by her side.

Elizabeth will mark 'Accession Day' in private as is customary, not viewing it as something to celebrate. But there will be four days of national events to mark her Platinum Jubilee in June.

In 2015, she overtook Victoria as Britain's longest-reigning sovereign in a line that traces its origin back to Norman King William I and his 1066 conquest of England.

When she ascended the throne, Josef Stalin, Mao Zedong and Harry Truman were running the Soviet Union, China and the United States, respectively, while Winston Churchill was British prime minister.

Including Churchill, she has been served by 14 prime ministers - a quarter of all there have been in Britain since Robert Walpole 300 years ago. During her reign, there have been 14 US presidents, all of whom she has met bar Lyndon Johnson.



Truckers and supporters continue to protest Covid-19 vaccine mandates and restrictions in Ottawa, Canada, on Friday. Hundreds of truckers drove their giant rigs into the Canadian capital on January 29, 2022, as part of a self-titled "Freedom Convoy" to protest vaccine mandates required to cross the US border. PHOTO: REUTERS

BACKING MOSCOW AGAINST WEST Xi upends Biden's strategic calculus

AFP, Paris

China's support for Russia in the standoff over Ukraine upends the strategic calculus for US President Joe Biden, who must now contend with a second front in a geopolitical fight whose ramifications could be felt worldwide.

By jointly lashing out Friday at Washington's alleged destabilising policies in both Eastern Europe and the Asia-Pacific region, Beijing and Moscow indicated that sanctions alone would not deter their bids to play larger roles on the global stage.

Appearing publicly as the Beijing Olympics opened, Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping showed an "enhanced commitment to make the world safe for authoritarianism, in particular in former socialist countries," said Steve Tsang, a political scientist at the SOAS University of London.

And for Xi, taking a public stand on Ukraine demonstrates "his shared interest with Putin to challenge the US-dominated world order", Tsang told AFP.

Official Chinese media outlets have been playing up the frequent encounters between Xi and Putin since Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea, which saw the Russian leader largely blacklisted by the West.

China's Global Times noted recently that "besides the official meetings, the two also shared some close moments like enjoying vodka, caviar and Russian ice cream and celebrating each other's birthdays".

"We know that both Russia and China value sovereignty above anything else, so alliance is still too strong of a word," said Anton Barbashin, an analyst at the Riddle think-tank in Glasgow, Scotland.

"But we are definitely going to see more coordinated action in international

relations, maybe simultaneous campaigns in Europe and Asia, as well as deepening economic ties between Moscow and Beijing," he told AFP.

And the Ukraine crisis gives Xi a chance to riposte indirectly to Biden's avowed focus of containing China's ambitions in the Asia-Pacific, as evidenced by the recent US-Australia defence pact and nuclear submarines deal.

"It increases Russia's relative importance for China -- Xi couldn't have provoked Biden nor Europe this openly," said Pascal

Putin that Russia was only a regional power -- he wants to show that Russia plays a central role, and he's succeeding," Ausseur said.

The payoff for China, meanwhile, could be in its own backyard: More US troops focussing on Ukraine and other Eastern European nations means less military weight to compete with Beijing in the Pacific.

The US response to Moscow on any Ukraine invasion, for example, could weigh heavily on any Chinese move to take



Ausseur, a former French navy admiral and director of the Mediterranean Foundation of Strategic Studies.

"And Putin showed Xi that he knows how to take geopolitical and military risks, which Beijing must have appreciated," he said.

Putin is using the threat to invade Ukraine to demand a halt to Nato expansion and what it calls "Cold War" ideologies, and now has Beijing's explicit support in the showdown.

"Don't forget that Barack Obama told

control of Taiwan, whose independence Washington has signalled it would defend.

Both Russia and China would also seize on any apparent US backdown over Ukraine to portray Washington as an unreliable partner, a potent argument as both countries look to spread their global influence, in particular in Africa.

"If the United States chooses retrenchment rather than its traditional global leadership role, both Russia and China could try to fill the void," Pezard said.



Bystanders watch as Moroccan emergency teams work to rescue Rayan in the remote village of Ighrane in the rural northern province of Chefchaouen, on Friday. PHOTO: AFP

PHOTO: AFP

Saving little #Rayan

AFP, Bab Berred

Moroccan rescuers worked through the night into yesterday, the fifth day of an increasingly urgent and nerve-wracking effort to rescue Rayan, a five-year-old boy trapped underground in a well.

The complex, slow and risky earth-moving operation has gripped residents of the North African kingdom and even sparked sympathy in neighbouring Algeria, a regional rival.

Rayan accidentally fell about 32 metres (35 yards) down the tight, empty shaft near his home in the remote village of Ighrane in Chefchaouen province on Tuesday afternoon.

Rescue crews, using bulldozers and front-end loaders, have dug almost all the way down but the final two metres are the most difficult because of the risk of landslides.

There has been no information about the fate of the boy, but the more time that passes, the more fears arise over whether he will be recovered alive.

Overnight, crews manoeuvred a heavy pipe into position in the area. "We're almost there," said one of the operation's leaders, Abdesalam Makoudi.

A glacial cold has gripped this mountainous and impoverished region of Rif, which is at an

elevation of about 700 metres.

On Thursday Moroccan media reported that rescuers managed to deliver oxygen and water to the bottom of the well.

Thousands of people gathered around the site, surrounded by olive trees, where AFP reporters said the tension was palpable. Some applauded to encourage the rescuers.

The shaft, just 45 centimetres (18 inches) across, was too narrow to reach Rayan, and widening it was deemed too risky -- so earth-movers dug a wide slope into the hill to reach him from the side.

The operation has made the landscape resemble a construction site. It involves engineers and topographers, and was made more complex by the mix of rocky and sandy soils.

Red-helmeted Civil Defence personnel have at times been suspended by rope, as if on a cliff face.

"I keep up hope that my child will get out of the well alive," Rayan's father told public television 2M on Friday evening. "I thank everyone involved and those supporting us in Morocco and elsewhere."

"Rescuers are literally in the process of moving a mountain to save little #Rayan. I hope that their efforts will not be in vain and that those who prayed for him will see their prayers answered," one internet user wrote.



DIPLOMATIC BLITZ Xi hosts banquet for world leaders

AFP, Beijing

Chinese President Xi Jinping hosted a banquet yesterday for heads of state and international organisations attending the Winter Olympics, part of a diplomatic blitz following nearly two years without face-to-face meetings due to the pandemic.

Beijing is keen to shore up international support and pull off a Games that will burnish its reputation, despite multiple countries including the United States, Australia, Britain and Canada announcing diplomatic boycotts over China's rights record.

Besides Russian President Vladimir Putin, the banquet guestlist included Kazakhstan President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan, Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el Sisi and Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, as well as a handful of leaders from Europe and Asia Pacific, according to Chinese state media.

State broadcaster CCTV said International Olympic Committee President Thomas Bach and UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres also gave speeches praising China's management of the Olympics and handling of the pandemic.

LOYALTY TO TRUMP GOP convention exposes fissure

AFP, Washington

Republicans' deep divisions over the 2020 US election were laid bare Friday as the party censured two lawmakers investigating the deadly Capitol assault aimed at stopping its certification -- only to see Donald Trump rebuked by Mike Pence for claiming falsely that his former vice president could have overturned the results.

An extraordinary split-screen began when Liz Cheney and Adam Kinzinger found themselves rebuked by the Republican National Committee (RNC) over their roles on the

House select committee probing Trump's involvement in the January 6, 2021 insurrection.

Just hours after the RNC met in Utah, Pence delivered an address in Florida rejecting Trump's claims that the former Indiana senator could have overruled vote tallies in swing states as he oversaw the congressional certification of Joe Biden's victory.

"President Trump is wrong. I had no right to overturn the election," Pence said at a Federalist Society event in Orlando. "The presidency belongs to the American people and the American people alone."

Trump, who retains his iron grip on the party despite losing in 2020, is expected to run for the 2024 Republican nomination, potentially against Pence.

US Covid death toll tops 900,000

AFP, Washington

The US death toll from the Covid-19 pandemic surpassed 900,000 on Friday, according to the Johns Hopkins University coronavirus tracker. The toll had hit 800,000 dead in mid-December, just a month and a half ago. New cases linked to the Omicron variant are falling, but daily deaths are still rising, with an average of 2,400 now, according to government figures. Covid deaths usually occur a few weeks after patients get the virus, which explains why the spike in deaths occurs later than the spike in new cases. The Covid pandemic has killed at least 5.7 million people worldwide since it began in December 2019, according to an AFP tally published on Friday.

Peru PM sacked over 'domestic violence'

AFP, Lima

Peruvian President Pedro Castillo dumped his prime minister Friday just three days after appointing him, amid outrage over revelations he was accused of domestic violence in 2016. "I have decided to recompose the cabinet," the president said, meaning Prime Minister Hector Valer Pinto is out. Valer Pinto, 62, first came under pressure Thursday when newspapers reported that in 2016 his wife and university-age daughter reported him for domestic violence. Valer Pinto responded to the news reports by denying he was an "abuser" and said he was never convicted of domestic violence.



Private airlines barely staying afloat

Govt must provide them financial assistance, reduce their tax burdens

WE are really concerned to learn that our private airlines have been struggling with a host of problems, which are not only impeding their growth but also have forced a number of them to completely stop their operations. According to a report by *The Daily Star* on February 5, regulatory malfunction, excessive tariffs, high jet fuel price and undue patronisation given to their main rival, the national flag carrier Biman Bangladesh Airlines, are the major reasons behind this.

According to the Civil Aviation Authority of Bangladesh, while 1.3 million people opted for air travel in 2000, the number increased to about 6 million in 2020. While our private airlines could have expanded their operations taking advantage of the high demand for air travel, they could not do so due to a lack of support from the government and other concerned authorities, experts say.

The most important challenge for these airlines is to survive against the state-financed Biman, which has a bonded warehouse facility as well as a hangar at the airport which other airlines don't have. What this means is, when it comes to servicing an aircraft or replacing spare parts, the private airliners fall far behind Biman as they can't keep the spare parts at the airport, leading to a regular disruption of flight schedules. Sometimes, the private airlines have to wait for months to import the spare parts. Moreover, they have to import many of the parts—such as the multiple number of generators used in the aircraft, various types of LCD panels and computer displays used in the cockpit—at a very high price, due to the unreasonable tax they have to pay at the Customs. Some of the parts are taxed between 15 and 150 percent while they should be cleared on zero-tax, according to industry stakeholders. Then there is a 5 percent advance tax (AT) which has been imposed recently on the import of aircraft, engines and spares.

Another major reason why the private airlines are struggling is their due surcharges. According to aviation analysts, it is the piled-up surcharges that forced the GMG Airlines, United Airways and Regent Airways to ground their fleet. The high price of jet fuel is another barrier for them.

Therefore, in order to revive our aviation industry, there needs to be a clear directive from the authorities to stop the arbitrary and whimsical practice of taxation on the private airliners. They also need bonded facilities at the airport to easily service their aircraft and replace the spare parts as needed. Getting permission from the authorities to import the parts should not also take so long. Most importantly, private airlines also need financial assistance from the government, that is until the playing field for them is level.

Save our forests from influential locals

Govt must take firm stance to stop environmental damage

STORIES of cutting hills or ravaging forests and other natural resources by powerful individuals are so frequently published that they do not surprise us anymore. It is well-known that these people often operate with some kind of work order issued by the local administration and, importantly, with the blessings of the local political power. As a result, they remain outside the dragnet of the laws even when they do something horrible.

One such story has now come from Cox's Bazaar with details of how a wildlife sanctuary, surrounding agricultural lands and two canals are being decimated by a syndicate having links with the ruling party. According to the Youth Environment Society (YES), a Cox's Bazar-based environmental organisation, the forestland and croplands belonging to locals were excavated 30 feet deep, turning an estimated 300 acres of arable land and forestland into veritable ponds.

The story says that after damaging two canals by building dams and extracting sand, the syndicate is tearing apart the forest by scooping out sand from it and topsoil from adjacent arable land in Dulahazara union of Chakaria upazila, Cox's Bazar. Reportedly, the canals, both marked as ecologically sensitive, have been leased out to a local influential group. And as expected, they have been making hefty money out of it paying no heed at all to the environmental damage caused.

Once an eye-catching locale with pristine trees, the whole area was a sanctuary for birds and wild animals. The Fasiakhali forest, which serves as a habitat for the critically endangered Asian Elephants, is now at risk because of these activities. The extensive damage done to the entire locality has also been mentioned in a report of the Department of Environment. It found out that about 4,000 square feet of the two canals were damaged as a result of sand and soil extraction by the leaseholders. These people are well-known, just as the official response, especially from the divisional forest officer of Cox's Bazar (north), is predictably lax.

We have noticed a pattern of such irresponsible and inadequate responses from the district officials in case of such acts of destruction of the environment and overstepping legal bounds by the perpetrators. This cannot be the norm. The higher authorities must take a firm stance to save our forests and other natural resources and ensure local officers and administration take appropriate measures.

How to read the Sinha murder verdict



OF MAGIC & MADNESS

Badiuzzaman Bay
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The Daily Star.

BADIUZZAMAN BAY

FOR the government, the timing of the Sinha murder verdict on January 31 couldn't have been worse, with increasing global scrutiny following a US sanction on RAB over allegations of human rights violations, including extrajudicial killings. Yet, soon after the verdict, which handed death sentences to two police officers, a top leader of the ruling Awami League said, "It proves that the Sheikh Hasina government believes in the rule of law." He said so despite the verdict having blown up the entire story arc built by state officials around instances of extrajudicial killing, or any mislabelling thereof (shootout, crossfire, gunfire).

That's politics 101—you control the narrative regardless of what happens. You stick to it until it becomes the "truth", and you use that "truth" as a crutch in the face of any future allegation. So, before the Sinha verdict too gets sucked into this political vortex, it's important that we take control of the narrative and critically examine why this verdict is significant, but also why its place in history may not be as assured as many think.

What's in the verdict? Besides sentencing Teknaf's suspended OC Pradeep Kumar Das and inspector Liaquat Ali to death for the "pure and simple murder" of Sinha Rashed Khan, the court also sentenced six others—including three cops—to life while acquitting seven other police personnel. Frankly, a death sentence is not something that we can ethically stand behind. But at least we now have the comfort of knowing these people are being held to account for a murder planned in cold blood.

Importantly, the verdict also marks a couple of firsts: it is the first time any law enforcement officers in the country have been brought to book for staging a shootout. It is also the first judicial acknowledgment of how a shootout/crossfire story is cooked up. Through its minute-by-minute description of the July 31, 2020 event, the court has essentially taken the lid off all the variations of this story produced over the years. In short, what all of them have in common is how the law enforcers encounter a "threat" from a "criminal" or his associates, and how they are "forced" to respond (read: fatally shoot) in self-defence. By exposing this farce, the verdict has shown that all shootout/crossfire incidents are basically premeditated.

However, being a first may be a source of comfort, but not necessarily a badge of honour. Pradeep and Co. did something



REPRESENTATIONAL PHOTO: STAR

The verdict is a painful reminder that countless other victims—victims without powerful backing or those whose moment of tragedy wasn't immortalised in a viral photo or video clip—didn't get justice.

meeting. Could Sinha's murder, or that of all other victims, be avoided if he had been stopped sooner? Should we be happy that Sinha got justice, or sad that others before him did not?

This is not merely a rhetorical question. Sinha's murder may have been "pure and simple", but for a broader context, we need to de-simplify the circumstances under which the case progressed, gaining unprecedented momentum as it was transferred to the Cox's Bazar court. Our memory of a muted standoff between the police and military establishments over the retired major's murder is still fresh. What chance does a victim without such powerful backing have of getting justice in a similarly speedy manner?

Unfortunately, a victim's family can rarely file a case, according to Nur Khan Liton, secretary general of Ain o Salish Kendra. Police do not want to record such cases. Even when they do, it is hastily binned or somehow falls through. For example, Sinha's may have been the first case to get a guilty verdict but it wasn't the first to go on trial. In that first trial in 2010, the lower court in Kushtia ruled in favour of the cops, even though the victim's family insisted that the former had picked him up before "staging" the shootout.

So while we are glad that a guilty verdict has been finally reached, and so fast, we doubt this will be the norm going forward. So far, there has been no official apology issued from the home ministry. We have heard of no internal

investigations or judicial inquiries into the other shootout cases that Pradeep and Co. were a part of. No political demand for eliminating the culture of extrajudicial executions. No official censure of lawmakers who previously supported this culture, even in parliament. No scrutinising the modus operandi of security agencies. And no outcry over why

this is the first verdict, and not the 100th or the 500th, hypothetically speaking.

It's as if the Sinha case was an embarrassment, and the sooner it goes away, the better.

For the government, however, this particular embarrassment may last longer than expected. While there has been a dip in the number of extrajudicial executions of late, it is unlikely to help its image with the widespread condemnation after the US sanctions on RAB. The verdict, far from being an affirmation of the rule of law, will instead be used as a reference point to further validate claims of state violence and torture. As image-conscious as this government may be, it doesn't seem to understand that the solution is really not to ignore or cover up crimes and failures—because nothing stays hidden for long in this age—but to own up to them and show sincere action to ensure they never happen again.

After the Sinha verdict, we are being told to be hopeful, to look ahead. But we cannot do so without also looking back. The verdict is a painful reminder that countless other victims—victims without powerful backing or those whose moment of tragedy wasn't immortalised in a viral photo or video clip—didn't get justice. Torture or staged executions by state officials reached a point that the identity of victims no longer mattered. Can we move ahead without critically questioning this failure of "the rule of law" or doing something about it?

Can we all play nice, please?



CHINTTO SINCE 1995

Dr Nizamuddin Ahmed
is an architect and a professor, a Commonwealth scholar and a fellow, Woodbadger scout leader, Baden-Powell fellow, and a Major Donor Rotarian.

NIZAMUDDIN AHMED

WITH the third round of Covid surge, educational institutions in Bangladesh are once again subjected to an extended shutdown. The purpose, we are told, is to prevent the spread of the highly contagious Omicron variant. This act of concern coming from the health ministry, the primary vanguard of our well-being, could be rather puzzling, judging by their recent vaccination campaign for the same schoolchildren.

Before delving any further, let me shine some light on our tradition of discordant work practice in the public sector, especially when it comes to inter-ministerial collaboration.

You might have seen the following episode in person or on TV, read in the papers or online, or *nidenpokke* heard of it: The roads and highways department lays the finishing asphalt to make a public road usable. Everyone is happy. But a week later, the happier person is the contractor of Titas Gas, who has received a work order to dig the same road to put in pipes. We need gas, man.

But wait! An even happier person waits for his cue with even larger pipes. The Dhaka Wasa has issued a separate work order. This contractor is polite enough to move in only after the gas guy has completed his work with a not-so-finished coat on the road. Therefore, there will be more digging. And finishing. Over time, the *nogorbashi* are finished.

The anecdote above had to be dug up

Instead of saving lives, the school vaccination programme could prove to be a super spreader. Under the circumstances, perhaps the school students are better off without vaccines in such crowded situations. The health ministry should really try harder to get their act right.

because of an unfortunate occurrence related to schoolchildren, where once again there were contradictory approaches to a common cause by two different ministries.

The education ministry spent months to plan, studied the ever-changing circumstances, learnt from other countries, trained teachers and officers, and then laid out a procedure to finally reopen schools and colleges after a long closure. Our children were protected.

During more than a year of closure, however, classes and exams had been conducted online and on television to keep the wheel of education running. The ministry was appreciably cautious about exposing students to the deadly virus. As the infection rate dropped to a somewhat tolerable level, students were allowed into classrooms physically—that, too, for two to three days per week. For the rest of the week, learning continued online.

By government order, campuses and buildings were thoroughly cleaned. At the school gates, students' body temperature was checked and their outstretched hands were sprayed with sanitiser. Mask wearing was, of course, mandatory. Inside the classrooms, they sat at alternate desks. Safe distance and Covid protocol were mostly maintained.

It was amazing how teachers managed their students—some of them eight- to nine-year-olds—administering such a demanding task with efficiency. It was obvious that training and communication were employed methodically under the aegis of the education ministry to let everyone involved know what was expected of them. Astoundingly, this happened in tandem all across the country.

Then came the students' vaccination. In early January, the government made the jabs mandatory for those who were attending classes in person. A welcome

move, no doubt, and somewhat of a thrill for students aged above 12 years. But the good news ends here, because the health ministry officials and medical professionals could not ensure precautionary measures.

There was wide-scale shoving and pushing, no one was caring about wearing masks, and shouting and exchange of red eyes were the order of the day. All of those gross delinquencies were committed by the parents of the children. Some children were understandably frightened.

What the education ministry developed and delivered after months of preparation was destroyed at one sweep by the health ministry and the medical practitioners involved—especially those who planned the school vaccination programme. The mindset of the innocent children, built over two years through massive campaigns on TV and radio, and through learning at home and school, went out the window. "Wash your hands, don't touch your face, wear a mask, avoid crowded places"—all this became a joke to them. Hopefully, the children know better.

Instead of saving lives, the school vaccination programme could prove to be a super spreader. Under the circumstances, perhaps the school students are better off without vaccines in such crowded situations. The health ministry should really try harder to get their act right.

My advice? Next time, don't allow parents or guardians into the vaccination premises. You will see the children behaving their best in the presence of their teachers. Let each school arrange vaccination of their respective students in their own premises. Medical professionals can visit the schools at appointed hours to administer the jabs.

Let's save lives together by learning from each other.

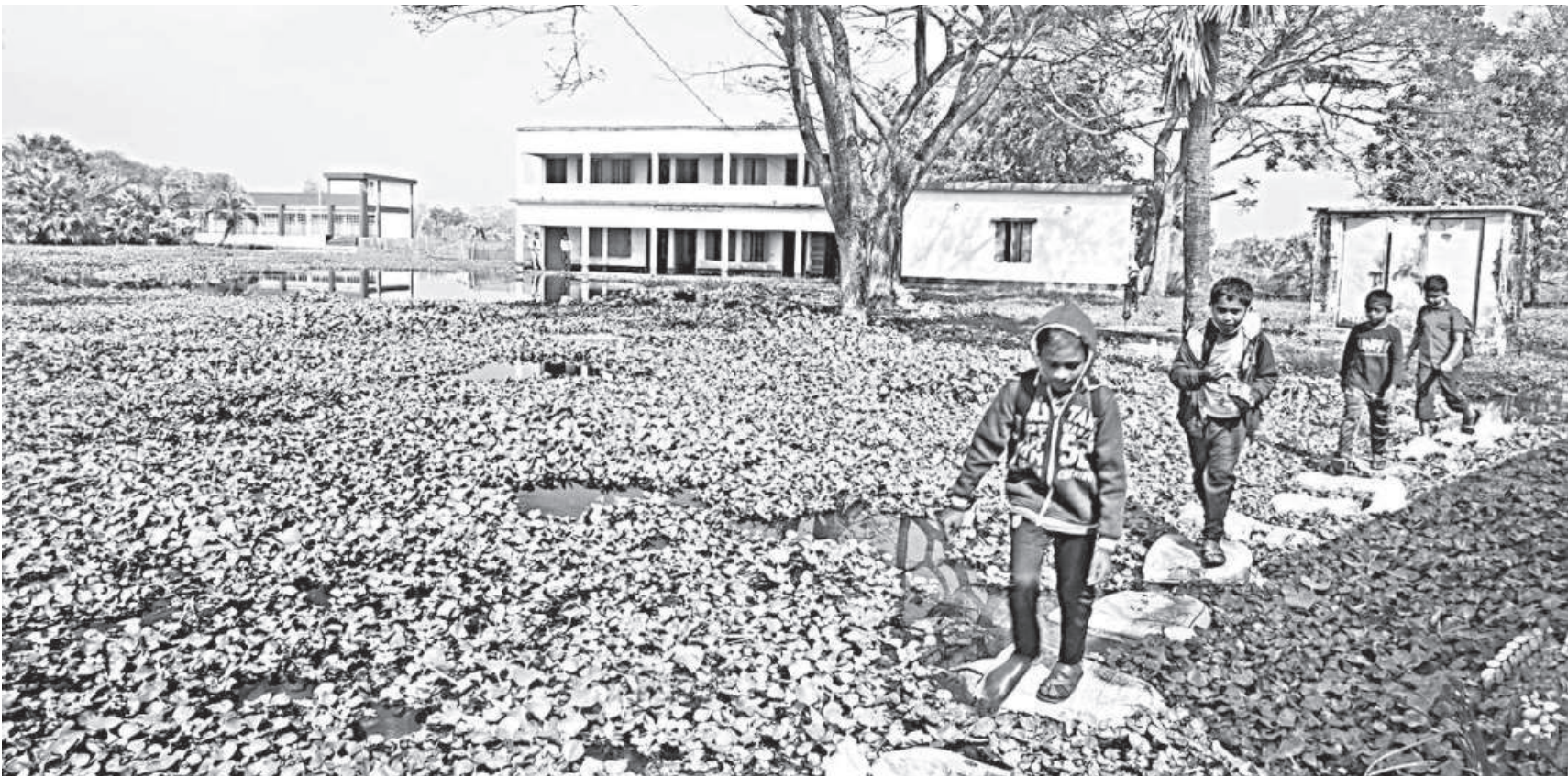
‘Social engineering is vital to solve waterlogging in Bhabadaha’

Dr Ainun Nishat, professor emeritus of BRAC University and a water resource and climate change specialist, talks to Naznin Tithi of The Daily Star about the reasons behind the persistent waterlogging problem in the Bhabadaha area and the measures that should be taken to solve it.

It's hard to believe that over a million people in Bhabadaha in the country's south-west region have been suffering from waterlogging for so long. When did the problem start and how did it get so bad?

The waterlogging problem has been there in Bhabadaha for the last 30 years, which is the result of development activities in the sixties and the seventies. This is the result of an absence of monitoring, greed of a group of people, and the inability of the local community to push for their own agendas and ideas. In any development project, when you intervene or interfere with the natural process, you need to monitor and see what is happening. But the Water Development Board has failed to do so in the case of Bhabadaha. There are also many other factors involved.

In the coastal areas of Bangladesh, polders were constructed to protect crops from the high tide (during hide tide, croplands would go under water) and for land building. A hundred years back, these polders were called “Oshtomashi Baadh”—or, embankments that would remain functional for eight months of the year. During this period, crops would be protected and harvested, and at the beginning of monsoon, it would be cut down for the tide to come in. Together with the tide would come sediment, which would get deposited and land would be raised. Although it takes time for the land to be raised through this process, it was going on.



was very high during monsoon—about 6 million metre cube. It would come naturally with the tidal water. The 10 to 12 large beels in the Bhabadaha area used to be filled up with the tidal sediment during monsoon.

But as the permanent polders were built around the beels, the land building process inside the polders stopped because water could not enter into the polders with sediments. The tidal volume then got deposited in the surrounding rivers, reducing their depth and width. The result is, the poldered areas became lower than the riverbed, creating waterlogging during monsoon. This problem became severe especially in Keshabpur, Abhaynagar, Dumuria and Tala upazilas of Jashore, Khulna and Satkhira in the early nineties.

To sum up, the waterlogging problem in Bhabadaha is a result of polderisation. I am not against polders. Without polders, the agricultural revolution in the south-western Bangladesh would have never been possible. After the polders were constructed in the sixties, for the first twenty years it produced excellent results. And then, in some areas, such as the Bhabadaha, the problem started to surface. And that was the time when shrimp cultivation was introduced. So, one group of the community—the powerful elite—didn't bother about the poor farmers and made money by farming shrimp.

However, the polder system is still functioning in Cox's Bazar, Chattogram, Noakhali, Laksmipur, Patuakhali and Barisal because the tidal cubature in these areas is still good with fresh water coming from the upstream. But in the south-western part, the behaviour of the polders became different due to the extensive network of rivers. In the Bhabadaha area, especially in Keshabpur, Abhoynagar, Dumuriya and Tala upazilas of Jashore, Khulna and Satkhira, fresh water supply from the upstream has decreased because of Farakka barrage and the tidal cubature has also declined.

Has anything substantial been done by the authorities so far to solve the issue? Reportedly, the Bhabadaha Pani Nishkashan Sangram Committee

▲ **The residents of the villages in the Bhabadaha region are going through unbearable suffering because it is not only their croplands that are inundated, but their homesteads are also under knee-to-waist deep water.**

PHOTO: MOKAMMEL SHUVU

After the polders were constructed in the sixties, for the first twenty years it produced excellent results. And then, in some areas, such as the Bhabadaha, the problem started to surface. And that was the time when shrimp cultivation was introduced.

has been protesting the projects undertaken by the Water Development Board. Why?

Around 1977/78, when the government took up the delta development project, these facts were revealed and we requested a new management approach for the polders. Then in the nineties, the government undertook a project to stop the tide by constructing regulators across the river system. But the local people and the civil society organisations opposed it, demanding fresh studies to deal with the issue. The local communities, based on their traditional knowledge and wisdom, demanded implementation of the Tidal River Management (TRM) method.

Through this approach, an embankment is built around a beel leaving two cut-points for water to enter and recede from. When the water recedes during low tide, it takes the sediment deposited on the riverbed in a process of natural excavation. Under this method, water can be allowed to enter the tidal basin (the beel) for land building. In the course of a few years, the empoldered area becomes higher than the surrounding riverbed.

Although the government and the engineers of the Water Development Board were against it, the local people started implementing TRM near Chuknagar in Dumuriya upazila of Khulna. After this first TRM initiative was successfully applied by the local community, fresh studies were carried out and the TRM was approved as the technical solution of the problem. But the powerful elites of the area and the local members of parliament did not want the method to be implemented. Government officials sided with the elites. They wanted waterlogging to be there so they could cultivate fish and shrimp. But the decision was suicidal for the local communities, because they could not cultivate paddy, their main food.

During the last 15 years, the government undertook various projects for dredging the rivers and to pump out the stagnant water from the area. But, no amount of dredging will be able to lower the riverbed level. It will get filled up in two/three years. Also, people can get only temporary benefits by pumping out water

from the beels.

So, what should be done now to push the authorities to implement the TRM approach, since this is the most efficient way to solve waterlogging in the area, according to experts and locals?

We need “social engineering” to solve the waterlogging problem of Bhabadaha—you need to allow the tide to come in and deposit the sediment in an organised manner. Doing so needs community involvement. But the WDB engineers traditionally like to work through the contractors, not through the community. Recently, the local community completed one TRM project in the Pakhimara Beel of Tala upazila in Satkhira, which has been quite successful. But the powerful local elites and the local MPs would always make attempts to foil the efforts taken by the locals.

Very recently, the government took up a project to implement TRM and go for land building, but the ministry itself opposed it.

As I have mentioned, the situation gradually deteriorated over the last 30 years. In the first 20/25 years, villagers reaped a lot of benefits from the polders. But now the hydro-morphological, tidal hydrodynamics and sediment transport mechanism has been totally altered. This requires a fresh assessment of the ground realities.

The waterlogging problem in Bhabadaha must be seen as a national problem. And the solution today would be to form a national commission with professionals from BUET and other experts who understand this particular problem and can solve it with the participation of the local people.

Needless to say, TRM is the ultimate solution. The Water Development Board should be instructed to push for implementing TRM in the Bhabadaha area. But they will have to fight with the local elites and their powerful backers who prefer using the land for shrimp cultivation. So, I think only the government can undertake this challenge, and they should not side with the powerful people at the expense of ordinary citizens.



▲ **Dr Ainun Nishat**
PHOTO: STAR

“Polder” is a Dutch word that basically means any embankment that prevents the movement of water from the river to inland. When it is linear, we call it an embankment. But when it encircles an area, we call it a polder. Currently, the entire coastal area of Bangladesh is empoldered—we have around 129 of them.

Around the time of 1965/1966, when the master plan for the overall water management of Bangladesh was prepared for the first time, the demand for building permanent polders came up. A US consultant with USAID funding, in consultation with the local people, decided to build polders around the entire coastal belt of Bangladesh. Before these polders were constructed between 1965 and 1969, tides used to come in and reach the beels or wetlands. The tidal volume

QUOTABLE Quote



CORRIE TEN BOOM

Dutch writer (1892 - 1983)

Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow. It empties today of its strength.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

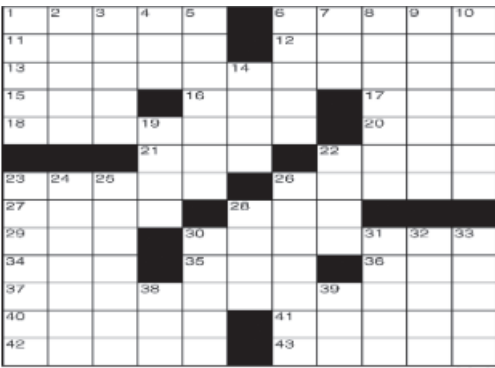
ACROSS

- 1 Sandbox toys
- 6 Accumulate
- 11 MacDowell of “Groundhog Day”
- 12 Sold for
- 13 Activating, in a way
- 15 Light brown
- 16 Fish eggs
- 17 “...man—mouse?”
- 18 Pencil ends
- 20 Mouse's cousin
- 21 Greek vowel
- 22 Heroic tale
- 23 Fire-fighting needs
- 26 Rx amounts
- 27 Important times
- 28 Spider's home
- 29 Boxing great
- 30 Sicilian wine

- 34 June honoree
- 35 Smart—whip
- 36 Tennis hit
- 37 Turning informer against
- 40 Funny Murphy
- 41 Rental contract
- 42 Animated characters
- 43 Ranch animal

DOWN

- 1 Cut's counter-part
- 2 Egypt's Sadat
- 3 Menzel of “Frozen”
- 4 Set fire to
- 5 Classified stuff
- 6 Zodiac ram
- 7 Fellow
- 8 Some cats and rabbits
- 9 Attic use
- 10 Orchestra pieces
- 14 Circle dance
- 19 Spots
- 22 Laments loudly
- 23 Telemarketer's aid
- 24 Magic setting
- 25 Tied the knot
- 26 Fouls up, as plans
- 28 Scrub
- 30 Spiked clubs
- 31 Pond growth
- 32 Unfettered
- 33 The Yokum boy
- 38 Pewter component
- 39 Hoop attachment

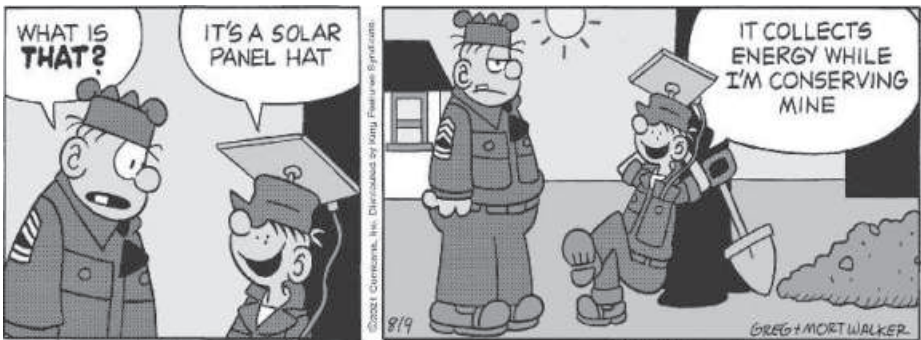


YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



BEETLE BAILEY

BY MORT WALKER



BABY BLUES

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT



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

A good Samaritan indeed

Rickshaw-van puller Alamgir leaves profession to guard risky unmanned level crossing

During the daybreak, at least 2,000 EPZ workers, mostly female, from surrounding villages cross the precarious level crossing on light vehicles braving the risk.

EAM ASADUZZAMAN

A poor man has set an example of magnanimity voluntarily guarding an unmanned rail crossing defying the bone-chilling cold and dense fog at the daybreak to caution Uttara EPZ workers about approaching trains, who are in a mad rush to reach factories in time.

Notably, on January 26, a terrific accident took away the lives of four female EPZ workers and critically injured four others as Khulna-bound Rupsha Express crushed a battery-run three-wheeler carrying them on the way to their workplace at the early hours on the unguarded rail crossing at Sonarai Dhonipara village in Nilphamari Sadar upazila.

After the accident, agitated people demanded that a gate be set up and a gateman be appointed but no high officials

of railway either visited the spot or gave any assurance in this regard.

Still at the daybreak, at least two thousand EPZ workers, mostly female, from surrounding villages cross the precarious level crossing on light vehicles braving the risk, locals said.

Alamgir Hossain, 40, a rickshaw-van puller who lives near the rail crossing, got worried and felt the urge to secure the level crossing.

Talking with local elderly people, Alamgir arranged bamboo poles and set them on each side of the rail crossing.

Whenever a train comes he sets the long bamboo pieces crosswise and cautions the pedestrians and vehicles to keep away from the rail tracks.

"I saw the blood-splattered bodies of the accident victims and when I found that the same risk still prevails, I became unsettled,"

said he.

"Every day, I come to the rail crossing at the daybreak and notice the headlight of an approaching train amid dense fog and whenever I see one I shout out to caution drivers and walkers. I have been doing this for all trains," he added.

Alamgir's son Aminur Rahman, 19, an HSC examinee, said "My father has given up pulling his rickshaw-van to guard the rail crossing, yet we respect his noble intention. To maintain the family, I and my younger brother are working at a brick kiln as our institution is closed."

Easy bike driver Shibu Roy said, "We sometimes offer him Tk 10 to Tk 20 but he never accepts."

Sadar upazila Chairman Shahid Mahmud said, "We have requested the railway authority to build a rail gate and appoint a gateman at this risky crossing."



Alamgir Hossain has been voluntarily guarding a risky rail crossing alerting vehicles and pedestrians while a train approaches at Sonarai Dhonipara village in Nilphamari Sadar upazila.

PHOTO: STAR

Courage

FROM PAGE 14

the communists for all the casualties and refused to sign. I reproached him for his behaviour. After he refused to sign, I, as the convener of the All-Party University State Language Action Committee, signed the leaflet.

Shortly afterwards, it was announced that a ghaibana janaza would be held at the Medical College Hostel compound at 10:00am the next day. That night, Toaha, Oli Ahad, Emadullah and I discussed the janaza in detail. At some point that night, Oli Ahad went to Maulana Bhasani and requested him to lead the janaza prayers. According to Oli Ahad, Maulana agreed. But he was not seen the next morning. We then learned that he had already left for Narsingdi. Oli Ahad became very angry with him. Later Maulana Bhasani told me that he did not confirm Oli Ahad. He left for Narsingdi because he felt that the people in the village areas needed to be informed about the situation in Dhaka.

In my opinion, the events of February 22 were more significant than the events of February 21. I learnt from my personal experience that students were less courageous than common people. If we had to rely only on the students, then there were doubts as to whether there would be a procession on February 22. The procession happened because of the participation of a large number of general people in the ghaibana janaza. A large number of employees of the secretariat participated in the janaza and the procession. Police opened fire on the demonstrators near the High Court gate. But the procession continued spontaneously. Nobody cared about Section 144.

Abdul Matin was the convener of the All-Party University State Language Action Committee during the language movement.

This is an abridged version of Abdul Matin's interview published in Bhasha Andolon Prasanga: Katipay Dalil (Ed. Badruddin Umar, Bangla Academy, 1995.)

Translated by: Shamsuddoza Sajen, The Daily Star.

Sanctions

FROM PAGE 2

yesterday as there were some misleading media reports on his speech delivered at a programme in New York on February 1 regarding the sanctions.

On December 10, 2021, the US imposed sanctions on Rab and seven of its present and former top officials over allegations of extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances.

Earlier, the United States did not invite Bangladesh to its Summit for Democracy held on December 9-10.

Covid pandemic

FROM PAGE 14

the previous week.

Next in line came France with 289,200 cases, down a fifth, and India where they fell by a third to 204,500.

The number of Covid-linked deaths increased globally for the fourth week in a row to 10,507 per day, a rise of 16 percent.

Even though the highly contagious Omicron variant led to four times more daily infections than previous waves, daily deaths remain far lower than their record high in January 2021 when they skirted 15,000.

The US recorded the most deaths this week with 2,576 per day, ahead of India (1,040) and Brazil (702).

Coastal areas

FROM PAGE 14

by law enforcers, it's just a matter of their willingness to stop the use of single-use plastic in hotels, motels, and restaurants," she told The Daily Star.

The DoE will implement the three-year project in the coastal districts of Bagerhat, Barguna, Bhola, Chattogram, Cox's Bazar, Feni, Khulna, Laxmipur, Noakhali, Patuakhali, Pirojpur and Satkhira.

A total of 40 upazilas in the 12 districts and eight selected areas of Chattogram city are within the project area, shows the Action Plan of DoE.

Bangladesh has been seeing a steep rise in plastic usage over the years. As per a World Bank research conducted in 2020, per capita plastic usage in the country was 3kg in 2005. The figure went up to 9kg in 2020.

According to World Bank data released last year, Bangladesh produces 8,21,250 tonnes plastic annually. Of the amount, 2,93,825 tonnes is recycled each year.

Zoo, park

FROM PAGE 14

"Sawan was suffering from old-age complications and died in her cage around 10:00pm. She was buried inside the zoo after an autopsy, which showed she wasn't suffering from any disease."

The average life span of a tiger is around 15-16 years. Sawan died at the age of 18 years and seven months, he added.

Teknaf shook with 'crossfire' horror

FROM PAGE 1

Around 10 pm Shah Alam told her that her husband would be taken to his house at 11 pm. He asked her to be there with money.

She waited all night for his call, which never came. So she went to his house the next morning at 7 am. She asked Shah Alam why he didn't call her. Upon getting no answer she went back home.

Meanwhile, despite Shah Alam's warning, Senowara told Abdul Jabbar, a member of ward number 9.

That same afternoon, she went to meet a former MP and told him in detail what has happened. He called SI Moshuir and told him to release her husband. SI Moshuir denied having her husband in the police station. Then the MP called OC Pradeep and he too denied having her husband in their detention.

Some 15-20 days later, a local named Rafiq Ullah was taken away by OC Pradeep and his men and kept in the hajotkhana on the second storey of Teknaf police station. In the detention cell, Rafiq Ullah met Senowara's husband, who gave her phone number and asked him to contact her.

When Rafiq Ullah got out of the station, he called Senowara and asked her to meet him. "Please don't tell anyone you met me," Rafiq told Senowara when they met.

She, however, told the MP what happened. The MP asked her to go back to the police station. She did

and demanded to see her husband.

But when they threatened her with arrest, she left the police station. She then sent a document to the superintendent narrating what happened.

Some three or four months later, OC Pradeep, Sagor Deb, Rubel Shwama, Moshuir and 2-3 cops went to her home after the evening prayers and told her that she must pay Tk 10 lakh if she wants her husband back alive.

She told them: "My house is broken. I have no rice to cook, and my children are hungry. How will I give Tk 10 lakh?"

The verdict stated that she fell to Pradeep's feet, but the cop told her that she must manage Tk 5 lakh at least. Otherwise, she would not get her husband back alive.

To gather the Tk 5 lakh, Senowara took a Tk 1.5 lakh loan from a non-governmental organisation, sold off her husband's CNG for Tk 2.5 lakh and mortgaged her home for Tk 1 lakh. It took 15 days to gather the money.

Pradeep and his team then called in at her home and picked up the amount.

The next day, Senowara called Pradeep but he did not answer. She went to the police station and begged for her husband. "Pradeep did not respond -- he simply laughed."

On July 7, 2020, local journalists called her and told her that her husband's dead body was in the morgue. OC Pradeep had

given him "crossfire".

The verdict stated that Senowara believes that her husband was tortured to death and then passed off as a "crossfire" death. He was declared to be the second-in-command of a robber named Hakim.

A local member and businessman named Ham Jalal told the court how he was extorted by the cops, and how his young brother was killed in a crossfire.

On January 23, 2019, six cops from Teknaf police visited the house and a sub-inspector named Sanjit told him to open the door or be shot. Four cops entered and two stood outside.

They told him that a listed drug trader had named him as a criminal. SI Sagor told him that he needed to pay Tk 20 lakh or be arrested.

When Ham Jalal said he did not have so much money, SI Sanjit called Pradeep to inform him, and the cop was instructed to detain Jalal.

Jalal was taken to the second storey of the police station where there are four rooms. In one of the rooms, detainees who would be sent off to "crossfire" are kept.

SI Sagar then turned to him and said: "You have earned a lot of money by becoming a member. Give Tk 15 lakh and we will tell sir to let you go. Otherwise, you will be dead on Marine Drive tonight."

Jalal agreed to give the money and asked the cop to contact the upazila rental car association's

general secretary Rafiq. He was then thrown into a cell.

Then 15-20 minutes before dawn, constable Rubel brought a mobile phone and asked him to talk.

Rafiq was on the other end and he questioned how he would gather so much money. He asked Rafiq to sell his Noah microbus for Tk 12 lakh, take Tk 1.5 lakh from his savings and borrow the rest.

The next day his father went to meet OC Pradeep but was told that his son was not at the police station, the verdict said. The father went to meet Pradeep again two days later and was told to pay Tk 7 lakh in exchange for his son.

His father bargained and offered Tk 6 lakh. That night, at 1:30 am, constables Sagar and Rubel took him to Marine Drive and asked him to recite the kalima.

"You will shoot me. I want to talk to OC sir one last time," Jalal told them.

He was allowed to speak with the OC.

"I have four sons and one daughter. If you kill me, their future is doomed. I owe people around Tk 1 crore," Jalal told the OC and begged for two days. At that moment, the OC got a call.

The next day, he was charged with possessing 3,000 pieces of yaba. His father came to the police station, cried and said: "You took Tk 6.4 lakh from me to release my son." Jalal was in jail for three months.

Earlier on December 13,

2018, his younger brother Yusuf Jalal was detained by the police, the witness testified. He said that a Teknaf municipality driver came to their house and conveyed that Pradeep said that Yusuf can be released for Tk 1 crore.

They could not manage Tk 1 crore, and later that night, around 1 am, Yusuf was killed in a crossfire at Moulyipara neighbourhood. Nurjahan, a resident of a house nearby, witnessed the incident and fainted, Jalal said.

The court also took testimony from Daily Cox's Bazar Editor and Publisher Faridul Mostafa Khan, who was tortured by Pradeep for his journalism.

Khan had published news about Pradeep killing people in the name of crossfire, which angered the cop.

When the cops tried to detain Faridul, he escaped to Dhaka. He even wrote a letter to the Prime Minister, home minister and inspector general of police seeking help. The letters were submitted to the court.

Faridul had also filed a writ petition with the High Court seeking safety for himself and his family.

On September 21, 2019, Faridul was picked up from his home in Dhaka's Mirpur neighbourhood and brought to Teknaf police station.

He testified that the criminals stripped and videoed him. They rubbed chilli powder on his eyes and beat him up with

hockey sticks. He told the court that OC Pradeep had urinated on his face.

Later that day he was taken to Marine Drive and was threatened with crossfire, but they changed their mind and prosecuted him for drug possession instead.

"Sinha would not have been killed if Farid's journalism had been paid heed, and Pradeep transferred out of Cox's Bazar," the court said.

Another victim Baby Begum testified. In 2019, fifteen days after Eid-ul-Fitr, OC Pradeep and 14 others raided their house for yaba.

Upon not finding yaba, they beat up her husband Ziaur Rahman, her 15-year-old daughter Nazneen Akhter and looted the house. She told the court that a constable took naga chilli peppers from the kitchen and rubbed them on her daughter's face.

Then the husband and the daughter were taken to the police station, she said. An informer visited their family and told Baby to pay Tk 5 lakh for the daughter and Tk 40 lakh for the husband.

When Baby said that she did not have that much money, they prosecuted Naznin with 2,000 pieces of yaba and OC Pradeep himself called Baby and threatened to kill Ziaur in a crossfire. Ziaur had been in illegal detention for 18 days.

During his detention, he was taken as an eye-witness to three crossfires and threatened with the same

fate if his wife did not pay up.

Baby managed Tk 15 lakh and handed it over to Pradeep via informers.

She was on her way to Cox's Bazar to see her daughter when she was picked up by cops claiming to belong to the Detective Branch and later slapped with three cases.

Baby also said that when she met her daughter at court, Naznin told her she was sexually abused by the cops.

PRADEEP DEFLECTING BLAME

The verdict observed that in a last-ditch attempt to save himself, Pradeep tried to make others scapegoats. When the prosecution finished their arguments, and the judge called the defence, Pradeep, who was standing on the docket, yelled and said he wants to say something.

"Liaquat killed Major Sinha. I did not command him to kill Sinha," he said.

When the court asked him to explain why sub-inspector Nandadulal Rakshit had said otherwise in his statement, Pradeep said: "I did all this upon the directives of SP Masud."

Contacted, Superintendent of Police ABM Masud Hossain said he had heard that Pradeep had tried to deflect blame but did not want to comment further.

The court observed that "even in this eleventh hour, Pradeep's declaration is conspiratory, deceptive and a final try to make Liaquat a scapegoat."



‘I burst into tears when I heard I won the Ekushey Padak’



PHOTOS: COLLECTED

The joy I feel cannot be described in words. I burst into tears when I heard that I won the Ekushey Padak.

SHAH ALAM SHAZU
In his illustrious career, noted actor Masum Aziz has worked in theatre, television, and films. He is also a writer and director. The actor won the National Film Award in 2006. He is one of the recipients of the Ekushey Padak this year. He was diagnosed with cancer last January, and is currently undergoing treatment. In a candid conversation with The Daily Star, the actor opened up about receiving the award, and more.
How do you feel about receiving the Ekushey Padak?

The joy I feel cannot be described in words. I burst into tears when I heard that I won the Ekushey Padak. I do not know if I am worthy of such a great award. I do not know if I have contributed enough to the field of acting, but this is the biggest achievement for me.

I am grateful to the government, journalists, and my colleagues.

As an actor, do you have any regrets?
I am an actor because I love acting. I focus on my craft, without being sidetracked. Countless people love me for my work. I am immensely grateful to them.

Do I even need anything else? I have gained people's love and respect, there is not anything more I could ask for.

What is acting to you?
Acting is devotion to me. I have spent the last five decades in this field. Acting has become a part of my identity. It brings me immense satisfaction.

Do you feel a sense of responsibility as an artiste?
An artiste should always have a responsibility towards society, and I do feel it. Artistes never just belong to their own selves. They belong to the society and the state.

Translated by Akhlakur Rahman

Nushash Humayun’s ‘Moshari’ in 2022 SXSW Film Fest

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK



Nushash Humayun's horror-short film 'Moshari' will have its World Premiere at the 2022 SXSW Film Festival in the USA.

The film will compete in the the Midnight Shorts section of the festival.

The film follows two sisters trying to survive the end of the world. "Moshari" stars "No Dorai" famed actress Sunerah Binte Kamal as the lead, as well as Nushash's niece, Onora.

"I am so proud of everyone who's worked on this, it's been years in the making", wrote Nushash on social media, while making the announcement.

The festival will commence on March 11, and will end on March 20, 2022.

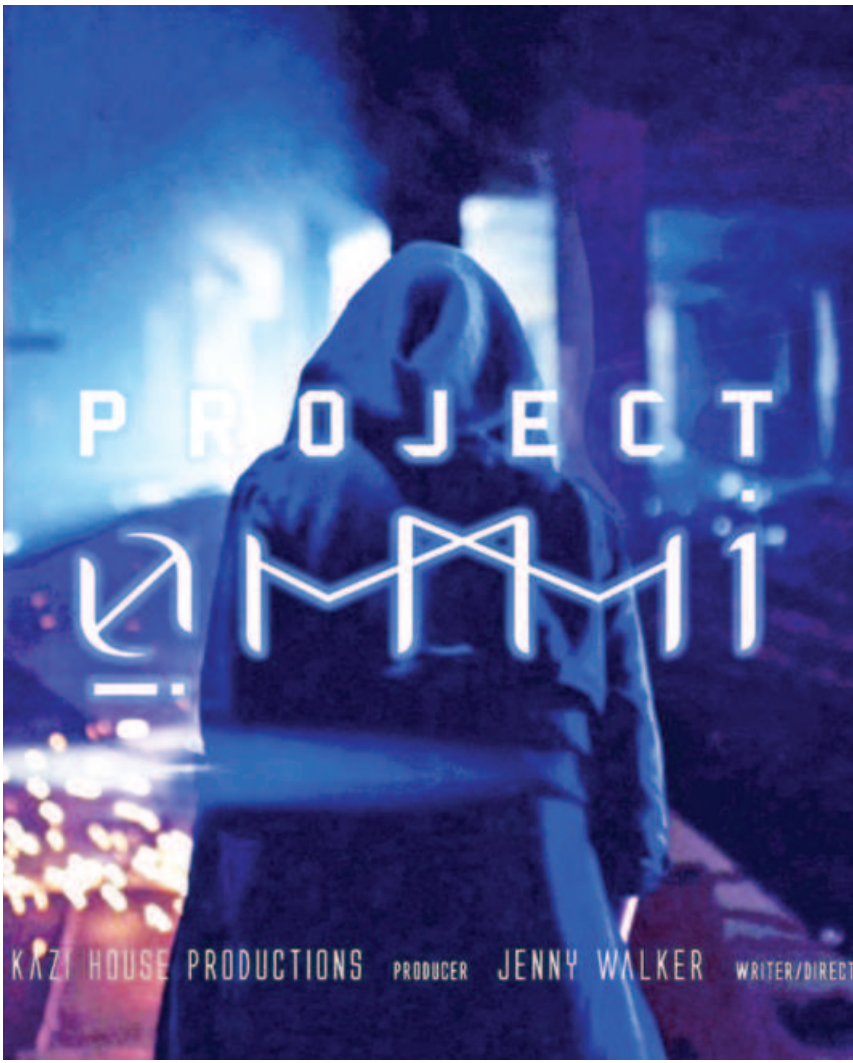
Ranbir ‘best boyfriend ever’ for recreating ‘Gangubai’ pose: Alia Bhatt

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Alia Bhatt and Ranbir Kapoor are one of Bollywood's most loved couple. The duo never fails to surprise their audiences with their cute photos and dotting posts for one another.

Alia Bhatt's trailer for "Gangubai Kathiawadi" was released on Friday and her beau was also present at the trailer premiere ceremony. However, what caught everyone's attention was Ranbir's reaction when asked about his thoughts on the trailer. The actor called it 'superb' and recreated Alia's iconic 'namaste' pose from the movie.

Later on, Alia Bhatt took to Instagram and declared him as the "best boyfriend ever" by posting a collage of their photos in the same pose.



Naseeruddin Shah starrer ‘Project Omme’ hosting open auditions

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Bangladesh's first futuristic sci-fi film Project Omme starring Naseeruddin Shah is looking for child actors.

Set in 2050, the film portrays a hacker, who teams up with a digital artist to create an AI child named Omme. Together they defeat criminals on the web.

However as their creation becomes more realistic, they must deal with the moral dilemma of creating virtual life. Packed with VFX, robots and super-powered action, Project Omme aims to be a Hollywood level production, made in Bangladesh. The crew, however, is looking for your help to find several child actors to bring the story to life.

Kazi House Productions, who have cast South Asian superstar Naseeruddin Shah, are expanding their search to include local non-actors. They are in search of actors aged 7-12, boys and girls, who can speak fluently in either English or Bangla. If interested, please send an intro email to kazihouseproductions@gmail.com or visit www.kazihouseproductions.com.

Arnob is my INSPIRATION

Madhubanti Bagchi

“Arnob da is my inspiration, I got to learn about Bangladeshi music through his songs. I had a bucket list of artistes with whom I wanted to collaborate with, and he was on top of the list,” she says.

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA
A mellifluous songstress from India, Madhubanti Bagchi is a rising star in both Tollywood and Bollywood. The popular singer, who started her career with "Ami Ar Amar Girlfriends" gave voice to numerous Bengali songs such as "Kichchu Chaini Aami", "Egiye De", "Tomake Chai", among others.

She paved her way into Bollywood with hits like "Barbaadiyan" from "Shiddat" and "Bansuri" from "Hum Do Hamare Do".

Madhubanti is currently in Bangladesh, working on a project with Bangladesh's ace musician, Shayan Chowdhury Arnob.

Fans have started speculating whether she is collaborating with them for Coke Studio Bangladesh.

While the singer remains tight-lipped about her involvement

with the popular musical franchise, she was quite excited on working with noted Bangladeshi musicians.

"I cannot confirm nor deny my involvement with the project. All I can say is that audiences will get to see something special soon," said the singer.

"Arnob da is my inspiration, I got to learn about Bangladeshi music

through his songs, I had a bucket list of artistes with whom I wanted to collaborate with, and he was on top of the list," she says. "I really want to do more shows with him here," mentioned Madhubanti, who got to work with Tahsan as well.

"I was quite overwhelmed with Tahsan's wonderful gesture and welcoming attitude," says Madhubanti. "He is such a fine gentleman, and I am really happy that I got to meet such fine musicians in Bangladesh," added the singer.

Madhubanti's stay in Bangladesh was short but she got to jam with national award winning composer Kaushik Hossain Taposh, and artistes like Oyshee, Sumi, Kona, Dola, among others.

She was asked to play many concerts in Dhaka, during her short visit. "I had to decline, as I don't want to perform without my band. However, I would love to play a concert here next time."



Arnob with Madhubanti.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



Too many yet too few caesarean section deliveries in Bangladesh

A study of a total of 27,093 women's data taken from five rounds of the Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey conducted between 2004 and 2017/18 was conducted in order to reach this conclusion. A 751 percent increase in CS use was discovered during the study's 13-year period, with consumption rising from 3.88 percent in 2004 to 33 percent in 2017.

STAR HEALTH REPORT

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO) data published in 2021, the number of cesarean sections (CS) performed continues to climb worldwide, representing 21 percent of all deliveries currently, with significant variation among countries.

Around 42 percent of all CS procedures performed worldwide are conducted without a medical necessity. As a result, they do not contribute to improving mother and child health in the world. Even more concerning, such inappropriate use of CS can result in a variety of undesirable effects, including hemorrhage and bleeding, in addition to linked maternal mortality and economic cost. Furthermore, it has been discovered that this is associated with a long-term loss of women's productivity and increased hospitalisation, both of which add to the strain on the formal healthcare delivery system.

The use of caesarean sections (CS) is growing rapidly in Bangladesh, despite the fact that CS use is still uncommon among women from disadvantaged backgrounds. Among low-income mothers, this raises the likelihood of long-term obstetric complications, as well as the possibility of maternal and child fatalities. According to a study published in the journal PLOS Global Public Health, the researchers sought to examine the interaction impacts of women's disadvantaged characteristics on their use of contraception in Bangladesh.

A study of a total of 27,093 women's data taken from five rounds of the Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey conducted between 2004 and 2017/18 was conducted in order to reach this conclusion. A 751 percent



increase in CS use was discovered during the study's 13-year period, with consumption rising from 3.88 percent in 2004 to 33 percent in 2017. Private health facilities accounted for about 80 percent of the total CS operations, with government health facilities coming in second (15 percent).

In rural regions with no participation in formal income-generating activities showed an 11 percent lower usage of CS in 2004 than women living in urban areas with no involvement in formal income-generating activities. Over time, this correlation has been more robust, and a 51 percent decrease in CS use was observed in 2017/18, indicating a more established relationship. In a similar vein, rural poor and poorer women were shown to have decreased chances of using

CS by 12 percent to 83 percent.

CS use is increasing in Bangladesh, as evidenced by the fact that a group of women with improved socio-economic circumstances are utilising this life-saving therapy without a medical necessity, while their counterparts with disadvantaged characteristics are unable to access the service.

Therefore, government programmes and regulations are essential for determining the need for CS and controlling its use in general and private health facilities in particular. The government could also set regulations on private health facilities, requiring them to provide CS when medically essential among the disabled for a small fee or even free of charge when necessary.

Brighten your winter with good-for-you oranges

Oranges have tons of immune-boosting vitamin C, but they are also packed with potassium, fiber, antioxidants, and more. Explore more of every part of the orange, from peel to the juicy fruit.

High in vitamin C: Orange contains vitamin c, boosting your immune system, improving iron absorptions and aiding in healing.

Healthy gut: One orange has 3 grams of dietary fibre that eases constipation, keeps your bowels healthy, lowers cholesterol, and controls your blood sugar levels.

Anti-inflammatory traits: Each orange has more than 170 phytochemicals and 60 flavonoids, which help with anti-inflammatory properties fighting long-term inflammation.

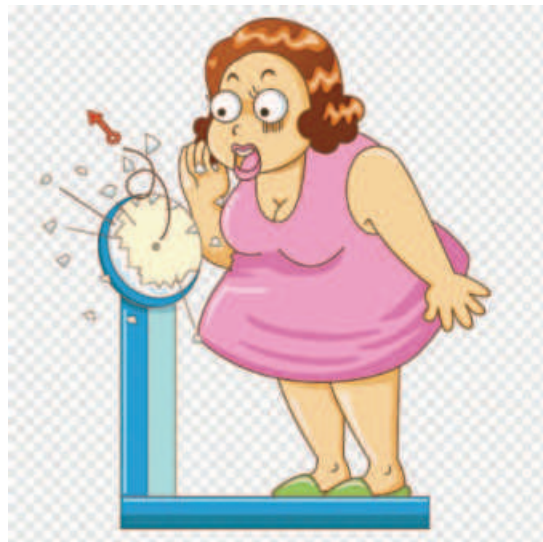
Contains potassium: One orange has potassium that fuels your nerves and muscles and keeps your heartbeat steady.

High in folate: Your body needs the B vitamin folate to make DNA and other genetic material and help your cells divide.

High in beta carotene: Beta carotene is a powerful antioxidant that promotes cell health and lessens the damage free radicals do to your body.

Good source of thiamine: B1, or thiamine, is a vitamin that helps your body process other nutrients and turn food into energy.

Soor orange contains calcium, fibre, vitamin C, and immune-boosting flavonoids. As part of a healthful and varied diet, oranges play a critical role.



HEALTH BULLETIN

Obesity may increase risk of some female reproductive disorders

Obesity is associated with an increased risk of developing female reproductive disorders. A study in PLOS Medicine suggests an etiological link between obesity and a range of female reproductive disorders.

Researchers conducted a study investigating the causal associations between obesity, metabolic hormones, and female reproductive disorders. They found observational associations between obesity and a range of female reproductive disorders, including uterine fibroids, polycystic ovary syndrome, heavy menstrual bleeding, and pre-eclampsia. They also found that some inherited genetic variation associated with obesity is related to female reproductive disorders. Still, the strength of those associations differed by type of obesity and reproductive condition.

The results suggest exploring the mechanisms mediating the causal associations of overweight and obesity on gynaecological health to identify disease prevention and treatment targets.

Experts warn of increasing overmedicalisation of death and urge a radical societal rethink

STAR HEALTH DESK

Globally, health and social systems fail to provide adequate, compassionate care for dying people and their families. Millions of people suffer needlessly due to the current emphasis on aggressive treatments to prolong life, global disparities in palliative care access, and high costs of end-of-life care. The Commission recommends a compassionate community model where communities and families collaborate with health and social services for the dying. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, many people have died alone, only communicating with their families via digital means.

During the last 60 years, health systems have taken over responsibility for dying. Most end-of-life care is provided in hospitals in the UK. Healthcare has alienated families and communities. People rely on health systems more because of this loss. Despite this, discussions about death and dying are often complex and stressful.

The Commission sets out five principles of a new vision for death and dying:

1. To live healthier lives and die more equitable deaths, we must address the social determinants of death, dying, and grief.
2. Relationships based on connection and compassion are prioritised and made central to the care and support of people dying or grieving.
3. Professionals must be included in networks of care for the dying, caring, and grieving.
4. Conversations and stories about everyday death, dying, and grief can help spark larger public debates and actions.
5. Death must be recognised as having value. "Without death, every birth would be a tragedy."

To achieve the widespread changes needed, the Commission sets out key recommendations for



policymakers, health and social care systems, civil society, and communities, which include:

- » Education on death, dying, and end-of-life care should be essential for people at the end of life, their families, and health and social care professionals.
- » Increasing access to pain relief at the end of life must be a global priority, and the management of suffering should sit alongside the extension of life as a research and health care priority.
- » Conversations and stories about everyday death, dying, and grief must be encouraged.
- » Networks of care must lead support for people dying, caring, and grieving.
- » Patients and their families should be provided with clear information about the uncertainties as well as the potential benefits, risks, and harms of interventions in potentially life-limiting illnesses to enable more informed decisions.
- » Governments should create and promote policies to support informal carers and paid compassionate, or bereavement leave in all countries.

Source: The Lancet

Optimising indoor lighting may help reduce the metabolic effects of prolonged indoor lighting exposure

According to a new Diabetologia study, obese, insulin-resistant adults' sleep energy expenditure is affected by the timing of light exposure. Therefore, optimising indoor lighting more like natural light/dark cycle may help lessen negative impacts on whole-body energy and glucose metabolism.

A 24-hour cycle of light and dark is required to synchronise the body's circadian clock. Obesity and cardiovascular disease are connected to solid light exposure late at night or early in the morning. People are exposed to glare at home, at work, or via screens of electronic gadgets at night since modern light is widespread and available 24/7. Light at night (LAN) exposure is linked to an increased incidence of type 2 diabetes in the elderly.

The modern culture also lacks time spent in intense light during the day. In reality, most time is spent indoors, with artificial light levels far below natural daylight.

The study indicated that spending the day in bright light reduced blood glucose levels before dinner. Exposure to the dim day - bright evening condition reduced sleeping metabolic rate (SMR) and energy expenditure after the meal. This illumination cycle also decreased melatonin production, which should rise 2-4 hours before bedtime to reduce natural light levels.

The study reveals that insulin-resistant people's indoor light environment can change metabolic parameters time-dependent, affecting long-term metabolic health.



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England next for Langer?

REUTERS, Adelaide

Even before quitting on Saturday as coach of the Australian men's cricket team, Justine Langer was being mentioned as a candidate for the vacant England job.

A day earlier, England interim cricket director Andrew Strauss left open the possibility of Langer taking over as England coach in the wake of Chris Silverwood's departure.

"I know him well and on the surface he's done a very good job with that Australian cricket team, so I wouldn't rule him out," Strauss, Giles's temporary replacement, told media.

"I personally feel someone with an outside view who can check and challenge the thoughts within the dressing room is a healthy thing."



On the eve of his 37th birthday, Manchester United's Cristiano Ronaldo had produced one of his most ordinary showings as the forward missed from the spot and, along with Marcus Rashford, was culpable of failing to take golden chances in their FA Cup fourth round game against Middlesbrough on Friday. After the regulation time ended in a 1-1 draw at Old Trafford, the Red Devils were knocked out of the tournament as they lost 8-7 on penalties.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Fresh health setback for Cairns

AFP, Wellington

New Zealand cricket great Chris Cairns revealed Saturday he has suffered a further health setback and has been diagnosed with bowel cancer.

Cairns was only discharged from hospital last week, five months after he underwent a life-saving heart operation and was then paralysed by a subsequent stroke.

"Another fight ahead but here's hoping this one is a swift upper cut and over in the first round," the 51-year-old, one of the world's top all-rounders in the early 2000s, said on social media.

"I was told yesterday I have bowel cancer... big shock and not what I was expecting.

"So, as I prepare for another round of conversations with surgeons and specialists, I keep remembering how lucky I am to be here in the first place."

AFP, New Delhi

India captain Rohit Sharma on Saturday ruled out drastic team changes in the wake of Virat Kohli's departure as skipper ahead of the hosts' 1,000th one-day international against the West Indies.

Rohit begins his tenure as full-time ODI captain in Ahmedabad on Sunday for the first of three matches after replacing Kohli.

A hamstring injury ruled out the 34-year-old from India's recent tour of South Africa, where they lost the

"These two guys have been great performers for us in the past and they have certainly created an impact in those years whenever they have played together"

Test series 2-1 and were whitewashed 3-0 in ODIs.

"We have played good ODI cricket over the course of few years, more than four years actually, so suddenly a loss of



series doesn't mean that there is panic," Rohit told reporters.

"South Africa series was a great learning (experience) for us as to what we didn't do collectively as a team," he added.

"What is important for us, moving forward, is the role clarity of certain individuals in the squad."

While Kohli was known for aggression in his seven-year term as captain across formats, Rohit, who has led the Mumbai Indians to five IPL titles, is known to lead with calm.

Rohit, called "Hitman" for his flamboyant batting and big

hitting, said he will not tinker with the template that Kohli created.

"When Virat was captaining, I was the vice-captain so we pretty much went about the team in a similar fashion," said Rohit.

"I just have to take it from where he left. The team pretty much knows what is expected out of them. And we want to continue the same template," he added.

"There is nothing that I need to come in and change drastically."

India's squad has been hit by Covid with four players

including Shikhar Dhawan and Shreyas Iyer testing positive ahead of the limited-overs series.

Rohit said Ishan Kishan remains the only opening choice in the first ODI, when India will become the first international team to have played 1,000 50-over matches.

The opening batsman said he wants to bring the spin combine of Yuzvendra Chahal and Kuldeep Yadav back into the fold.

Chahal, a leg-spinner, played the ODI series in South Africa but injury-plagued Yadav, a left-arm wrist-spinner, last played an international for India in July.

"These two guys have been great performers for us in the past and they have certainly created an impact in those years whenever they have played together," said Rohit.

"In the middle they were left out because of the combination we wanted to get... but it's certainly on my mind to get them back together, Kuldeep especially," he added.

"But we want to get him in slowly. We don't want him to rush into things."

Mane, Salah face off in AFCON final tonight

REUTERS, Yaounde

One of world football's most exciting attacking duos will face-off against each other in Sunday's Africa Cup of Nations final as Mohamed Salah leads Egypt against a Senegal side spearheaded by Sadio Mane.

The Liverpool pair, a combined force at club level, will be taking on talismanic roles at opposite ends for their respective countries as Egypt seek to extend their record number of Cup of Nations triumphs to eight while Senegal look to win it for the first time.

Salah has made no secret of his burning desire to win a major trophy with Egypt, which has so far evaded him, while Mane beamed with joy and giggled with delight at the post-match press conference after his team won their semi-final on Wednesday.

Senegal, who are Africa's top ranked team, were among the favourites and overcame a languid start to reach the final for the third time.

They scored only one goal during the opening round but still finished top of their group and have looked efficient in overcoming their opponents in the knockout stage.



But their road to the final proved a lot easier than Egypt, who lost their opening group game to Nigeria and drew heavy criticism from home fans for their early performances.

But they have gained momentum, edging the Ivory Coast in a penalty shootout in the round of 16; Morocco 2-1 after extra time in the quarter-final and hosts Cameroon on penalties again in Thursday's semi-final.

Dembele back in Barca squad

AFP, Barcelona

France international Ousmane Dembele has been named on the Barcelona squad for Sunday's crunch Spanish league match against Atletico Madrid despite his ongoing contract standoff with the Liga side.

Xavi Hernandez has opted to stick with the talented 24-year-old despite reinforcements -- Adama Traore, Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang and Ferran Torres -- signed in the winter transfer window as Barcelona face a fight to finish in La Liga's top four this season.

"Circumstances meant that we had to find a solution with Ousmane," Xavi told Saturday's pre-match press conference.

"He is part of the club and the squad. We met and we decided that he is part of the team. We can't afford to shoot ourselves in the foot. It's the club's decision and we'll use him when we think it's necessary. He's a player in the team like any other."

"A month ago, we decided one thing, but circumstances have changed," added Xavi.

Sylhet eye turnaround on home soil

SPORTS REPORTER

The Sylhet leg of the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League is set to begin tomorrow and Sylhet Sunrisers, who are struggling at the bottom of the table, will be eyeing to make a turnaround on home soil.

With just one win in six games, Mosaddek Hossain's Sylhet are yet to find momentum despite having some regular local performers like Mohammad Mithun and Anamul Haque.

West Indies batter Lendl Simmons was the first to score a century in this edition while Collin Ingram also made crucial contributions but Sylhet have still been unable to play as a unit.

Sylhet will be facing Khulna Tigers in the day's second fixture tomorrow. And Anamul, who is the leading run-scorer for Sylhet, thought that execution will be the key for his side to return to winning ways.

"I think we have got some very good performers in the side but the thing is we are unable to execute on the field. We were a bit unlucky too in the tournament with toss playing a big role. Obviously, we will be playing at home but the reality is we won't have the crowd support in the stadium as the spectators are not allowed due to Covid-19. But still, we will try to bounce back and give something to the people of Sylhet," Anamul told The Daily Star.

Sylhet would probably have to do the uphill task without their only national team representative Taskin Ahmed. Taskin missed Sylhet's last game due to a recurring back problem.

The Sylhet team management informed that it can't take any risks regarding Taskin as the pacer would be needed by the national side in their upcoming home series against Afghanistan later this month.



Rubel Mia sets off to celebrate his decisive goal as Chittagong Abahani came back from a goal down to beat Rahmatganj MFS 2-1 in a Bangladesh Premier League fixture at the Birshreshtha Matur Rahman Stadium in Munshiganj yesterday.

PHOTO: SAJJAD HOSSAIN

Winning start for Ctg Abahani

SPORTS REPORTER

Chittagong Abahani took pole position with three points, alongside four other clubs, following a 2-1 win against Rahmatganj MFS as the first round of matches of the Bangladesh Premier League concluded yesterday.

The portside city side, who finished fifth last season, fought back from a goal down to register the first victory at the Birshreshtha Matur Rahman Stadium in Munshiganj. Rubel Mia scored the winning goal on 72 minutes after Ebimibowei Thankgod had scored the equaliser on 53 minutes, following Tetey Adjah's opener for Rahmatganj on four minutes.

The other match of the day in Tongi between Mohammedan and Sheikh Russel ended in a 1-1 draw. Souleymane Diabate gave Mohammedan a 23rd minute lead but Aizur Akhmatov equalised for Russel on 84 minutes.



The iconic Zia Hall near Shibbari intersection in Khulna city being demolished. The building that had an auditorium with a two-storey seating arrangement was the centre of cultural and political activities in the '90s. It remained out of service for almost a decade before it was sold to a local enterprise on auction. PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN



Courage of the common people

ABDUL MATIN

Around 11:30am, (on February 21, 1952) police fired tear gas as students started coming out of the university in groups. Initially, we kept a list of those who were coming out as well as those who were arrested. But it was no longer possible after a while as students rushed out in large numbers.

In the morning, a part of the wall between the university and the medical college was demolished. While I and Oli Ahad were leaving Modhur Canteen, we heard shots being fired at the Medical College dormitory compound. The students were shouting through the microphone. We started running and as soon as we reached the medical, we saw the injured students being taken to the emergency room of the hospital.

I stayed at the emergency section of the hospital. Sitting on the lawn I began to cry. I started having doubts about the decision to break Section-144. At that time several university students came to me and said that a leaflet had to be distributed immediately. They added that another leaflet had been drafted, but the convener of the All-party State Language Action Committee, Kazi Golam Mahbub, refused to sign it. I took the draft leaflet from them and met Kazi Golam Mahbub. He was also at the emergency section at that time. He started blaming

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SUKANTA HALDAR and MOSTAFA YOUSUF

The Department of Environment has failed to comply with a High Court directive that asked it to stop the use of single-use plastic in hotels, motels, and restaurants of coastal areas in two years.

The HC had issued the directive in January 2020 in response to a writ petition filed by Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association in mid-2019. The DoE was asked to put an end to the use of such plastic by 2021.

The government department last year launched a three-year (2021-23) project to stop the use of single-use plastic in 12 coastal districts. It has so far held just one meeting with hotel, motel owners in Cox's Bazar.

The HC in its order had also asked the DoE to submit a compliance report to it by 2021, but the government body responsible for protection of the environment is yet to do so.

Abul Kashem, general secretary of Cox's Bazar Hotel,

SINGLE-USE PLASTIC

Coastal areas still littered with them

DoE fails to comply with HC order to stop their use by 2021

Motel Owners Association, said the DoE held a meeting with them in Cox's Bazar last year. Officials at the meeting encouraged hotel, motel and restaurant owners to stop using single-use plastic.

"Since then, we have not seen any step by the department to contain single-use plastic," he added.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Razinara Begum, director (waste and chemical waste management) of DoE, said they in cooperation with World Bank prepared a roadmap to stop the use of single-use plastic in hotels, motels, and restaurants.

Asked about the reason for the delay in complying with the HC directive, she said, "We need time to make people aware of pollution and prepare them mentally to look for alternatives to single-use plastic."

Razinara said they identified coastal areas exposed to plastic pollution and held consultation meetings with different stakeholders.

"We can't stop its use overnight. We have to reach the goal of zero single-use plastic with cooperation from all," she added.

Single-use plastic includes single-use cups and plates, lollipop sticks, wrappers, sachets, extruded polystyrene, plastic cutlery, cigarette filters, cotton swabs, coffee stirrers, small water and juice bottles, plastic bags and multilayer plastic packaging.

Concerns are growing worldwide about plastic pollution, especially in oceans, where nearly half of the single-use plastic products end up, causing deaths to marine life. Plastic also enters the human food chain, multiple studies have found.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association, said she sees no reason why the delay in complying with the court order occurred.

"As the authorities are assisted

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Daily Covid deaths on the rise again

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The daily death toll from Covid-19 rose again yesterday as the health directorate reported 36 deaths in 24 hours till 8:00am, up from 30 the previous day.

On Wednesday, the figure was 36, the highest since September 22 last year.

With the latest count, the total number of Covid deaths in the country went up to 28,560, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

At least 8,359 people tested positive for Covid-19 in the same 24-hour period, raising the total number of confirmed cases to 18,53,1887.

The positivity rate stood at 23.83 percent after testing 35,074 samples countrywide.

The overall positivity rate is 14.61 percent.

At least 7,017 Covid patients have recovered during the 24 hours, taking the total number of recoveries to 15,94,391. The recovery rate is 86.04 percent.

Of the 36 deceased, 21 were males and 15 females.

Of them, one was aged between 21 and 30 years, two were between 31 and 40, two between 41 and 50, six between 51 and 60, and 25 were above 60 years, said a DGHS release.

Fueled by the Covid Omicron variant, the country started witnessing the third wave of the virus in the beginning of last month. The daily positivity rate hit 34 percent mark in the last week of January, the highest in the country so far.

However, Bangladesh is seeing a decline in the number of cases since early this month.

Zoo, park animals dying from diseases

Says fisheries minister

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

SM Rezaul Karim, minister for fisheries and livestock, yesterday said the foreign animals in Bangladeshi safari parks and zoos are dying from infectious diseases.

He said this while talking to the journalists at the foundation laying ceremony of the Institute of Livestock Science and Technology in Sylhet.

About the recent animal deaths at the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Safari Park in Gazipur, he said, "Bangladesh's climate and environment are unfamiliar to the foreign animals, which is why they are being infected by diseases."

"The zebras died of a disease. Lab reports showed that the other animals also died from similar ailments."

The minister added, "We are looking into whether there was any negligence on our part... Different ministries are working together to make sure no wildlife dies, and the environment and climate are not destroyed."

Rangpur Zoo's only tigress dies

On Friday night, the lone tigress of Rangpur Zoo died from old age, said zoo officials.

Ambar Ali Talukdar, deputy curator of Rangpur Zoo, confirmed the death yesterday afternoon.

The tigress, named Sawan, was brought to the zoo in 2010.

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Covid pandemic begins to ebb

Shows weekly data; cases drop by a 10th after rising for 15 weeks, deaths rise by 16pc

AFP, Paris

The Covid-19 pandemic started to ease around the world this week after a three-and-a-half-month rampage of ever-increasing infections, AFP data published yesterday showed.

The average number of global daily cases dropped by a tenth this week to 3.03 million, after increasing for 15 weeks in a row, according to an AFP tally to Thursday.

Almost every region of the world saw an improvement over the past seven days.

In the United States/Canada zone the number of new daily cases dropped by 38 percent, while Africa saw a 21 percent fall and Asia a 16 percent drop. Cases in the Latin America/Caribbean zone decreased by 13 percent and in the Middle East by four percent.

The situation was almost stable in Europe, with a one percent rise. Once a

catch-up in Australian figures is factored out, the number of infections in Oceania decreased by around a tenth.

Iran saw the biggest spike in the number of new cases this week with a 233 percent rise.

The Solomon Islands in the Pacific followed with 138 percent more cases, Armenia with 137 percent, neighbouring Azerbaijan was 133 percent up, while cases doubled in South Korea.

The Dominican Republic saw the biggest drop of the week with 65 percent fewer cases, followed by Nepal with 55 percent less, Argentina (down 51 percent), Jamaica (minus 50 percent) and Morocco (minus 49 percent).

The US remained by far the country with the highest number of new cases with 362,800 per day on average, which nevertheless was a drop of 39 percent on

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Transport workers have gotten into the habit of picking up passengers from the middle of the road instead of designated stops, not even making exceptions for the physically challenged. One such bus is seen picking up two blind men in the capital's Rampura. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS