

COUNTRYWIDE OXYGEN GENERATORS

99 promised, none completed

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

None of the 99 oxygen generators the government planned for health facilities across the country at different times last year has been set up yet.

In April 2021, the minister had said, "We will import machinery... to set up small oxygen plants at different hospitals."

This was a time when hospitals were struggling to meet the demand for oxygen support amid rising numbers of Covid patients, and India, which is a major source of medical oxygen for Bangladesh, banned the export.

By July, the daily demand for medical oxygen in Bangladesh reached around 400 tonnes a day, up from the usual 110-120 tonnes.

The government later planned to procure 99 oxygen generators in phases: 40 with its own funds, 30 with the Asian Development Bank's Covid-19 response assistance funds and 29 from the UN.

But setting up of the generators has not been complete anywhere, said Farid Hossain Mian, director (hospitals) at the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The number of Covid cases remained low for a while and has risen again, but the generators have yet to be operational at any of the hospitals.

An oxygen generator can produce up to 500 litres of oxygen per minute. It can provide uninterrupted supply to at least 50 Covid-19 patients needing 10 litres. Compared to liquid oxygen supplied in tanks, the generators are much more efficient.

While the generators to be procured with the ADB and UN funds still exist only on paper, health officials make conflicting claims about the current status of the 40 generators that the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs approved through a direct purchase method in May last year.

Only last month, officials made a list of 99 hospitals where generators can be set up. All the public medical colleges, district town hospitals

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A parrot pecks at Palash flowers on a tree in the capital's Central Shaheed Minar area yesterday. The blooming of this flower, also known as the flame of the forest, heralds the arrival of the Spring or Basanta (Phalgun-Chaitra). The photo was taken two days before the first day of Phalgun. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

'No trust' in search panel

Major opposition parties refuse to submit names for EC appointments

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

Almost all major opposition parties have refrained from submitting names to the search committee for forming the next Election Commission, citing a lack of confidence in the committee.

Five years back, 26 out of 31 registered political parties had sent names to the then search committee. The BNP were among

the 26.

But this time 24 parties have put names forward out of 39.

In 2017, the then search committee sought five nominations from each political party for the posts of a chief election commissioner and four election commissioners.

This year, the parties have been asked to file 10 names, two for each of the five posts.

The BNP and its alliance

partners as well as left leaning CPB and Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal have not sent names this time. They are also among seven political parties who did not participate in the president's dialogue (December 20 to January 17) on formation of the EC.

Political parties who did not submit names said they have little or no confidence in the

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RECOVERING FROM COVID, REINVENTING OUR FUTURE



31ST ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL SUPPLEMENTS

The Daily Star has been bringing out a series of diverse and informative supplements around this time of the year for quite some time. This year too, we are pleased to bring out a five-part 200-page special supplement series, beginning February 13, on the occasion of the newspaper's 31st anniversary. Renowned experts from various fields have enriched these supplements with their insightful contributions.

The five segments are: "BLUEPRINT FOR A BRIGHTER TOMORROW"

which features a collection of articles on how Bangladesh's economy has recovered from the Covid-19 pandemic and the way forward.

"FOURTH INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION"


which covers how our everyday lives are changing forever due to giant leaps in technology.

"ENTERTAINING A NEW WORLD" which sheds light on the future of entertainment in a shifting world.

"DEVELOPING AN INCLUSIVE AND DEMOCRATIC BANGLADESH" which focuses on the challenges that Bangladesh must overcome for a democratic and inclusive future.

"TIMES CHANGE, SO MUST WE" which looks at how our lives are changing with the passage of time.

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প্রথম মৃত্যুবার্ষিকীতে শ্রদ্ধাঞ্জলি



মোঃ সফিকুল হক চৌধুরী
১ জানুয়ারি ১৯৪৯ - ১২ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২১

আশা পরিবার

DEMOCRACY INDEX Bangladesh ranks 75th

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has ranked 75th on the latest democracy index of the Economist Intelligence Unit, one notch up from last year.

The country is still classified under the “hybrid regime” category, meaning substantial irregularities often prevent elections from being free and fair here, according to the “Democracy Index-2021” published by the UK-based Economist Group.

“Government pressure on opposition parties and candidates may be common. Serious weaknesses are more prevalent than in flawed democracies -- in political culture, functioning of government, and political participation,” the report, released on Thursday, said while defining a “hybrid regime”.

Moreover, in a hybrid regime, corruption tends to be widespread and the rule of law is weak. Civil society is weak. Typically, there is harassment of and pressure on journalists, and the judiciary is not independent, it said.

Bangladesh scored 5.99 out of 10 this year to be ranked 75th among 165 countries and two territories. Last year, it secured the 76th spot with the same score.

Among seven South Asian countries covered in the report, India and Sri Lanka are ahead of Bangladesh while Bhutan, Nepal, Pakistan and Afghanistan are behind.

This year, the results reflect the continuing negative impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on democracy and freedom around the world for a second successive year, says the report.

According to the index, less than half (45.7 percent) of the world's population now live in a democracy of some sort.

Norway, New Zealand, Finland, Sweden, and Iceland are the top five democracies. Afghanistan, Myanmar, North Korea, Democratic Republic of Congo, and Central African Republic are at the bottom.



Workers stage a rally near Khalishpur Jute Mills Limited in Khulna city yesterday demanding reopening of state-run jute mills, payment of arrears, and withdrawal of cases filed against them. The protest was organised under the banner of Khalishpur-Daulatpur Jute Mill Factory Committee.

PHOTO: STAR

RAJBARI SADAR POLICE STATION

Husband ‘tortured’, she got ‘rape threat’

University student files complaint with Police Headquarters

STAR REPORT

A university student has alleged that she got rape threats from cops after she went to Rajbari Sadar Police Station looking for her husband, who was detained there for questioning over a murder.

She also said law enforcers tortured him into confessing his involvement in the killing.

“I saw my husband, Mehedi, blindfolded and being beaten up indiscriminately with sticks at the police station. They were pressuring him into making a confessional statement over the murder of former Banibaha Union Parishad chairman Abdul Latif,” the student, Tapashi Rabeya Sohani, told The Daily Star yesterday.

“The cops also threatened to kill him in crossfire,” she said.

Tapashi said she was confined to a room at the station. There, policemen hurled abuse at her, and one of them threatened to rape her, she said.

On February 9, she filed a written complaint with the IGP's cell at the Police Headquarters in Dhaka over the matter.

Tapashi and Mehedi are students of two private universities in the capital. They got married around two years back.

On November 17, a week after Latif's murder, a police team, led by Rajbari Sadar Police Station OC Shahadat Hossain, went to Tapashi's home in Banibaha union, Tapashi told The Daily Star over phone.

One of the law enforcers, Sub-Inspector Hiran Kumar Biswas, said he would talk to Mehedi for five minutes. They then took him to the police station, she claimed.

In a frantic search for Mehedi, Tapashi went to the police station, the office of the SP and the Detective Branch of police in the district, but could not find him anywhere.

Tapashi then again went to the police station, around 1:30pm on November 17, and saw policemen beating Mehedi with sticks. They were pressuring him into confessing that he killed Latif, she said.

Assailants opened fire on Latif, also president of the Awami League in Banibaha union, around 12:30am on November 11 last year when he was on his way home after dropping Mehedi off in his father-in-law's home in a motorcycle.

Latif died on his way to a hospital in Dhaka. Before his death, he named some people who might have been behind the attack. Mehedi was not one of them, Tapashi said.

Two days later, Latif's wife filed a murder case against eight people with the police station.

“That night after my husband was taken to the police station, cops told me to go home. They assured me that he would be released the next morning. They told me to come back to the police station to take him back, if he did not return home by then,” Tapashi said.

As she went back to the station the next morning, she saw Mehedi locked in a room, blindfolded. He was hanging upside down. Policemen kept beating him up with sticks. They also put a piece of gamcha in his mouth and tortured him this way till 4:00pm, she said.

“During that time, they kept me locked in another room. They even threatened that they would rape me if Mehedi does not confess killing Latif,” she said.

“At one point, Mehedi was taken

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JUSTICE FOR SAGAR-RUNI

Culture of impunity behind delay

Say five UN experts in statement

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Five UN human rights experts have expressed deep concern at the failure of the Bangladeshi authorities to complete an investigation and bring the perpetrators to justice 10 years after the murder of journalists Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi.

“A decade after the killing of the two journalists, there is still no justice as a result of an appalling and pervasive culture of impunity in Bangladesh,” said the experts in a statement yesterday.

The statement said at least 15 journalists have been killed in Bangladesh in the past decade. The incidents appear to be rarely investigated or prosecuted. In some cases, local authorities are thought to be directly implicated in the attacks.

The allegations brought to the attention of the Bangladesh government by the UN experts often have gone unanswered. No response was ever received from the government to a letter sent by the UN experts following the murder of Sagar and Runi in 2012.

They urged the government to conduct and complete, prompt, thorough, independent and effective investigations and

bring perpetrators to justice for the murder of Sagar and Runi and other killings of journalists and human rights defenders in Bangladesh.

The special rapporteurs and independent experts, who are part of the UN Human Rights Council,

include Irene Khan, Mary Lawlor, Clément N Voule, Nils Melzer and Morris Tidball-Binz.

Sagar and Runi were stabbed to death in their home on 12 February 2012.

The Rapid Action Battalion was tasked by the High Court to investigate the case in 2012.

On November 24, 2021, the Court demanded for the 84th time that Rab should submit its findings.

The experts expressed concern that the trial for the fatal shooting of journalist and human rights defender Abdul Hakim Shimul in February 2017, allegedly by the then-mayor of Shahzadpur, has been repeatedly delayed.

Currently, it has been placed on a stay order by the High Court, with all the accused on bail.

The experts also recalled the death in custody in February 2021 of the writer Mushtaq Ahmed, following nine months in pre-trial detention on charges under the Digital Security Act for publishing an article criticising the government's pandemic response.



99 promised

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and several upazila hospitals will get a generator, said Farid.

On January 3 this year, Director General Prof Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam of the DGHS, said, “We distributed 40 generators to different medical college hospitals and district hospitals... some of those have already been set up.”

But two DGHS officials familiar with the matter said none of the generators has been set up and ready to use.

Farid said, “A few hospitals have received the necessary equipment and several other facilities will receive them soon. Some machinery is being imported.”

Nazmul Islam, director of communicable disease control at the DGHS, said, “Before choosing a hospital, we have to check whether the facility has room for the equipment. Then a specification [for public purchase] has to be prepared. As far as I know, the CMSD has completed the tender process and has issued a work order [to the contractor].”

Prof Nazrul Islam, member of the National Technical Advisory Committee on Covid-19, said the delay is caused by

inefficiency.

In March last year, the health ministry accepted a proposal to receive 29 oxygen generators procured by the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS).

But the minister has yet to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the UNOPS, a prerequisite for the UN body to launch the procedure.

A health ministry official, preferring anonymity, said signing of the MoU was delayed because officials were still working on a list of the facilities that would get the generators.

“Multiple government offices are involved in the process. Coordination has been the main challenge,” the official added.

In August, the Cabinet Committee approved a proposal to procure 30 oxygen generators with ADB funds.

On August 23, the CMSD published the technical specifications of the generators on its website. Officials said orders have been placed for the generators.

But the CMSD officials refused to give information about the contractors, the costs, and the manufacturers of the equipment.

‘No trust’ in search panel

FROM PAGE 1

search committee. They believe that submission of nominations would make no difference in EC formation as the president cannot pick the CEC and other commissioners without consulting the prime minister.

Bangladesher Biplabi Workers Party is one of them.

“We don't have any confidence in the search committee as there are some controversial people in it. Moreover, the nominations will be finalised according to suggestions made by the prime minister,” said Saiful Haque, general secretary of the party.

Bangladesh Jatiya Party (BJP) joined the president's dialogue, but did not submit any nominations.

“We joined the talks with the president to clearly say that a free and fair election is not possible without a neutral polls-time interim government. So, submission of nominations to the search committee will not make any difference to the formation of the Election Commission,” said BJP Chairman Andaleeb Rahman Partha.

Bangladesh National Awami Party (Bangladesh-NAP) also joined the talks with the president, but did not recommend names.

“We wrote to the search committee mentioning that the electoral system has collapsed and people have a very little confidence in the search committee. So we are not giving any nominations,” said M Golam Mustafa Bhuiyan, secretary general of the party.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhruul Islam Alamgir yesterday said the current EC should be put on trial for destroying the country's electoral system.

“We have no interest in the search committee as it has no significance. All these [formation and activities of the search committee] are meaningless,” he said while exchanging views with local journalists in Thakurgaon.

Bangladesh Muslim League, a component of the BNP-led 20-party alliance, also did not put names forward.

However, the ruling Awami League and its alliance partners, including Jatiya Party, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD), Workers Party of Bangladesh, have recommended names.

Speaking to The Daily

Star, Cabinet Division Joint Secretary Shafiul Azim yesterday said, “A total of 24 registered political parties and six professional bodies have submitted their nominations.”

He, however, refused to elaborate on which parties did not send names.

An AL delegation, led by its Information and Research Secretary Selim Mahmud, submitted a list of 10 names to the Cabinet Division yesterday.

The names were finalised at a meeting of the AL presidium members on Wednesday. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, also the party chief, chaired the meeting.

Bangladesher Samyabadi Dal, a member of the AL-led 14-party alliance, said they submitted six names.

Before the formation of the search committee, President Abdul Hamid had invited 32 political parties to the dialogue. But 25 of them joined talks.

The search committee was formed on February 5 under the Appointments of the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners Act 2022.

The following day, the six-

member search committee after its first meeting asked individuals to submit their CVs to the Cabinet Division either by email or in person for the five EC posts.

Around 200 people have so far sent their nominations, according to Cabinet Division sources.

“We cannot say the exact number of individual applications right now as some people also proposed names of others also. But we have received about 200 emails,” said Shafiul Azim.

The previous search committees in 2012 and 2017 didn't seek applications from individuals.

The Cabinet Division is giving secretarial support to the search committee which has to propose 10 names to the president by February 24. The president will finally pick the five, according to the law.

The search committee will hold talks with civil society members, election experts and media personalities at the Supreme Court Judges Lounge today and tomorrow to get suggestions and proposals on EC formation.

The tenure of the incumbent EC expires on Monday.

After the United States deported the estimated 80-90 Cameroonians on two flights in October and November 2020, they “faced arbitrary arrest and detention; enforced disappearances; torture, rape, and other violence; extortion; unfair prosecutions,” HRW said in a 174-page report.

US, Cameroon ‘violated’ rights of asylum seekers: HRW

AFP, Yaoundé

Cameroon committed “serious human rights violations” against dozens of its citizens after the US deported them back to the Central African country in breach of international refugee law, Human Rights Watch said Thursday.

Almost all of those involved were from the English-speaking minority in western Cameroon, where anglophone separatists and government forces have been engaged in a deadly conflict for five years, with the UN and NGOs regularly accusing both sides of atrocities against civilians.

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NY DA prosecutes highest number of anti-Asian hate crimes

AFP, NEW YORK

A New York prosecutor said Thursday that his team was prosecuting its highest number of anti-Asian hate crimes since a unit was established more than a decade ago.

Anti-Asian violence surged in the United States following the start of the coronavirus pandemic in 2020. Activists believe the hate crimes were fuelled by talk of the “Chinese virus” by former president Donald Trump and others during the early days of the pandemic.

New York officials have also cited a history of mental illness, exacerbated by a disruption to social services during the pandemic, among many of the perpetrators.

“Tragically, our office is currently prosecuting 33 hate crime cases driven by anti-Asian bias – unfortunately, the most we have had since our hate crimes unit was established in 2010,” said Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg.

Blood-soaked road

FROM PAGE 12

to join the procession at the university next day. As Nadera Begum had an arrest warrant issued in her name, she couldn't come.

Whether it was for the letter or spontaneously, a few students from the university's female hostel and about 30-40 students from Kamrunnesa, Banglabazar and Muslim Girls School gathered at Amtala on February 21.

At the Amtala meeting, however, it was decided that section 144 would not be violated. We, the female students, were against this decision. That's why we, four female students, came out on the street chanting Rashtrio Bhasha Bangla Chai (we want Bangla as the state language). Police didn't stop us. Two small processions followed us. Police arrested the third and

fourth procession of girls.

We could not go far. Tear shells kept coming towards us. I rushed towards the emergency section of the Medical College Hospital. By that time police opened fire on students. I can still hear the screams of the injured persons who were brought to the emergency section. After taking some first aid, we went towards the hostel. There were no dead bodies there; the black-pitched road was soaked in blood.

Halima Khatun was one of the female forerunners to break the Section 144 on Dhaka University campus on February 21, 1952

Source: Bhasha Andolon Shachtallish theke Baanna (Ed. Mostofa Kamal, Bangladesh Co-operative Book Society Ltd, 1987)

Translated by Shamsuddoza Sajen

Educational institutions to reopen soon

Says Dipu Moni

STAR REPORT

Education Minister Dipu Moni yesterday expressed hope to reopen educational institutions soon, following the downtrend of Covid-19 infection rate in the country.

"We have to be more careful amid the pandemic. We want to reopen the educational institutions as soon as possible. The infection rate has been decreasing, so we hope we can reopen the institutions soon," she said at a programme at Sylhet Circuit House, reports our Sylhet correspondent.

The minister was speaking at a view-exchange programme with leaders of Sylhet district and city unit of Awami League.

DU in-person classes for freshers from Feb 22

Meanwhile, Dhaka University authorities have decided to resume in-person classes for first-year students on February 22, maintaining health guidelines.

Besides, the scheduled examinations will be held as per the routine, said a DU press release yesterday.

"We will also take the initiative to resume in-person classes for students of all academic years, if the Covid situation improves by this time," said Vice-Chancellor Prof Md Akhtuzzaman.

On January 21, the university suspended in-person classes till February 6, following government decision amid a surge in Covid-19 cases. Later, the suspension was extended till February 21.



An 11-member delegation on behalf of the protesting students of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology had a meeting with Education Minister Dr Dipu Moni at Sylhet Circuit House yesterday. The minister said the meeting was fruitful, and hoped to fulfil the students' demands that have not yet been met.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

'VC's removal up to chancellor'

Says Dipu Moni after 3-hour meeting with protesting Sust students

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Education Minister Dr Dipu Moni said the students of Shahjalal University of Science and Technology (Sust) have explained the reasons behind wanting the VC's resignation, and their demands will be shared with the chancellor.

"The appointment and removal of a vice-chancellor lie with the chancellor. We have heard their reasons and will share them with the chancellor. He will then decide in this regard," the minister said yesterday, while talking to journalists at Sylhet Circuit House after meeting with a delegation of eleven protesting students.

The meeting started at 2:55pm and concluded at 6:15pm. Deputy Education Minister Mohibul Hasan Chowdhury and UGC Secretary Dr Ferdous Zaman were also present at the meeting.

"Many of their demands have already been fulfilled. We hope to take necessary

DEMANDS FULFILLED

- Detained alumni granted bail
- Treatment for injured student Sazal Kundu
- Proctor Prof Alamgir Kabir, student guidance director Zahir Uddin Ahmed removed

DEMANDS UNFULFILLED

- Withdrawing cases against students
- Reopening mobile numbers and mobile banking of detained alumni

measures to fulfil their other demands soon," said Dipu Moni.

"The meeting was fruitful. We wish the situation returns to normal at the university as soon as possible."

After the meeting, the minister went to the Sust campus around 7:00pm and talked to other students.

On January 13, residents of Begum Sirajunnessa Chowdhury Hall started a movement, demanding resignation of its provost. The protest turned anti-VC when on January 16, police entered the campus, injuring at least 40 protesting students. On January 19, 24 students started a hunger strike.

During the movement, two cases were filed—one by police against 200 to 300 students and another by a Tanti League leader against more than 150 alumni, of whom, five were arrested by police.

On January 26, two former professors of the university—Dr Muhammed Zafar Iqbal and his wife Dr Yasmeen Haque went to visit the protesting students. The next morning, after 163 hours, they called off the hunger strike upon being assured by the former professors of their demands getting fulfilled.

However, the students continued their protest, demanding the VC's resignation.

SAGAR-RUNI MURDER

Rab denies failure to unravel mystery

Journalists call for immediate submission of probe report

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) refused to admit their inability to properly investigate journalist couple Sagar Runi's murder, ten years after the case was handed over to them.

"How can you say that Rab is not capable? The investigation officer is probing all angles of the case. The investigation is ongoing," Rab Legal and Media Wing Director Commander Khandaker Al Moin told reporters yesterday.

Sagar Sarowar, news editor at private TV channel Maasranga, and Meherun Runi, senior reporter at ATN Bangla, were killed in the early hours of February 11, 2012, at their rented flat in the capital's West Rajabazar.

"We have regularly updated the court with the investigation's progress. Hence, the court has given us more time," said Moin.

"After the murder, several people were primarily arrested. Statements of 160 witnesses have been recorded. DNA samples have been sent to the US. We received some information from there and hope to reveal those soon."

When asked about the no-confidence of the victims' families in Rab's probe, the Rab spokesperson replied that he has not been notified of this, and the matter is under the court's jurisdiction.

"INCAPABLE OFFICERS SHOULD BE FIRED IF NECESSARY"

Colleagues of Sagar and Runi expressed their frustration over Rab's supposed failure to identify the murderers in ten long years.

Journalist leaders, during a protest rally held at the premises of Dhaka Reporters Unity yesterday, said invisible forces are working against the case's proper investigation.

They also mentioned that the deadline for submitting the probe report has been deferred 85 times.

DRU president Nazrul Islam Mithu urged

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PRAYER
TIMING
FEB 12



	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	5-25	12-45	4-30	5-57	7-15
Jamaat	6-00	1-15	4-45	6-01	7-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Preparations are going in full-swing at Suhrawardy Udyan ahead of Ekushey Boi Mela, slated to start from Tuesday. After two years of pandemic-induced financial losses, publishers are looking to make a return to profits this year. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

Book fair may go on for longer

Says state minister for cultural affairs

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khalid yesterday said there is a plan to increase the duration of Amar Ekushey Boi Mela, as Covid-19 infection rate has gone down.

He said this time, the duration of the fair will be two weeks. "In fact, we have become accustomed to the fact that Ekushey Boi Mela will be month-long... But we could not start from February 1 due to Covid."

"However, considering the Covid situation, if the infection rate comes under control or decreases... then we will try to increase the duration," he said.

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QUAD FOREIGN MINISTERS' MEETING

Australia, US announce new funds for Indo-Pacific

PORIMOL PALMA

Australia and the United States have announced new funds for the promotion of democracy, human rights and economic development in the Indo-Pacific region.

Australia will invest \$10.2 million, while the US has announced to give \$1 million to promote youth engagement in democratic processes and protection of human rights in Bangladesh and Nepal, according to two separate statements yesterday.

In addition, Australia has announced another \$61.6 million for the region's countries, which includes Bangladesh, to be provided for regional cooperation, disaster resilience, the digital sector, energy, infrastructure and more.

The US government has also planned a \$10 million project for the next five years in Bangladesh that will look to promote open governance and accountability, according to a diplomatic source.

The announcements come after a foreign minister-level meeting of Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) members—the US, Australia, Japan and India—which concluded in Melbourne yesterday. The four countries pledged to deepen cooperation and ensure a coercion-free Indo-Pacific region.

Foreign ministers of Quad vowed to work on humanitarian relief, terrorism, cyber and maritime security, and global supply chain challenges in the region.

The US Department of State, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor in a statement said it will work to mobilise youths in policy making and participation at all levels of government, as well as promote transparency, accountability and civic participation.

"The Biden administration seeks to strongly engage Bangladeshi government, civil society and media to improve governance and democracy," a diplomatic source said.

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SC LEGAL AID COMMITTEE

Justice Jahangir new chair

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Justice Jahangir Hossain Selim, a judge of the High Court Division of the Supreme Court, has been appointed as chairperson of Supreme Court Legal Aid Committee (SCLAC). The SCLAC is a body that provides legal assistance to poor litigants of the country without any cost.

Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique made the appointment. The appointment comes after the outgoing chairperson of SCLAC, Justice M Enayetur Rahim, was elevated to judge of the Appellate Division of the SC on January 9.

The Supreme Court administration issued a notification on Wednesday to this effect.

Justice Jahangir was formerly a member of the International Crimes Tribunal.



Commemorating the 70th anniversary of Ekushey February, a solo exhibition titled “Borney Byanjona” (Layouts in Letters) was inaugurated yesterday at La Galerie and Galirie Room at Alliance Francaise de Dhaka. The exhibition features Bangla calligraphy by Arham ul Huq Chowdhury and will be open to all till February 22, Monday to Saturday from 3:00pm to 9:00pm.

PHOTO: STAR

CMCH staffer suspended for stealing govt medicine

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH) authorities yesterday suspended a staffer over stealing government medicine from the hospital.

The suspended staffer, Ashu Chakraborty (32), is an office assistant at CMCH, said CMCH director Brig Gen Shamim Ahsan.

Police recovered government medicine worth Tk 3.5 lakh, after searching a house near CMCH, which a gang used as a store for keeping stolen medicine from CMCH, said Arafatur Rahman, additional deputy commissioner of Chattogram Metropolitan Police.

Director Shamim said after searching a bag the two were carrying, police recovered government medicine that were supplied to the hospital for patients.

“We suspended Ashu, while Syed is an outsider,” he said, adding that police were taking legal action against both.

Contacted, Jahedul Kabir, officer-in-charge of Panchlaish Police Station, said during primary investigation, police came to know that a nexus consisting of CMCH staff members and outsiders used to steal government medicine worth Tk 15,000 to Tk 20,000 from different wards every day to sell them to medicine shops near Chattogram Medical College Hospital.

“We have identified the nexus and are trying to arrest the other members,” he said.

Husband ‘tortured’, she got ‘rape threat’

FROM PAGE 2 elsewhere and then six to seven of the cops started interrogating me. They were making obscene gestures and asking me how much I could pay them.”

“I was into the second month of my pregnancy. After I begged them to stop, all except one left.” Tapashi said the man, who had introduced himself as a Special Branch officer from Dhaka, then slapped her and left the room.

She said her parents went to the police station the next day looking for her, but policemen told them that she was not there. After she shouted, her parents saw her. Only then, she was allowed to go.

Tapashi claimed that the

law enforcers also forced her and her parents into signing on a blank piece of paper before setting her free. “They also threatened us that they will kill Mehedi if we shared anything with anyone.”

Police also had taken Mehedi’s signature on blank paper the previous night, she said.

After torturing him for three straight days, Mehedi was shown arrested as a suspect in the Latif murder case before a district court, she said.

Tapashi said she cannot stay at her home as police often visit it at night and threaten her.

“I’ve been hiding for the last two and a half months. Police even sent their informants to my relative’s

house,” she said.

She also said SI Hiron went to her uncle’s home in Rajbari around 20 days back. As she tried to run away, she slipped over on the ground amid rain and had a miscarriage.

Contacted, OC Shahadat Hossain refuted the allegations, saying they did not torture anyone.

He said they took Mehedi to the police station for questioning over the murder. “The woman came to the police station, but she would not leave without her husband. At one point, we convinced her into going home,” he said.

SI Hiron could not be reached for comments. Superintendent of Police in Rajbari M M Shakiluzzaman said the

allegation by Tapashi was not true. “But if she files any complaints with us, we will investigate them,” he said.

The Daily Star is publishing the couple’s identities with her consent.

South Sudan risks return to war, UN warns

AFP, Juba

South Sudan risks a return to war, the United Nations warned yesterday, with outbreaks of interethnic violence and political infighting threatening to undo even the limited progress made in implementing its lumbering peace process.

What’s 1,000

FROM PAGE 5 didn’t show much interest in paddy cultivation fearing increased irrigation costs.

In addition, farmers said in the previous boro season, they got a fair price for paddy, but the cost was higher. As a result, they have been discouraged from cultivating paddy and agricultural land is now lying uncultivated.

Kazi Lutful Bari, deputy director of the Department of Agricultural Extension (Moulvibazar), said it has been a long-standing demand of the area’s people. If an irrigation system is introduced, many uncultivated lands can be cultivated.

However, WDB will need to see if the pump can be placed in an area where everyone can access it, he added. Contacted, Akhtaruzzaman, executive engineer of WDB in Moulvibazar, said he will visit the area soon and look into the matter.

Rab denies

FROM PAGE 3 the government to terminate the investigation officer, saying that police does not need such an incapable officer.

Nazrul said they would submit a memorandum to the home ministry on Sunday. Memorandums will also be submitted to the president and prime minister later to set a deadline for completing the probe.

Sheikh Mamunur Rashid, joint secretary-general of a faction of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists, urged the judiciary to intervene.

Journalist leaders also proposed a syndicated investigation report and a committee to monitor the progress of the investigation.

Is Harris really dead?

FROM PAGE 12 has been working to get information on the matter.

On January 11, various media outlets ran reports on Harris’s death after his cousin Ashiq Chowdhury in a Facebook post claimed that the BNP leader passed away at a hospital in the UK three and a half months ago, and was buried there.

Quoting his daughter, some media outlets reported that Harris died of post Covid-19 complications in a Dhaka hospital and was buried in the capital.

M o h a m m a d Kamruzzaman, special superintendent of CID’s Dhaka metropolitan (South) which is tasked with investigating the matter, said officials have written to the police in Sylhet, where Harris was born, to

investigate the matter.

“I will be able to give you an update after receiving the findings from Sylhet,” he added.

Harris, political secretary to former prime minister Khaleda Zia, had disappeared when a military-backed caretaker government took over in 2007. The Interpol red notice was served on him in November 2015.

On August 21 in 2004, a grisly grenade attack was carried out on an anti-terrorism rally organised by Awami League on Bangabandhu Avenue in the capital.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, then leader of the opposition, was the target of the attack. The BNP Jamaat alliance government was in office at the time.

Book fair

FROM PAGE 3

He made the remarks while inspecting the fairground at Suhrawardy Udyan. During this time, the cultural affairs minister also visited the fair and observed the under-construction stalls and pavilions. He said there was no booth at Bangla Academy to vaccinate publishers, salespeople and Bangla Academy officials. “However, we requested Dhaka Medical College and Hospital to provide services. They are doing that.”

Sleeping

FROM PAGE 12

— did not intend to focus on weight loss, but the researchers noticed that the participants began losing weight within two weeks of changing their sleep patterns, according to The Guardian report.

The improved sleep pattern also prompted consumption of 500 fewer calories a day among some participants.

“If healthy sleep habits are maintained over longer duration, this would lead to clinically important weight loss over time,” said Dr Esra Tasali, of the University of Chicago’s sleep centre.

As part of the study, the volunteers were not asked to restrict their diets or change their exercise routines. They all slept in their own beds and wore devices to track their sleep duration.

Previously, studies revealed that lack of sleep can lead to weight gain through increased food intake.

“In our study we only manipulated sleep and had the participants eat whatever they wanted, with no food logging or anything else to track their nutrition by themselves,” Dr Tasali said.

No evidence, yet Rasraj faces

FROM PAGE 12

57(2) of the Information and Communication Technology Act 2006 which has been repealed amid widespread criticisms.

Talking to The Daily Star, Rasraj’s lawyer Nasir Miah said Mohammad Iqbal Hossain, inspector of the Detective Branch of police in Brahmanbaria, submitted the charge sheet on December 29, 2021.

The next day, Brahmanbaria chief

judicial magistrate sent the case to Chattogram Cyber Tribunal for trial, he added.

Contacted, Inspector Iqbal said the forensic department found evidence that Rasraj deleted the photograph from his Facebook.

Supreme Court lawyer ZI Khan Panna opined that the pressing of chargesheet against Rasraj under the DSA was a “heinous criminal act” on the part of law enforcement agencies.

Rasraj is an innocent fisherman who cannot even use Facebook, he said, adding that the charge sheet submission after two years under the DSA was unlawful.

Panna, a trustee member of Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust and a former chairperson of Ain O Salish Kendra, said, “I will appear before the Chattogram court with a group of lawyers from Dhaka on behalf of Rasraj. “We will defend him on

the next hearing of the case.”

Chattogram Cyber Tribunal lawyer Bhulon Bhowmik said the tribunal was yet to register the case and fix the date for its hearing.

The PBI has submitted the charge sheet of the case after six investigators looked into the allegation.

Rasraj, who was arrested in connection with the attack in 2017, is now on bail in the DSA case.

French troops kill 10 jihadists

AFP, Paris

French counter-terrorism forces based in west Africa killed ten suspected jihadists accused of

involvement in a massacre of police officers in Burkina Faso last November, the French military announced on Thursday.

The suspected jihadists were

from a group affiliated to the radical Ansarul Islam movement that has carried out “numerous attacks against civilians”.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার				
বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ				
উপ-পুলিশ কমিশনার (সরবরাহ ও পরিবহন) এর কার্যালয়				
চট্টগ্রাম মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ, চট্টগ্রাম				
উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি				
নিম্নলিখিত শর্ত সাপেক্ষে “পিপিএ-২০০৬ ও পিপিআর-২০০৮” এর সর্বশেষ সংশোধনীসহ সংশ্লিষ্ট অন্যান্য আইন অনুযায়ী সিএমপি’র রেশন স্টোরে ২০২১-২০২২ অর্থ বছরের ৪র্থ কোয়ার্টার (০১লা এপ্রিল/২০২২খ্রি. হতে ৩০ শে জুন/২০২২খ্রি. পর্যন্ত), এর জন্য (ক) দেশীয় ছোট দানার উন্নতমানের ১,৩৫,০০০ (এক লক্ষ পঁয়ত্রিশ হাজার) কেজি “মস্তর ডাল” ক্রয় ও (খ) প্রাস্টিক কন্টেইনার/পাত্রের-মাধ্যমে ১,২৫,০০০ (এক লক্ষ পঁচিশ হাজার) লিটার উন্নত ব্র্যান্ডের “সয়াবিন তেল” ক্রয়ের জন্য প্রয়োজনীয় যোগাভাসপত্র সরবরাহকারী/ফার্ম/দরদাভাগের নিকট হতে সীলমোহরকৃত খামে দরপত্র আহবান করা যাচ্ছে -				
১.	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	স্বরষ্ট্র মন্ত্রণালয়/জন নিরাপত্তা বিভাগ		
২.	সংস্থা	বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ		
৩.	মালামাল ক্রয়কারী কর্তৃপক্ষ	পুলিশ কমিশনার, সিএমপি, চট্টগ্রাম		
৪.	কী কারণে দরপত্র আহবান	(ক) উন্নতমানের দেশি ছোট দানার মস্তর ডাল ক্রয় ও (খ) প্রাস্টিক পাত্রের মাধ্যমে উন্নত ব্র্যান্ডের সয়াবিন তেল ক্রয় সংক্রান্ত		
৫.	দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের সর্বশেষ তারিখ	০৬/০৩/২০২২খ্রি., বিকাল ১৭.০০ টা পর্যন্ত		
৬.	দরপত্র গ্রহণের সর্বশেষ তারিখ ও সময়	০৭/০৩/২০২২খ্রি., সময়-দুপুর ১২.০০ টা পর্যন্ত		
৭.	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	০৭/০৩/২০২২খ্রি., সময়-দুপুর ১২.৩০ টা		
৮.	দরপত্র মূল্যায়নের তারিখ ও সময়	০৯/০৩/২০২২খ্রি., সময়-দুপুর ১২.০০ টা		
৯.	বাজেট ও অর্থের উৎস	জিওবি (রাজস্ব)		
১০.	দরপত্র আহবানকারী কর্তৃপক্ষের নাম ও ঠিকানা	মোঃ ফারুক উল হক, পিপিএম, উপ-পুলিশ কমিশনার (সরবরাহ ও পরিবহন), সিএমপি, চট্টগ্রাম		
১১.	দরপত্র খোলার দস্তর	উপ-পুলিশ কমিশনার (সরবরাহ ও পরিবহন), সিএমপি, চট্টগ্রাম-এর দামপাড়াস্থ পুলিশ লাইনস্ অফিস কক্ষ		
১২.	মালামাল সংগ্রহ অথবা কাজের বিস্তারিত বিবরণ	দরপত্র তফসিল মোতাবেক		
১৩.	দরপত্রের সাথে সংযুক্ত প্রয়োজনীয় কাগজপত্রাদি	দরপত্রের সাথে হালনাগাদ/২০২১-২০২২ অর্থ বছরের নিম্নবর্ণিত কাগজপত্রাদির সত্যায়িত ফটোকপি দাখিল করতে হবে ক) ব্যবসায়িক ট্রেড লাইসেন্স, খ) আয়কর পরিশোধের সনদপত্র, গ) ভ্যাট রেজিস্ট্রেশনসহ পরিশোধের হালনাগাদ সনদপত্র, ঘ) ব্যাংক কর্তৃক আর্থিক স্বচ্ছলতার প্রত্যয়নপত্রসহ দরপত্র দাখিলের পূর্ববর্তী ০৬ (ছয়) মাসের ব্যাংকের সাথে লেনদেনের স্টেটমেন্ট, ঙ) এনআইডি কার্ড, চ) মস্তর ডালের ক্ষেত্রে এগ্রিকালচারাল লাইসেন্স, ছ) ছবিসহ ফার্মের মালিকানার হলফনামার কপি এবং প্রতিনিধির ক্ষেত্রে ছবিসহ প্রাধিকারপত্র।		
১৪.	সিডিউল প্রাপ্তির স্থান/সিডিউল বিক্রয়ের স্থান	(ক) সিএমপি রেশন স্টোর, দামপাড়া পুলিশ লাইনস্, চট্টগ্রাম (খ) পুলিশ সুপার, চট্টগ্রাম-এর যোলশহরস্থ কার্যালয় (গ) জেলা প্রশাসক, চট্টগ্রাম-এর কার্যালয়		
১৫.	দরপত্র গ্রহণকারী অফিসের নাম ও ঠিকানা	(ক) উপ-পুলিশ কমিশনার (সরবরাহ ও পরিবহন), সিএমপি, চট্টগ্রাম-এর দামপাড়াস্থ পুলিশ লাইনস্ কার্যালয় (খ) পুলিশ সুপার, চট্টগ্রাম-এর যোলশহরস্থ কার্যালয়		
১৬.	দরপত্র গ্রহণ/মূল্যায়ন	পিপিএ-২০০৬ ও পিপিআর-২০০৮” এর সর্বশেষ সংশোধনীসহ সংশ্লিষ্ট আইন অনুযায়ী		
১৭.	ক্রয়ের বিবরণ			
	লট নং	দরপত্রের বিষয়	দরপত্র সিডিউলের মূল্য (অফেরথযোগ্য)	দরপত্রের সাথে দরপত্র জামানত (ফেরথযোগ্য)
	০১	উন্নতমানের ছোট দানার দেশি মস্তর ডাল ক্রয়	১,০০০/- (এক হাজার) টাকা মাত্র	৪,০০,০০০/- (চার লক্ষ) টাকা
	০২	উন্নত ব্র্যান্ডের সয়াবিন তেল ক্রয়	১,০০০/- (এক হাজার) টাকা মাত্র	৫,০০,০০০/- (পাঁচ লক্ষ) টাকা
বি. দ্র. : দরপত্র আহবানকারী কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা বাতিল করার অধিকার সংরক্ষণ করেন। উল্লেখ্য যে, কোন কারণে দরপত্র উন্মুক্তকরণের দিন অফিস বন্ধ থাকলে পরবর্তী অফিস খোলার দিন যথাসময়ে টেন্ডার উন্মুক্ত করা হবে। কর্তৃপক্ষ প্রয়োজনে চাহিদার পরিমাণ,ক্রয়-বৃদ্ধি করতে পারবেন।				
(মোঃ ফারুক উল হক, পিপিএম)				
বিপি-৭৯০৩০২৭৮২৩				
উপ-পুলিশ কমিশনার (সরবরাহ ও পরিবহন)				
পক্ষে পুলিশ কমিশনার				
চট্টগ্রাম মেট্রোপলিটন পুলিশ				
চট্টগ্রাম				
জিডি-২৭২				

Energy sector victim of wrong policies, corruption

Speakers tell BAPA-BEN Conference

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The country's energy sector must come out of the shadows of wrong policies and corruption, speakers said at the Bapa-BEN (Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon and Bangladesh Environment Network) conference yesterday.

The speakers also criticised the government for its policymaking blunders, such as the decision to base much of the energy sector on coal, at a time when the rest of the world is moving away from it.

The two-day annual conference kicked off at Stanford University campus at the capital's Siddheshwari, with the theme "Energy, Climate Change and Sustainable Development".

It was attended by representatives from various political parties, including ruling Awami League, BNP, Ganasamhati Andolon and Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB).

During his speech, Junaid Saki, chief coordinator of Gansamhati Anodolon, said the whole world is looking for ways to divert their energy sector from coal, whereas Bangladesh adopted a policy where 70 percent of energy is based on coal-fired power production.

He also said the government is trying to hang on to power by allowing environmentally harmful coal power-plants in Rampal, neglecting the needs of the region and the Sundarbans. Ruhin Hossain Prince, presidium member of CPB, emphasised on ensuring 100 percent ownership of the country's resources.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



No, this dustbin didn't grow out of the ground. While the city authorities undertook road development work at this spot in front of Khulna city's KDA Bhaban recently, they laid down cement without disposing of the bin. It now sticks out like a sore thumb, causing inconvenience to pedestrians who walk down this footpath. This photo was taken on Thursday from Shib Bari roundabout.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

It's not pro-migrant workers

Expatriates' welfare ministry to consider revising migration cost list

JAMIL MAHMUD

Expatriates' welfare ministry has taken up an initiative to revise the costs for international migration, with the aim to make it more "realistic" for the labour force.

The issue came up during a meeting at the ministry's employment wing in November last year.

As per the meeting minutes, it focused on pressing issues such as the rising plane fare for workers amid the pandemic. The additional cost-burden of institutional quarantine upon arrival was also discussed.

Currently, the government lists migration costs for 16 labour-receiving countries at a maximum of Tk 1.66 lakh and minimum of Tk 97,780.

However, concern is growing among migrant rights groups as workers often have to pay hefty amounts to intermediaries to secure jobs overseas.

After the current fees were set by the government, they voiced concerns over whether this will lead to increase in other costs for workers as well.

- » Workers pay 3 to 4 times more than govt-stipulated fee
- » Additional costs include quarantine, service charge, airfare, visa fees
- » Experts fear current fees may lead to overall increase in cost

In light of this, an official of the expatriates' welfare ministry recently said they want to revise and re-fix the migration costs based on suggestions from stakeholders. "We want to make it [migration costs] more realistic," said the official, preferring anonymity.

Besides, setting migration costs for some newer labour-receiving countries – including Mauritius and Seychelles, which were left off the current list – has become a necessity, said another official.

However, Shakirul Islam, chairperson of Ovivashi Karmi Unnayan Program, said if the government's revised fees increase existing costs, then this will be a "terrible step".

He added that as part of ethical recruitment practices, many countries

now focus on an "employer pay model", saying Bangladesh should go for such models while sending workers abroad.

The 16 listed countries are Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Malaysia, Libya, Bahrain, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Iraq, Qatar, Jordan, Egypt, Russia, Maldives, Brunei, and Lebanon.

For 14 of these countries, excluding Saudi Arabia and Singapore, the fees were set in 2017. The costs for Singapore was set at Tk 1.4 lakh the same year.

For Saudi Arabia, the government in 2016 fixed Tk 1.65 lakh for each male worker, while the country currently recruits Bangladeshi female domestic workers under a "zero cost" agreement.

However, according to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics data, the

estimated average recruitment cost for Bangladeshi migrants was Tk 4.17 lakh between 2015 and 2018.

This includes agencies' service charge, airfare, passport, medical, and visa fees.

Migration cost for Singapore was Tk 5.74 lakh, Saudi Arabia Tk 4.36 lakh, Malaysia Tk 4.04 lakh, Qatar Tk 4.02 lakh, and Oman Tk 3.08 lakh.

Talking to reporters last December, secretary of the ministry Ahmed Munirur Saleheen pointed to the lack of formal complaints filed by workers.

He urged workers to file complaints, along with necessary proof, stressing that the ministry will take stern action based on their complaints.

M Tipu Sultan, president of Recruiting Agencies Oikya Parishad, however, said they were unable to maintain the government-fixed costs due to increase in airfare.

Earlier, airfare for workers heading to the Middle East was between Tk 20,000 and Tk 25,000, which has now increased to over Tk 1 lakh, Tipu said. He urged the government to introduce a special "labour fare" for workers.

War criminal Syed Mohammad Qaisar dies

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

War criminal and former Jatiya Party leader Syed Mohammad Qaisar died yesterday.

The death-row convict breathed his last while receiving treatment at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University in the morning, his lawyer SM Shahjahan told The Daily Star.

He said Qaisar died naturally, as he was around 85 years old.

The lawyer said a review petition, filed by Qaisar against his death penalty in a war crimes case, is pending with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court.

"Now the Appellate Division will declare his review petition abated and will exempt him from the case," he said.

Advocate Shahjahan said the apex court will pass necessary order after he informs the court about Qaisar's death.

Qaisar filed the petition with the Appellate Division on October 29, 2020, seeking review of its verdict that upheld his death sentence for committing crimes against humanity and war crimes during the country's Liberation War in 1971.



Farmers of Kawadighi haor said fields in Akhaikura and Ekatuna unions have been lying barren for years due to the lack of irrigation.

PHOTO: STAR

What's 1,000 acres of land without water?

Lack of irrigation facilities, authorities' neglect key reasons, say farmers of Kawadighi Haor

MINTU DESHWARA

About 1,000 acres of land is lying uncultivated due to lack of irrigation facilities in Kawadighi haor of Moulvibazar Sadar upazila.

Farmers of the area said if a water pump was set up in the area, they will be able to use the water from the haor for irrigation. Although they've been making this demand for almost a decade, the authorities aren't paying any heed.

These uncultivated lands are in Akhaikura and Ekatuna unions of Sadar upazila.

A canal flows downstream towards the lands, joined by the Kawadighi haor.

Farmers Saddam Hosain and Bidhan Malakar said some are setting up irrigation pumps while others

are installing 200-300ft long plastic pipe. However, these are quite expensive and not all farmers can afford those.

Bijoy Das of Rasulpur village in Akhaikura union said even 30-40 years ago, these lands could produce Katari (bona aman) paddy.

According to local voluntary organisation, Islamic Social Welfare, since 2012, they've applied to the executive engineer of Water Development Board more than once for a water pump. The last application was made on January 30, 2019. If there's a water pump in the area, an additional 15,000 tonnes of paddy will be produced, they said.

Meanwhile, rainfall has been comparatively less this year. With fields suffering from drought, farmers

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Two killed in road accidents

Youth dies after train runs him over

STAR REPORT

Three people were killed in road and train accidents yesterday, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Panchagarh, a biker was killed and his co-rider injured, as a pickup truck hit them on Panchagarh-Banglabandha highway at Dariapara village in Sadar upazila.

The deceased was identified as Firoz Hossain (26) from Panchbibi upazila of Joypurhat.

After the accident, firefighters took the injured to Panchagarh Sadar Hospital, where on-duty doctors declared Firoz dead.

In Dinajpur, a biker was killed after a three-wheeler ran him over on Dinajpur-Rangpur highway at Gopalganj village in Sadar upazila.

Doyal Chandra Roy (25) from the upazila's Basherhat village died on the spot. The accident occurred after he fell off the motorbike, said police.

In Chattogram, an 18-year-old youth died after being crushed under the wheels of a train in Sitakunda upazila of Chattogram.

The incident took place at Sitakunda's Sheikh Para in the morning, after the unidentified youth fell off the Sagorika Express train, said Sub-inspector Khorshed Alam, in-charge of Sitakunda Railway Police Outpost.

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We speak the same language, WE ARE ONE

Prosenjit Chatterjee

A heart-to-heart with ‘Bumba da’

I have particularly become addicted to the OTT platform ‘Chorki’, they are simply amazing. I wholeheartedly congratulate them for their initiative; I eagerly await their new productions. I am in touch with many talented directors from Bangladesh. If I get an offer for a good project, I will definitely take it up.

SHARMIN JOYA

There are few people who follow Bengali films, and do not love its omnipresent poster-boy, who is lovingly known as ‘Bumba Da’. In Prosenjit Chatterjee’s illustrious career of 24 years, he became one of the most revered faces in Bengali cinema, notwithstanding language or border.

The eminent actor was last seen in “Kakababur Prottyaborton”, which released in Bangladesh on February 4. Because of the SAFTA agreement, the film was released on the same day in India and Bangladesh.

The ever-energetic ‘Bumba Da’, who is excited by the prospect of film industries on both sides of the border collaborating, talks to The Daily Star about his career, views and more.

How do you feel about reprising the role of ‘Kakababu’, especially after the film released in both countries through your efforts?

I have always tried to create a bridge amongst us, and I am glad that we have successfully done this. Our generation have dealt with great obstacles; the next generation must come forward to strengthen the bond.

I believe that if we cooperate, we can create films like “Bahubali”, or any other wonderful productions from the Tamil and Telugu industries.

We heard that you approached Srijit Mukherjee to direct the series, while having solicited the rights from Sunil Gangopadhyay.

Usually, directors happen to choose the artistes.

However, in this case, the opposite happened. In fact, Srijit was not convinced to take up this project at all!

How much effort did you put in to actually look like the character?

I went through physical and psychological



PHOTOS: COLLECTED

transformations simultaneously, while preparing for the role. For six months, I walked with the help of a crutch, I even wore customised shoes with heels of two different sizes. To be honest, my body language completely changed after playing the role.

Those who read Sunil Da’s ‘Kakababu’, know that the character is quite witty and humorous. From top to bottom, I internalised all his quirks and habits.

In many interviews, you mentioned that you want to work in films that cater to children. Do you know how they are receiving “Kakababur Prottyaborton”? Parents used to introduce me to their kids as “Prosenjit uncle”. However, I wanted to break that barrier and bring myself into a place where this generation can directly relate to me.

Children’s films are rarely made in our

region. “Kakababu” is for audiences of all ages.

Now, kids come up to me and say “Kakababu, where is your crutch?” It amuses me greatly!

You only appeared in one film made by a Bangladeshi director, Benazir Ahmed’s ‘Priyo Shotru’ in 1995. Whom do you want to work with in the future?

It absolutely depends on the offer. Mostofa Sarwar Farooki is one of my most favourite directors, and unfortunately, I could not give him my schedule twice. One of the projects was his “Doob”.

I have directed some projects in BFDC – Alamgir *saheb* and Razzak *saheb* know how much I adore them.

I am in touch with many talented directors from Bangladesh. If I get an offer for a good project, I will definitely take it up.

You had tweeted praises for ‘Mohanagar’, directed by Ashfaq Nipun, after it aired on Hoichoi. Do you regularly watch Bangladeshi content?

I even contacted Ashfaq Nipun and congratulated him, after watching his brilliant series.

I follow and admire contemporary Bangladeshi works a lot.

I have particularly become addicted to the OTT platform ‘Chorki’, they are simply amazing. I wholeheartedly congratulate them for their initiative; I eagerly await their new productions.

I cannot differentiate between two Bengals. I am equally loved as ‘Bumba Da’ in Bangladesh as well. I am so proud of Bangladeshi artistes for exploring their talents in the international arena. Since we speak same language, I consider us as one.

When will you make your OTT debut?

I have already completed “Stardust”, directed by Vikram Motwane. This is a huge project, which will be released in an Indian OTT platform very soon.

There was a time when Bangladeshi films prospered, and Tollywood remake many of them. Now, Tollywood, as an industry, has prospered greatly.

Even 15 years ago, people would laugh at our films. We did lot of joint ventures and remakes at that time. If we are united in our efforts, we can uplift both our film industries to greater heights.



Kajol to return with “Salaam Venky”

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The shooting for the Kajol starrer “Salaam Venky” has begun recently. The actress took to her Instagram, announcing the kick-start of her first schedule for the production.

Her Instagram post reads: Today, we begin the journey of a story that needed to be told, a path that had to be taken and a life that had to be celebrated. We cannot wait to share this unbelievably true story of #SalaamVenky with you.

Directed by actor-turned-director Revathy, “Salaam Venky” recites the story of a mother battling difficult circumstances. The film is based on a true story with characters inspired by real-life instances.

Sting sells career catalogue

Eminent British singer-songwriter Sting has sold his career music catalogue to Universal Music Publishing Group (UMPG).

The company confirmed the news, on Thursday.

All of Sting’s solo works, as well as those when he was with rock band The Police, now belongs to UMPG.

However, the financial details of the deal were undisclosed.

“It is absolutely essential to me that my career’s body of work have a home where it is valued and respected – not only to connect with longtime fans in new ways but also to introduce my songs to new audiences, musicians and generations,” Sting said in a statement.

Sting’s band, The Police, released five studio albums between 1978 and 1983.

He has released more than a dozen studio albums. His latest record, “The Bridge”, was released in November.

He is the recipient of three BRIT Awards, including one for Outstanding Contribution to Music, Billboard Magazine’s Century Award, a Golden Globe and Emmy Award. Sting is also a four-time Oscar nominee.

Where is Mahiya Mahi?

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The web series ‘Driver’, starring Mahiya Mahi and Mosharraf Karim, was released yesterday. Although director Iftekhar Chowdhury and other crewmembers of the film were busy promoting ‘Driver’, Mahi was nowhere to be found.

Filmmakers Mostafizur Rahman Manik and Raju Chowdhury have also publicly stated that they tried to contact the actress for two new projects, albeit unsuccessfully.

Mahi has worked in Manik’s in “Jannat”, “Ananda Ashru”, “Jao Pakhi Bolo Taare” and “Ashirbad”.

The Daily Star also tried to call the actress, who did not respond to calls or texts.



‘SHOSHURBARI ZINDABAD 2’ is a blessing for our cinema

APU BISWAS

“A good film always demands the big screen. Only cinema halls can fully quench the thirst for those who want to enjoy an authentic cinematic experience,” she says.

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Celebrated actress Apu Biswas is set to return to the silver screen with “Shoshurbari Zindabad 2”. The film will be released tomorrow, in 30 cinema halls nationwide.

We caught up with the actress to know more about her experience and recent endeavours.

She spoke about having a new film to look forward to, after a long break.

“A good film always demands the big screen. Only cinema halls can fully quench the thirst for those who want to enjoy an authentic cinematic experience,” she says. “I am very hopeful that ‘Shoshurbari Zindabad 2’ will leave behind an entertained audience. I request my fans to come and visit the theatres, as our existence and efforts are defined by their presence.”

The film will have a premiere in the USA. “I believe this has not just strengthened the ground for “Shoshurbari Zindabad 2”, but has come as a blessing for the industry as a whole,” says Apu. “We are finally gaining ground in the international scenario,

and hope that this is followed by more groundbreaking productions”.

She also shared her views on the recent Bangladesh Film Artists’ elections, which have been mired in controversy. “At the end of the day, our spectators want to see us on screens. The way that everyone responded to the elections, is indeed very positive from my perspective,” says the actress.

“I wish they kept supporting us in the same manner when our films release as well. Drawing audiences back to the theatres should be our prime focus.”

She is also in talks for some projects on OTT platforms. “I want to explore this new territory. For me, acting is primary, and the medium will always come in second. However, I am critical when it comes to picking roles. I will not compromise on my standards. OTT platforms have emerged as a promise and I am optimistic about their future,” she concludes.



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED



American military personnel from the allied nations deployed to Romania take part in a ceremony during a visit of the Nato secretary general and Romania's president at the Mihail Kogalniceanu Military Base Mihail Kogalniceanu, Romania yesterday. Nato chief Jens Stoltenberg yesterday warned of the “real risk for a new armed conflict in Europe” as both the alliance and Russia are increasing their troop presences around Ukraine.

PHOTO: AFP

‘Nothing for the poor’
Protesters in gov’t-held Syria decry economic hardship

ALJAZEERA ONLINE

Hundreds of people in Sweida, a Druze-majority city in southwestern Syria, have taken to the streets for a fifth day to decry corruption and worsening living standards, according to activists.

Protesters yesterday gathered in the government-held city’s main square, waving the multicoloured Druze community flag.

“We cannot live,” a religious elder at the protest told the crowd. “We want to live in our nation with our dignity and rights for everyone.”

The demonstrators accuse President Bashar al-Assad’s government of failing to address a spiralling economic crisis.

“The regime has made so many flawed decisions that has led to this economic deterioration,” Rayyan Maarouf, of media activist group Sweida 24, told Al Jazeera. “They have not tried to present a solution to all of this.”

Over the past week, protesters blocked roads with burning tyres and gathered in the city square, according to social media posts. One of them, a woman attending with her young child, held a loaf of bread on which she had etched the phrase, “There is nothing left for the poor.”

Quad pledges co-op on ‘coercion’, climate, Covid

Condemns N Korea’s ‘destabilising ballistic missile launches’ in violation of UNSC resolutions



REUTERS, Melbourne

The United States, Australia, Japan and India yesterday pledged to deepen cooperation to ensure the Indo-Pacific region was free from “coercion”, a thinly veiled swipe at China’s economic and military expansion.

Foreign ministers of the so-called Quad group, meeting in the Australian city of Melbourne, also promised to increase cooperation on Covid-19, cyber threats and counter-terrorism.

In a joint statement, they vowed to work on humanitarian relief, disaster assistance and the delivery of infrastructure to the region, and condemned North Korea’s “destabilising ballistic missile launches” in violation of UN Security Council resolutions.

They said their informal Quad grouping was determined to deepen engagement with regional partners, and increase their capacity to combat unregulated and illegal fishing.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken travels onwards to Fiji today to meet with Pacific island leaders to whom fishing and climate change are likely to be priority issues.

“We agreed to boost maritime security support for Indo-Pacific partners to strengthen their maritime domain awareness and ability to develop their offshore resources, to ensure freedom of

navigation and overflight and to combat challenges such as illegal fishing,” Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne said after the meeting.

The Quad partners “oppose coercive economic policies” that run counter to the World Trade Organization system, “and will work collectively to foster global economic resilience against such actions”, the statement said, a reference to China’s recent trade boycotts of Australia and Lithuania.

Blinken arrived in Australia this week as Washington grapples with a dangerous standoff with Moscow, which has massed some 100,000 troops near Ukraine’s border and stoked Western fears of an invasion. Russia denies it has such plans.

China has denounced the Quad as a Cold War construct and a clique “targeting other countries”.

Payne said earlier yesterday the Quad’s cooperation on the region’s Covid response was “most critical”, with cyber and maritime security, infrastructure, climate action and disaster relief – especially after the recent Tonga volcanic eruption – also in focus.

The Quad nations have begun holding annual naval exercises across the Indo-Pacific to demonstrate interoperability, and the United States itself conducts freedom of navigation patrols in the South China Sea.

US could use frozen Afghan funds for 9/11 victims

AFP, Washington

President Joe Biden seized \$7 billion in assets belonging to the previous Afghan government yesterday with the aim of splitting the funds between victims of the 9/11 attacks and desperately needed aid for post-war Afghanistan.

The unusual move saw the conflicting, highly sensitive issues of a humanitarian tragedy in Afghanistan, the Taliban fight for recognition, and the push for justice from families impacted by the September 11, 2001 attacks collide, with billions of dollars at stake.

The first stage was simple: Biden formally blocked the assets in an executive order signed yesterday.

The money – which a US official said largely stems from foreign assistance once sent to help the now defunct Western-backed Afghan government – had been stuck in the New York Federal Reserve ever since last year’s Taliban victory.

The insurgency has not been recognised by the United States or any other Western countries, mostly over its human rights record.

However, with appalling poverty gripping the country after decades of war and the previous government’s rampant corruption, Washington is trying to find ways to assist, while side-stepping the Taliban.

PEGASUS SCANDAL

EU to launch rare inquiry

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

The European parliament is preparing to launch a committee of inquiry into the Pegasus spyware scandal after evidence emerged of government critics in Poland and Hungary being targeted with the surveillance software. The cross-party body will seek testimony from member states’ intelligence services, elected politicians and senior officials, with a previous inquiry into alleged European facilitation of CIA “black sites” providing a model. The move is the most significant yet from Brussels since a group of media organisations including the Guardian revealed that Pegasus software was being used against journalists, activists and politicians in numerous countries across the world including in Europe. It follows the announcement from the Israeli government this week that it would investigate reports of Israeli police using Pegasus against its citizens. Local media reports claimed the list of targets included people involved in the corruption trial of the former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

TRUMP DOC HANDLING

US House panel launches probe

REUTERS, Washington

A US congressional committee is investigating former President Donald Trump’s handling of White House records after 15 boxes of documents were transferred from his Florida resort to a federal agency, including whether the material included classified information, the panel’s chairwoman said on Thursday. House of Representatives Oversight Committee Chairwoman Carolyn Maloney said in a statement she was “deeply concerned” that the records were not promptly turned over to the National Archives when Trump’s term ended in January 2021 and “that they appear to have been removed from the White House in violation of the Presidential Records Act.” Maloney, a Democrat, also expressed concern over US media reports that Trump “repeatedly attempted to destroy presidential records, which could constitute additional serious violations” of that law, which requires the preservation of written communications related to a president’s official duties.

Koala listed as endangered

AFP, Sydney

Australia officially listed koalas across a swathe of its eastern coast as “endangered” yesterday, with the marsupials fighting to survive the impact of bushfires, land-clearing, drought and disease. Conservationists said koala populations had crashed in much of eastern Australia over the past two decades, warning that they were now sliding towards extinction. Environment Minister Sussan Ley said she had designated koala populations as “endangered” to offer them a higher level of protection in New South Wales, the Australian Capital Territory and Queensland. The koala, a globally recognised symbol of Australia’s unique wildlife, had been listed as “vulnerable” on the eastern coast just a decade earlier. “We are taking unprecedented action to protect the koala,” the minister said, highlighting a recent government promise of Aus\$50 million (US\$36 million) to protect and recover koala habitats.



A Palestinian demonstrator hurls an object at Israeli forces during a protest against Jewish settlements near Nablus, in the Israeli-occupied West Bank yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

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A promise unfulfilled for a decade

How many more court dates till Sagar-Runi get justice?

IN a changing and developing Bangladesh of the last decade, one consistent aspect has been the absence of justice for the murder of journalist couple, Sagar Sarowar and Meherun Runi. They were slain in their home in the capital in the early hours of February 11, 2012. The home minister of the time had vowed to catch the killers within 48 hours. Not only has this promise remained unfulfilled over the last 10 years, the investigation officer (IO) for the case was changed six times, and the Rab and other investigative agencies have so far taken 85 dates from the court to complete the probe. On January 24 this year, the Rab IO, Khandaker Md Shafiqul Alam, once again failed to submit the probe report and filed for a time extension for the eighth time in just a year. The current date for submission of the report is now February 23.

Under these circumstances, we cannot help but wonder if authorities even intend to deliver justice for the couple's murder. Will there only be tens more court dates for many more years until the case becomes something forgotten for the public and the media? Meanwhile, for the couple's family and close ones, the underlying mystery of their murder is a reality they have to live with hourly. Runi and Sagar's son, Megh (then five-years-old), was in the house while his parents were brutally slain. Runi's mother passed away last month, unable to see justice served for her child in her lifetime. The rest of the world may only make mentions of the case around the time of the murders' anniversary, but it is the victims' family members to whom the investigators owe answers and to whom the state owes justice.

One cannot help but be wary about why they have still not made any headway with the murder case of Sagar-Runi. If indeed no influential persons are involved, then the authorities should make an effort to actually prove that. The eight suspects, two of whom are currently out on bail, must also be investigated extensively. We would urge the Rab and the government at large to deliver long-awaited justice to Sagar and Runi's families, instead of making the investigation into a process of asking redundant questions to the victims' relatives once a year. We would like nothing more than to see the real killers being identified and brought to justice, as was promised a decade ago.

First the Buriganga, then the Dhaleshwari

Temporary shutdown of tannery industry needed to save environment

WE welcome the instruction of the parliamentary standing committee on the environment ministry to take necessary measures to shut down the Savar Tannery Industrial Estate for its failure to comply with the environment standards. Rejecting the tannery estate's response to a show cause served to it by the Department of Environment (DoE) in December last year—in which the former laid out some ill-conceived plans to stop the environment pollution—the committee also decided that the tannery industry will remain shut until it takes measures to treat all kinds of wastes generated.

While this decision will no doubt have a devastating impact on the tannery industry, we feel we have reached a point of no return. For over a decade, the industry has been operating without a fully functional central effluent treatment plant (CETP), which means it has been dumping over 15,000 cubic metres of untreated liquid waste into the Dhaleshwari river every day. The estate has no facility to treat solid wastes, including heavy metals and chromium, either. The river, which was once the lifeline of fisherfolk and other communities in the area, has lost its soul and its surrounding areas have become uninhabitable due to the foul stench and deadly contamination of its water.

We have been hearing about the decision to shut down the estate for more than nine months now—the same parliamentary body recommended shutting down the estate last August, a directive which itself came more than three months after the initial recommendation to shut it down. How many more bureaucratic loopholes do we have to go through before the recommendation is actually implemented? We've already wasted enough time dragging our foot through the dark, hazardous water of the Dhaleshwari—do we want to kill off the river altogether?

Shutting down the industry is a necessary measure that has come too late in the day anyway. But the government, particularly the DoE, must answer for why the industry was moved from Hazaribagh to Savar before the CETP was operational. Why could the CETP not be completed in more than a decade, even after 500 crores was spent on it? How could the estate have been allowed to run without an environmental clearance for so long? There is no end to the questions, but we are yet to receive any convincing answers from the authorities about their own complicity in the whole fiasco. With so much money wasted, the Dhaleshwari wrecked, people's lives and livelihoods destroyed, have we learnt anything at all from our mistakes or will we continue to mindlessly tread down the path of unplanned development?

No real social change comes on its own



Serajul Islam Chowdhury is professor emeritus at Dhaka University. The article has been translated from Bangla by Azmin Azran.

SERAJUL ISLAM CHOUDHURY

EVERY new year brings new hope in our lives. We hope that things will finally change. But things do not, they stay the same, and we despair of ever finding change until another new year comes and ignites our hope again. The reason behind this, in short, is a disease that our society and state have long been infected with: capitalism. Our effort to rid ourselves of this disease through political means has been persistent, as has been our failure. It's evident everywhere you look. From the prices of goods to a general lack of security in every aspect of life, the markers of this failure are clear for all to see. We have become accustomed to this—until an incident here or there jolts us awake, making us realise that we're in trouble.

Let's talk freedom. The question over individual freedom is an old, if recurring, one, but it should have been settled by now. There should have been no doubt that "freedom" and the "freedom of expression" are the same thing. Without the freedom of expression, democracy is just a fiction. In our so-called democratic state, the duties of the members of parliament should have been to pass appropriate legislation, establish control over the executive branch of the government, hold the government accountable, ensure transparency in the activities of the executive branch, and scrutinise the government's foreign policies and agreements. But they are doing none of these, not in the slightest.

Criticism of mistakes made by the government is part of the democratic process. But our rulers cannot tolerate even a hint of criticism. They are too sensitive about it. The reason for this is that they do not have a solid moral footing. They know how they have come to power, and when power is monopolised like this, it is natural to lose people's support. Our rulers only serve their own interests, not the interests of the people. Hence, they are easily disturbed by criticism. It makes them feel vulnerable. It makes them fear that their downfall may not be far away.

Part of their strategy is to make noise—a lot of it. So some of them say they will not rest until they bring about "change"; others claim that people will be blown away by a surge of prosperity and dance in joy. No matter which government is in power, they want to drown any sound of criticism with their own noise. They are quick to reject, choke or silence any voice critical of their actions or lack thereof. Their hostility towards critics gives the impression as if they think that since they have acquired the right to rule, they should be the ones making all the noise. There is an element of self-deception in this pattern of thinking. They hope that only their noise, and no other sound, will be echoed.

It's not like the ruling party always speaks in one voice. You can hear a variety of contrasting opinions from within the ruling camp. For example, when the current government came to power, one of the ministers said they would be able to control the prices of commodities through the intervention of the state-run TCB. Almost immediately, another minister spoke in favour of keeping the market open, saying a free market would bring down the prices. Consequently, the TCB remains stuck in no man's land, and

prices have not gone down at all. In fact, the steady rise of prices has left the people overwhelmed.

The effective role of opposition is vital for a parliamentary democracy. But the history of our country tells us that no opposition party has been able to carry out its responsibility so far. Often they faced obstacles created by the government,

there was pressure from the so-called international community to pass this legislation. It is not difficult to assume that this law will be of no use to the people while the government shows no tolerance for any form of criticism. The ruling class is averse to any expression of people's grievances, let alone any suggestion of empowering them, which it is pledge-bound to do.

Under these circumstances, it is important to apply pressure to make the government become tolerant. There are two vital sources of pressure here: the first, of course, is the public, and the second—and more important one—is an alternative democratic political power. Developing the latter is a time-consuming process. But the people can quickly organise themselves for a common cause if they are united.

In the Pakistan era, we saw how united journalists were on the question of the freedom of the press, and how any assault on newspapers would ignite nationwide protests. That unity does not exist anymore. The ruling class has been able to create divisions within the journalistic community, and the media is haemorrhaging as a result.

The practice of culture and literature, even of journalism, requires a material foundation which is not strong in Bangladesh. There is no indication that the new year that we have started will reinforce that foundation. A big problem here is lack of investment. Investment is not growing. There is fear that the remittance sent by our migrant workers will soon shrink. A number of mega projects have been undertaken which involve big spending. But instead of generating value, it's more likely that there will be wastage.

One example of this is Dhaka's flyovers. Experts say that instead of reducing traffic congestion, these will rather increase it. Pedestrians and ordinary public transport users will see little change in their luck while the benefits will be enjoyed by motorists. Almost all big cities in the world have moved away from the idea of flyovers, except for Dhaka. The solution to traffic congestion is metro rail, which is now seen in all big cities including Kolkata. Dhaka also needs metro rail, and it's a good thing that the construction of our first rail is underway. Once the construction is over and the metro rail gets functional, we will know how beneficial it is.

Going back to the question of freedom, it's essential to change our current system for our collective freedom. But this hasn't been possible as yet. Whatever prosperity there has been is enjoyed mostly by a few people, and even those are not safe either. Most people are spending their days in hardship and danger. There is no doubt that we can't change this system with individual efforts alone. Even a political movement cannot do anything about it. However commendable these isolated efforts are, what we really need to effect



▲ The ruling class has been able to create divisions within the journalist community, and the media is haemorrhaging as a result.

ILLUSTRATION: NOOR US SAFA ANIK

while also lacking the moral strength to overcome that. They also lack acceptability among the people. In a situation such as this, whatever valid criticism we see comes from the people. Silencing their voice is tantamount to establishing dictatorship.

While the media is being subjected to covert and overt threats, the current government passed the Right to Information Act, 2009, the apparent

Criticism of mistakes made by the government is part of the democratic process. But our rulers cannot tolerate even a hint of criticism. They are too sensitive about it. The reason for this is that they do not have a solid moral footing. They know how they have come to power, and when power is monopolised like this, it is natural to lose people's support.

objective of which was to empower that very media and bring about transparency and accountability within the government. Such contrasts between the real and the legal are not uncommon. Apparently,

change is a collective and continuous socio-political movement guided by clear objectives. If we can't do that, we won't be able to live like we want to, and we will remain half-dead, like we are now.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send us your letters to letters@thedailystar.net

Stop killing students' potential

The established education system of many countries and the perspective of parents are responsible for destroying the individualism of young people. Students are instructed to read textbooks as gospel, and are forced into trying to meet ridiculously lofty expectations academically—which has led to students only attempting to obtain marks and failing to explore their potential in other aspects of life.

Often students are made to forgo their originality in order to obtain the highest marks, essentially by copying whatever the teachers or top students may be doing. Parents do not help by drawing comparisons between students and cultivating a rather contentious environment. A student feeling the necessity to overtake others might resort to

unfair means. I, myself, passed my SSC last year and in the exam hall, I saw many of my peers tracing each other's answers as if that were normal. Even the invigilators were enabling the students saying, "Do whatever you want but stay quiet when I say the magistrate is coming." Staying at the top becomes schools' only purpose, rather than actually educating young minds. Such practises are stifling students' potential, which results in the demise of their individuality and creativity. Educators, parents and guardians must stop prioritising excellent exam results above all else if we want to end this phenomena of students losing their originality.

Muhtasim Sadat,
Notre Dame College



Are we listening to our adolescents?



LAILA KHONDKAR

Laila Khondkar is an international development worker.

TO understand what our adolescents dream about the future, researchers at the Economic Relations Division (ERD) under the finance ministry conducted an explorative survey between August and September 2021. All eight divisions of Bangladesh and different types of educational systems were covered in this survey, conducted on 145 adolescents. According to the study, adolescents dream of various off-track professions, like being a YouTuber, professional gamer, content creator, voice artiste, philanthropist, cricketer player, etc, in addition to the mainstream professions like doctor, engineer, teacher, banker, lawyer, and maulana (religious preacher). The findings were included in the National Human Development Report 2021.

The adolescents surveyed expressed interest in studying specific subjects that can help them realise their dreams, like fine arts and painting, content creation, and social media growth or ICT. "Yet, they were trapped in the traditional classroom-learning structure, which has little or no significant role in fulfilling their dreams. Some were even ready to quit from this traditional mainstream schooling system that is not modern and unable to accommodate the arrays of dreams and goals of their lives," the report highlighted.

The findings of this survey demonstrate the disconnect between the ambitions of our adolescents and what the present education system offers. What about their parents? Things are beginning to change slowly, and some parents are respecting the dreams of their children. Still, in many cases, a child's dream to become a singer, artist,



PHOTO:
PON CHANGMA

In many cases, a child's dream to become a singer, artist, photographer, or an astronaut is often criticised and dismissed as unrealistic.

main focus of education, which explains the huge dependency of students on coaching centres and private tuition.

Presently, students in Bangladesh are so busy with studies that they hardly find time for extracurricular activities such as sports, music, dance, painting, etc. Rabindranath Tagore emphasised a lot on the importance of holistic education and designing the education system from a child's point-of-view. Stimulating thinking and nurturing imagination as well as creativity are quite central to his thoughts on education. He implemented these ideas while establishing an educational institution in Shantiniketan. "Don't limit your child to your own learning, for he was born in another time"—his warning is still relevant.

The world is going through tremendous changes due to the advancement of technology. Artificial intelligence is having, and will continue to have, influence on all aspects of our society, including employment. Within the next few decades, many professions

that exist now may disappear, while many new professions will emerge. What students are learning today may become irrelevant when they enter the job market. People may not be able to have a single profession throughout their lives.

In a good education system, there should be focus on developing critical thinking, creativity, teamwork, and communication, which will give students the skills to retrain every few years and adapt to changing contexts. Bangladesh must consider education as a priority and make the required investments, if our children and young people are to receive education that will prepare them for careers in a diverse range of fields. The aforementioned survey is an example that adolescents are more advanced in their thinking about the future of work. Adults should catch up.

Do parents want their children to be happy? If yes, they have to understand that there are many different routes to happiness. In his book "Happy Ever After," happiness expert Professor Paul Dolan draws on a variety of studies ranging over well being, inequality, and discrimination, to bust the common myths about our sources of happiness. He shows that there can be many unexpected paths to lasting fulfilment. Some of these might involve not going into higher education, choosing not to marry, rewarding acts rooted in self-interest, and caring a little less about living forever.

Children are individual human beings, not parental property and should not be treated as such. It is the parents' responsibility to provide appropriate guidance to their children, so that they can realise their full potential. Instead of imposing their own views, parents should support their children while they navigate through their own lives and find meaning and contentment.

It is important that parents listen to children actively and value their dreams. The education system should adapt to the needs of the adolescents, too, in a world that is changing extremely fast. Adolescents are speaking up. Are we listening?

A region connected by waterways



Pallab Bhattacharya is a special correspondent for The Daily Star. He writes from New Delhi, India

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

WHEN the Indian cargo vessel MV, named after former Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, set sail carrying 200 tonnes of food grain on a 2,350 km journey along the waterways from Ganga to Brahmaputra, the world's two largest rivers, via Bangladesh on February 5, it became an important marker of physical connectivity more than just between the two countries. It also conjured up a vision of broader regional linkages. This is the first time that food grain movement is taking place in this waterway route.

More than bilateral connectivity, the vessel's journey has implications not only for ending northeastern Indian states' difficulties due to their landlocked status, but also for holding out the prospects of ending Bangladesh's location as an outlier in efforts to build a bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia.

The journey of the vessel may be a pilot project between India and Bangladesh, but it has far-reaching implications for the future in connecting mainland India with its northeastern states, Indian officials said. The waterways will not only

remove geographical hindrance but also provide an economical and convenient transportation for the businesses and people of the region.

In line with India's "Act East" policy, the Indian Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways has taken up several infrastructure projects on National Waterway-1, Indo-Bangladesh Protocol route and NW2, through the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWA) to improve connectivity with the northeastern region through waterways via Bangladesh. Sonowal rightly termed the Patna-Pandu route via Bangladesh as the most seamless cargo transportation through Brahmaputra and an opportunity for the people of Assam and other northeastern states of India to connect with the wider world.

The Indian government has undertaken the ambitious Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP) with an investment of about Rs 4,600 crore for the capacity augmentation of NW-1 (Ganga) for safe and sustainable movement of vessels of up to 2000 tonnes.

After the MV Lal Bahadur Shastri's journey, Inland Waterway Authority of India is looking to run regular scheduled services on these waterway routes. To improve navigability, two stretches of IBP routes—Sirajganj-Daikhowa and Ashuganj-Zakiganj—are being developed at a cost of Rs 305.84 crores on an 80:20 share basis (80 percent being borne by India and 20 percent by Bangladesh).

It is not just India-Bangladesh connectivity which will get a boost because of the waterway routes, and the route chart of MV Lal Bahadur Shastri from Patna to Pandu will give us an idea of why.

The contracts for dredging on the two stretches for providing and maintaining requisite depth for seven years (from 2019 to 2026) are underway, said the officials, which is expected to provide seamless navigation to India's northeastern states via the IBP route. In 2014-15 to 2016-17, the state-owned Food Corporation of India had moved tonnes of food grains to Agartala using the IBP waterway route when the rail link between West Bengal and the adjoining northeastern region was non-operational during gauge conversion in North Eastern Frontier Railway.

The Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade (PIWTT) between India and Bangladesh allows mutual arrangements for the use of their waterways for the movement of goods between the two countries by their vessels. India's National Waterway-1 (Ganga) is connected with National Waterway-2 (Brahmaputra) and National Waterway-16 (River Barak) through India-Bangladesh Protocol routes.

It is not just India-Bangladesh connectivity or the link between mainland India and northeastern India which will get a boost because of the waterway routes, and one look at the route chart of MV Lal Bahadur Shastri from Patna to Pandu will give us an idea of why. It will sail through Bhagalpur, Manihari, Sahibganj (Bihar), Farakka, Tribeni, Kolkata, Haldia, Hemnagar (in

West Bengal), Khulna, Narayanganj-Sirajganj, Chilmari (Bangladesh), Dhubri and Jogighopa (in Assam). If waterways involving India and Bangladesh can be made the preferred mode of transportation, it can open up opportunities for a port-and-jetty-led model along the rivers of the two countries. Another key ingredient of this model would be to develop rail and road transport connections to the port and jetties.

The movement of MV Lal Bahadur Shastri is expected to establish the technical and commercial viability of IWT mode using the multiple waterways, and offer an alternate route for transportation of goods, which will help decongest not just the good traffic by road between India and Bangladesh, but provide an option for transportation of cargo from Bihar to Nepal.

The fact that Bangladesh will be facilitating the goods traffic through waterway routes between mainland India and northeastern India underlines the importance of that country's territory as a crucial bridge between South Asia and Southeast Asia through Chattogram and Mongla ports. The potential of a regional network of waterway routes can be multiplied further if Bangladesh can be integrated with the Kalandan multimodal transport hub India has built in Myanmar in close proximity to the northeastern Indian state of Mizoram.

QUOTABLE
Quote

Paulo Coelho

(born August 24, 1947)
Brazilian writer

You drown not by falling into a river, but by staying submerged in it.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Succeed

6 Tooth points

11 Get up

12 Like bar beer

13 Goes under

14 Lane of film

15 Gear part

16 Uno plus due

18 Draw

19 Hoppy brew

20 Nourished

21 German conjunction

22 Get excited

24 Egyptian goddess

25 Shirt parts

27 Tampa Bay team

29 Parent's answer to "Why?"

32 Ulna's place

33 Univ. or acad.

34 Spoil

35 Arrest

36 Crew need

37 Frank holder

38 Bush's successor

40 Make amends

42 Form 1040 user

43 Back biter

44 Extreme diets

45 Impudent

DOWN

1 Item replaced after filling up

2 Meadowlark's cousin

3 Belly dancers use them

4 Inquire

5 Soothing

6 Like some messages

7 Cycle starter

8 Possessions that scream wealth

9 Grilled sandwich

10 Tears along

17 Copy

23 WBA wins

24 Nest egg acct.

26 Spiritual retreats

27 Fled

28 Sinai setting

30 Spa rooms

31 Stubborn

33 Flies high

39 Ran into

41 — degree

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11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44

WEDNESDAY'S ANSWERS

T O U R E D G R A Z E
A U R A E R O A N E T
U T U R N A L O N E
E N T A I L
P A C I L L D A B
A T R E S T E R I E
T W I S T O F L I M E
T A M S S I L V E R
I R E L A X E D S
S E X T E T
J A P A N U T I C A
A P H I D R O M A N
W E I L L E N E M Y

BEETLE BAILEY BY MORT WALKER

I'M HAPPY TO SEE THESE NEW FEMALE RECRUITS

ME TOO...

MAYBE SOMEONE ELSE CAN BE "MISS CAMP SWAMPY" THIS YEAR

BABY BLUES BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT

WHAT ARE YOU DOING?

CREATING A NEWSPAPER

I'M GOING TO WRITE DOWN ALL THE STUFF THAT GOES ON IN OUR FAMILY.

MY BRAIN KEEPS WORKING DURING THE SUMMER.

I GIVE MINE THREE MONTHS OFF.



Changing perspective of CSBA: Opportunities and challenges

Lessons from the CARE-GSK CHWI/Skilled Health Entrepreneur (SHE) model

BACKGROUND: Bangladesh's commitment to its citizens and the international community necessitate a solution to the high maternal mortality ratio, which is driven by inequitable access to skilled and facility-based childbirth services. In addressing this problem, CARE Bangladesh, in 2013, promoted and invested in a proven and tailored model – the Skilled Health Entrepreneur (SHE) model – in hard-to-reach areas.

Under the SHE model, women are identified and selected from within the communities they serve, and subsequently trained and accredited as skilled birth attendants (SBAs) by the Bangladesh Nursing and Midwifery Council. As SBAs, they promote birth preparedness planning, provide antenatal care (ANC) and provide skilled assistance to pregnant women to ensure institution-based childbirth.

CARE Bangladesh in association with The Daily Star organised a roundtable titled "Changing perspective of CSBA: Opportunities and challenges" on January 12, 2022. Here we publish a summary of the discussion.



Dr Halida Hanum, Reproductive health epidemiologist, Johns Hopkins University
We have achieved a lot in terms of reducing the maternal mortality rate in Bangladesh. However,

we have a long way to go. As per our SDG commitment, Bangladesh wants to reduce its maternal mortality rate from 170 to 70 by 2030. By 2025, we want to increase institutional delivery from 47 to 70. We also have many other important targets in this field. Today, we will discuss how we can achieve these targets, and what role CSBA can play in this endeavour. We will also discuss what lessons we can take from GSK-CHWI/SHE model.



Professor Dr Syed Mudassar Ali, President, Community Based Health Care
I must congratulate CARE Bangladesh for providing training to community-based skilled birth

attendants (CSBAs). Now, the challenge is to properly utilise this human resource. We need adequate budget to give it a more permanent shape. Unfortunately, we can't absorb them into our existing community clinic structure. We can't pay them regular salary. However, the Local Government Ministry has a budget for health which often remains unutilised. If they can bear the yearly expenditure of the trained human resource, we, from CBHC, can provide all other required support.

Daryl Burnaby, Director, Global Health, GlaxoSmithKline (GSK)
GSK reinvested 20 percent of the profit generated in Bangladesh to develop the health infrastructure in partnership with CARE and the Government of Bangladesh. As an organisation that develops vaccines and medicines, we realise that we need to go further to help build and support the infrastructure that needs vaccines and medicines most. Working with an expert organisation like CARE which has been working in Bangladesh for a long time and in partnership with government of Bangladesh, means that any solution we develop will be locally appropriate and sustainable. We have trained 400 skilled health entrepreneurs and more than 4000 community health workers. We have also provided support to community groups to make sure people in the community have access to expert healthcare for infectious disease, nutrition, hygiene, sanitation, and maternal neonatal and child health problems. In the maternal, newborn and child health space, as a result of our work, newborn and under-five child mortality and morbidity has declined. Our work has increased access to antenatal and post-natal care and there is now much better understanding about potential complications during pregnancy and childbirth. We are really proud to support the programme. We hope that the Government of Bangladesh, CARE and other stakeholders carry it forward.



Bidhan Krishna Sarkar, Assistant Scientist, International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh (icddr,b)
Hard-to-reach areas such as Sunamganj and Netrokona remain underwater for almost six months every year. It is really

difficult for the people of these areas to get proper healthcare support, particularly the services of skilled birth attendants. Keeping this in mind, the initiative of creating private CSBAs by training local people began. They were trained as per the protocol of the Bangladesh Nursing Council. 400 CSBAs have been trained through this process. We got extensive support from the local government bodies and community clinics.

This programme was launched in 2012. It was carried out in 11 Upazilas in Sunamganj and five Upazilas in Netrokona, covering around four million people. It was an ideal example of public-private partnership. We have developed a business model so that the private CSBAs can continue their activities even after completion of the project. The service price was determined by the local government authorities.

The trained CSBAs have participated in 50,000 safe deliveries and referred to institutional facilities for another 50,000 deliveries. Earlier, only 13 percent of deliveries were attended by skilled birth attendants. Our intervention has increased the rate to 37 percent. The work of CSBAs has helped to reduce the mortality rate of mothers and children significantly in these areas. In addition to attending deliveries, CSBAs have also been providing health-related services for non-communicable diseases such as diabetes.

Private CSBAs serve the marginal and poor sections of the population. They are already familiar with the government health structure since they provide support during delivery at the government facilities. Considering the contribution of private CSBAs, the government should invest in this human resource and bring them into mainstream health facilities. Those who will not be integrated into health facilities can still refer patients to institutional delivery facilities. They can be recognised as professional referrals. They can be of great help in successfully implementing the government's plan to provide 24/7 delivery services.



Mahmuda Akhter, Private CSBA & Secretary, Suseba Network, Netrokona I, along with 110 other private CSBAs, have been working in the remote areas of Netrokona since 2020.

We got training from CARE Bangladesh. After completing training, we began working as skilled birth attendants at both home and institutional facilities such

hard-to-reach areas such as Netrokona and Sunamganj. To ensure their future services, we must support them. Local government bodies can play an important role in this regard. We can involve these CSBAs in our upcoming operation plan for the community clinic programme in hard-to-reach areas.



Dr Masud Reza Kabir, Line Director, Community Based Health Care, Community Clinic Health Support Trust
If we want to achieve the SDGs, we need to increase the number of CSBAs in the country. They have been playing a significant role in reducing maternal and child mortality. CSBAs, who are affiliated with local government health facilities, have facilitated around 85,000 normal deliveries without any casualties. We have a shortage of community health workers, and CSBAs are potential healthcare providers for a range of services outside of birth delivery. That is why we should provide additional training to CSBAs and facilitate their activities by providing various kinds of institutional support.



Professor Dr Ferdousi Begum, Obstetrical and Gynaecological Society of Bangladesh
At one point of time, the rate of maternal mortality was very high in the country.

Now, we have curbed this rate with the help of CSBAs. However, there is still a lot of work to be done. We cannot allow for the number of CSBAs in the country to fall. That is why, it is important to incentivise these CSBAs to continue to serve the country. Alongside incentives such as child delivery fees and financial assistance, they should also be provided with training so they can work in other sectors of health as well.



Dr Afsana Karim, Senior Technical Advisor, Maternal and Newborn Health, Save the Children
While working in the area of maternal health, we realised that there are some hard-to-reach areas in the country

where childbirth services are not available. At the same time, the local institutional facilities are also inadequate at times. In these areas, the CSBA programme can be beneficial. The hardest challenge is to find women

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Private community-based skilled birth attendants (CSBAs) should be formally integrated into the government health sector. The government should invest towards maintaining this human resource.
- Local government bodies can play an important role in supporting CSBAs.
- CSBAs should be provided with a fee for every birth delivery they perform and a referral fee whenever they recommend a nearby medical institute.
- Provide additional training to CSBAs so that they can provide services beyond attending deliveries.
- Allocate and reserve space for CSBAs at local health facilities such as community clinics and family welfare centres.
- Bring all CSBAs under one framework so that they can be monitored properly.
- Ensure that training for CSBAs meets international standards.
- A portion of the upcoming National Budget should be allocated for CSBAs.
- The private sector should be encouraged to support training and employment of CSBAs.

as community clinics and family welfare centres. However, we do not get a salary for providing these services. We serve the ultra-poor communities in these areas, but our own families are also dependent on us financially. I hope that we will soon be provided with some form of compensation for the service we provide. There should be some sort of seating arrangement for us at institutional health facilities.



Marzia Begum, Private CSBA, Sunamganj
We have been providing delivery services in 13 Upazilas of Sunamganj since 2013. Besides attending deliveries, we also provide antenatal and postnatal care services. We are involved in the COVID-19 vaccination programme. Some of us are affiliated with government health facilities. We get very little compensation from the local government body for our service. I would request the government to seriously consider providing us an emolument.



Dr Md Shamsul Haque, Line Director, Maternal newborn child and adolescent health (MNC & AH), Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS)
The CSBAs have played an essential role in carrying out the COVID-19 vaccination programme in

who fit the criteria necessary to be a CSBA. Ideally, when selecting CSBAs, we should take women who have studied till the 10th grade. At the same time, they should be from the local community so that there is no risk of them moving elsewhere.

Once the CSBAs have been provided with training, the local government should act as a liaison between the CSBAs and the local community. Additionally, the government should set the fees that will be paid to the CSBAs so that they can continue to provide services without facing a financial burden.



Dr Iqbal Anwar, Former Scientist, icddr,b
Skilled Birth Attendants (SBAs) include doctors, nurses and midwives. In Bangladesh, there is a severe lack of SBAs. Despite providing various forms of

skills training, the number of SBAs in the country has not increased. While there are Trained Birth Attendants (TBAs) throughout the country, they cannot provide the same services as an SBA. That is why we have to work to increase the number of SBAs. TBAs and institutional delivery cannot reduce the maternal mortality rate alone. The services provided by the SBAs or CSBAs can help save the lives of many pregnant women, and that is why we need to encourage more women to take on the role of a CSBA.



Farida Begum, Programme Analyst, Midwifery, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)

If we want to utilise CSBAs properly, then we must engage them in institutional delivery. They can work at the community clinics or recommend nearby facilities to pregnant women in the case of complications.

We should consider increasing the number of midwives in community clinics in areas with a high maternal mortality rate. If we can ensure financial support for CSBAs, they can act as agents for the local government. This will help increase the number of institutional deliveries, thus reducing the maternal mortality rate.



Dr Ashutosh Das, Ex-Civil Surgeon, Sunamganj
If we want our country to move forward, we must empower motherhood. We have to value mothers as, without a healthy mother, there cannot be a healthy child. And if we don't have healthy children, we cannot ensure a healthy nation.



Dr Mozammel Haque, Deputy Director Family Planning, Faridpur
In recent years, CSBAs have played an integral role in the overall family planning vision of the Bangladesh government. They are

providing support in various roles outside of traditional CSBA duties. They have acted as substitutes for Family Welfare Visitors (FWVs) in districts with a shortage of FWVs. Alongside this, they have helped provide antenatal care and also worked in the community clinics.

First and foremost, we need to ensure that CSBAs are provided with a fee for every birth delivery they make. Additionally, we need to incorporate them into the Local Governance Support Project (LGSP).

Finally, the local administration should establish a micro-loan facility for CSBAs, so that they can engage in income-generating activities by themselves.



Dr Tajul Islam, Ex-Civil Surgeon, Netrokona
CSBAs have very few demands. They want to receive some form of financial support and want to be able to work at their community clinics. They are not asking for much, and we should allocate specific rooms for CSBAs at the local community clinics. Giving them such a small form of recognition can encourage even more women to come forward to work as CSBAs in their communities.



Dr Md Anisur Rahman, Deputy Director Family Planning, Netrokona
In the Netrokona district, there was hardly any Family Welfare Assistant (FWA) or FWV when I first joined. In Kalmakanda, we had seven postings for FWVs, but only two were hired. But now, the scenario is different due to the help of CSBAs. Our CSBAs work at 18 community clinics and nine Family Welfare Centres (FWCs) in Netrokona. We need to continue all the training programmes for CSBAs as they can help fill the gap for FWAs and FWVs.



Tulashi Ranjan Saha, Managing Director (Additional Secretary), Community Clinic Health Support Trust
As per our commitment to the SDGs, our target is to reduce maternal mortality to 70 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030. In Bangladesh, the number is currently at 169 per 100,000 live births. It will be a great challenge to reduce this number by 100 in the next eight years, and this cannot be achieved without the support of CSBAs.

Currently, we have over 14,000 community clinics in the country. However, not all of these clinics have birth delivery services. In these areas, having a CSBA who is adequately trained can save the lives of many pregnant women.

CSBAs are not only trained in childbirth but also in other health-related areas such as inoculation, food, nutrition, etc. That is why it would be beneficial to link existing CSBAs with local government institutions for a variety of health-related services.



Niranjana Bandhu Dham, Deputy Director Family Planning, Sunamganj
In Sunamganj, the rate of at-home birth deliveries is approximately 60 percent. We want to increase the percentage of institutional

delivery, but it's a challenge to do that in areas with communications issues. Having CSBAs in such areas ensures a minimum level of support for pregnant mothers during childbirth at home. Alongside this, CSBAs can also help by recommending pregnant women to nearby institutions in case of complications. When they refer other medical institutions, they should receive a referral fee, and the government should make this referral fee mandatory.

Dr Riad Mahmud, Policy and Technical Advisor, USAID
My first recommendation would be that CSBAs, both private and public, are available at community clinics, especially in hard-to-reach areas. The second recommendation is to ensure that all CSBAs are brought under some framework. While CARE-GSK has done a great job training their CSBAs, other agencies are also working here. We need to ensure that all CSBAs in the country are following standard procedure and ensure a certain quality of service. The local government should enlist the CSBAs in the health and family planning department so that they can be monitored properly.



Mahbub Elahi Chowdhury, Scientist, icddr,b
We have two types of CSBAs: government-employed CSBA and private CSBA. Today we are focusing on private CSBAs. We need to find out how this role can be made more sustainable. Without some form of income-generating activity, CSBAs cannot continue to provide the necessary services.



Dr Zoshim Uddin, UNFPA
The local government has the necessary funds, but we must ensure that it reaches the community clinic level. Currently, CSBAs receive around six months of training and nine months of practical experience. If we add another six months to the training programme, then the training would meet international standards for SBAs. The government should allocate a portion of the budget from health and family planning towards SBAs in the upcoming National Budget.

Dr Halida Hanum
Every year 2.6 million children are born in Bangladesh. Currently, 53 percent of deliveries take place at home of which only 3 percent are attended by SBAs. We need to seriously think about this 50 percent of mothers who are giving birth at home without any support from SBAs. Besides safe delivery, we should provide proper care to women during the pregnancy and postpartum periods.

Every woman has the right to safe motherhood. Political commitment is needed towards ensuring this right.

We need to engage local government bodies and other local organisations in our effort. We should also try to mobilise various local funds for training and provision of emolument for CSBAs. The private sector should also come forward to support these initiatives.



Shahana Parvin, National Coordinator, Community Clinic Health Support Trust
Awareness is more important than money. We must create mass awareness about safe motherhood.

I want to actively engage community groups and support groups in all the health-related programmes in Bangladesh. I am seeking active support from all the relevant stakeholders to achieve this goal.

Professor Dr Syed Mudassar Ali
We are increasing space in community clinics. There will be a provision to add another floor. It will enable us to provide seating facilities to CSBAs.

If we properly develop the referral system, we will be able to reduce maternal mortality significantly. We have to diagnose symptoms properly and in a timely manner.

I promise you that you will get full support from community clinics. We will sign MoUs with different organisations including CARE to build strong partnerships and reduce maternal mortality.



Dr Ikhtiar Uddin Khandaker, Director - Health, CARE Bangladesh
I want to express my sincere gratitude to all the participants of today's roundtable. It was a fruitful discussion. We have received several important recommendations which will make our intervention more impactful. Finally, I request all to join hands and work together to achieve the goal of safe motherhood for women in Bangladesh.

Comilla play Barishal in Qualifier-1

SPORTS REPORTER

Shakib Al Hasan scored an unbeaten 29-ball 51 as Fortune Barishal consolidated top spot in the BPL with an eight-wicket victory over Minister Dhaka at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

The ace all-rounder smashed six fours and two sixes as Brishal overhauled Dhaka's total of 128 in 15.3 overs with eight wickets in hand. The defeat left Dhaka hanging by a thread for a place in the four-team playoffs, as they have nine points from 10 matches. The Mahmudullah-led side will only go through if either of Khulna Tigers or Chattogram Challengers – both on eight points – lose their last match today.

Earlier in the day, Comilla Victorians ensured berth in the first Qualifier against Fortune Barishal, to be played on February 14 at Dhaka, with a convincing 65-run win against Khulna Tigers.



With the mega IPL auction set to take place today and tomorrow in Bengaluru, Shakib Al Hasan served a reminder of his prowess to the franchise owners with a blitzkrieg on Friday night. The all-rounder smashed an unbeaten 29-ball 51, following a one-for-21 with the ball, to lead Fortune Barishal to an eight-wicket victory over Minister Group Dhaka in a BPL encounter at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Afghans due today

SPORTS REPORTER

Afghanistan squad will arrive in Dhaka today to play a three-match ODI series and a two-match T20I series against Bangladesh, slated to begin on February 23.

Leg-spinner Rashid Khan will not be travelling with the side from Qatar as he is expected to be with his PSL side Lahore Qalandars till February 19.

The Afghanistan side will set off for Sylhet after landing in Dhaka and are expected to begin training on February 14 following a day's quarantine. The team will then move to Chattogram, where all three ODIs will be played, with the second and third ODI scheduled for February 25 and 28.

Afghanistan stars such as Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Qais Ahmed, who are currently playing in the ongoing BPL, will join the Afghanistan camp following the completion of the stints with their respective BPL franchises.

Pace, swing and bounce. At the age of 18, Ripon Mondol already has all the qualities required to be a star in the future. The right-arm pacer was the only Bangladeshi representative in the ICC's Most Valuable Team of the Tournament from the recently-concluded ICC Under-19 World Cup.



The Daily Star's Ekush Tapader got hold of the youngster as he talked about his cricketing journey, his most cherished wicket in the tournament among other things. Here are the excerpts of the interview:

The Daily Star (DS): You scalped six wickets in 14 matches in the ICC Under-19 World Cup. How happy are you with your performance?

Ripon Mondol (RM): I am happy with my performance but not so much with the team's performance. Had we done better as a team, I would be happier. But we did try our best as a team but things did

not go our way this time. Let's take the quarterfinal against India for instance. It was important to win the toss. The wicket was wet in the beginning and had we won the toss, maybe the story would have been different.

DS: How did it feel to get a place in the team of the tournament?

RM: This felt great. When we landed in Dhaka from Dubai, I was overwhelmed to see a flurry of congratulatory messages after turning my phone on. My mentors also congratulated me so it was inspiring.

DS: Tell us about your rise to this level in cricket.

RM: I used to play tape-tennis cricket since my childhood. I knew Shorif bhai, who used to play in the first division. He told me: "You should get into a cricket academy. Hopefully, something good will come of it." Then I got into a cricket academy named Global Academy in Mohakhali, Dhaka. After that, I got called up for a team in the third division. I did not play any matches in the first season. The next year, however, I took 17 wickets in eight matches. Then I got Manjurul Islam Monju sir as my coach. He helped me get into the Surjo Torun Club in the first division. That year (2019) I took 27 wickets in 12 matches. I also became the highest wicket-taker in Dhaka first division. Then I got acquainted with

cricketer Nadif Chowdhury while bowling in the nets during the Dhaka Premier League. He helped me. He said: "Your age is below 19. I will talk to the selectors and ask them to give you a shot. The rest is up to you." This is how with everyone's help I was able to reach this level.

DS: Did you always want to become a pacer?

RM: Yes.

DS: In which area do you focus more?

RM: Our [one of the] coaches Talha Jubair made us work on our line and length more than anything. The aim was to make us able to bowl all six deliveries on the same spot. I was always able to generate pace. I clocked 136kmph in the World Cup.

DS: Which was your fondest spell in the World Cup?

RM: I got four-wicket hauls against Canada and India. Both these spells are very memorable to me.

DS: Taking whose wicket gave you the most pleasure?

RM: I really enjoyed taking the wicket of South Africa's [Dewald] Brevis. He is being called 'Baby AB'. I loved taking all the wickets but his one was special.

DS: What is your plan next?

RM: I will play in the Premier League next so I would like to do well there.

Kremlin backing Valieva in doping row

AFP, Moscow

The Kremlin said Friday it was fully behind Russian figure skater Kamila Valieva, whose Olympic gold medal hangs in the balance after she failed a doping test.

"We boundlessly and fully support Kamila Valieva and call on everyone to support her," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters.

"And we say to Kamila: don't hide your face. You are a Russian -- perform and defeat everybody," Peskov added.

The IOC and the International Skating Union are appealing against Russia's decision to allow Valieva to continue competing in Beijing after the 15-year-old tested positive in December for trimetazidine -- a metabolic agent that is prescribed for the treatment of angina and vertigo. It is banned by the World Anti-Doping Agency because it can increase blood flow efficiency and help endurance.

Valieva led the Russian team to gold in the team event with landing a historic quad jump.



India sweep ODI series against Windies

AFP, AHMEDABAD

Shreyas Iyer and Rishabh Pant hit half-centuries to set up a thumping 96-run victory for India in the third one-day international against the West Indies and sweep the series on Friday.

Iyer, who made 80, and Pant, who hit 56, guided India to 265 after they lost three early wickets while batting first in Ahmedabad.

Bowlers, led by pace spearhead Mohammed Siraj, then combined to bowl out the West Indies for 169 in 37.1 overs to seal their first ever ODI whitewash over their opponents.

Siraj and fellow paceman Prasidh Krishna took three wickets apiece, while quick bowler Deepak Chahar and left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav also claimed two each. But it was the 110-run fourth-wicket partnership between Iyer and Pant that made India bounce back from 43-3, having lost two key wickets of skipper Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli for nought.

Chahar and Washington Sundar, who made 33, got useful cameos before India were bowled out on the final ball of the 50th over.



Premier League back in original format

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) is all set to return to the home-and-away format, as decided by the professional football management committee yesterday.

The ongoing league will feature six venues across the country from the fourth round onward, leaving Tongi's Shaheed Ahsan Ullah Master Stadium behind.

Previously, citing the upsurge of coronavirus, the Bangladesh Football Federation started the professional football league's 14th edition in two venues -- Tongi and Munshiganj -- without the home-and-away concept, leading to dispute with the Archery Federation for occupying the Tongi Stadium. However, this time, they have decided to revert to the original format, citing the infection rate of the Omicron variant of the coronavirus had reduced drastically.

"The fourth round matches of the league will take place in six venues except Tongi," informed Abdus Salam Murshedy, the league committee chairman, after mentioning that the third-round fixtures will continue to take place in Munshiganj and Tongi. Murshedy proceeded to reveal the finalised six venues and their corresponding home teams.

"Every venue will have two home teams. Sylhet will have Abahani and Rahmatganj, whereas Gopalganj will be the home venue for Muktijoddha Sangsad and Uttar Baridhara.

"The Bashundhara Kings Arena will host Bashundhara Kings and Sheikh Russel KC while Sheikh Jamal DC and Saif SC will have Munshiganj as their home venue.

"Police FC and Swadhinata KS will use Rajshahi Stadium as their home venue and Cumilla will host home matches for Mohammedan SC and Chittagong Abahani," informed Murshedy.



Australia batsman Ben McDermott launches one against Wanindu Hasaranga of Sri Lanka during the first T20I in Sydney yesterday. The right-hander slammed 53 off 41 deliveries as the world champions beat the visitors by 20 runs in DLS method. Adam Zampa and Josh Hazlewood took four wickets each as Sri Lanka could only score 122 for 8, chasing a victory target of 150.

PHOTO: AFP

What to WATCH

- T SPORTS**
- BPL**
- Chattogram vs Sylhet
Live from 12:30 pm
- Khulna vs Comilla
Live from 5:30 pm
- PSL**
- Islamabad vs Quetta
Live from 8:30 pm
- T SPORTS & MTV INDIA
- La Liga**
- Atletico Madrid vs Getafe
Live from 2:00 am (Sunday)
- MTV INDIA**
- La Liga**
- Villareal vs Real Madrid
Live from 9:15 pm
- TEN 2**
- Bundesliga**
- Bochum vs Bayern Munich
Live from 8:30 pm
- Leverkusen vs Stuttgart
Live from 11:30 pm
- STAR SPORTS SELECT 1
- EPL**
- Manchester United vs Southampton
Live from 6:30 pm
- Everton vs Leeds
Live from 9:00 pm
- Norwich vs Manchester City
Live from 11:30 pm



SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



SEE PAGE 4 COL 5





PHOTOS: ABU BAKAR SIDDIQUE

A Trail Of Death And MISMANAGEMENT

PINAKI ROY

Despite the forest department lacking the skilled manpower needed to run two existing safari parks, plans are underway for yet another safari park project in Lathitila forest in Moulvibazar's Juri upazila, at the cost of destroying natural forests.

The prospect is particularly troubling given the recent heart-wrenching death spree of animals at Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Safari Park in Gazipur. Between January 2 and February 3, along with a tiger and a lioness, 11 zebras died in the safari park. Two top officials of the park were removed over negligence of duty involving the incident.

The authorities initially tried to conceal the death of a tiger inside the park but a local lawmaker disclosed the information in a briefing. Later, the safari park authorities said that the tiger died due to anthrax infection and the lioness died due to old age complications.

Prof Dr Md Abu Hadi Noor Ali Khan of the Department of Pathology, Faculty of Veterinary Sciences, Bangladesh Agricultural University (BAU), and a member of the medical board formed to find the cause of the deaths, said three zebras died of injuries to their bellies while the others were suffering from pneumonia.

However, the actual cause of injuries could not be specified yet. "Due to the cold weather, eight other zebras might have been infected with pneumonia, increasing their respiratory problems and decreasing their immunity," said Dr Khan. "The zebras had a chance to inbreed at the park, which made the animals genetically weak."

Traces of lead and nitrate were found in the grass fed to the animals. According to Dr Khan, excessive amounts of urea, used for rapid growth of grass, and insecticides to kill insects in the grass could also be harmful for animals, particularly foreign breeds who do not have immunity against such fertilizers.

Wildlife experts said the safari parks in the country do not abide by international standards, according to which, if you import an exotic animal, you must create an atmosphere similar to its country of origin.

Prof Dr Anwar Hossain, former chairman, Department of Zoology, University of Dhaka and CEO of WildTeam, said, "When they import African animals, they cannot also import the African environment. It is easy to create an artificial atmosphere for exotic animals in a zoo, but it is hard to create such an environment in a bigger space like a safari park. If we import animals from Africa and keep them here without recreating their habitat, we make them vulnerable," he said.

"Besides, veterinarians from Bangladesh do not learn how to treat zebras. They learn about the treatment of cattle, so it is hard for them to treat zebras when they are sick," he added.

Following the death spree, the government formed a four-member

not possible to test the animal feed and determine its quality."

According to the newly appointed project director Molla Rezaul Karim, all the recommendations of the expert committee will be implemented soon.

"We will consult with local and international experts regarding management of those animals," he said.

Yet another safari park

Masterplan for a third Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Safari Park to be set up in Lathitila forest in Moulvibazar's Juri upazila, with a budget of BDT 846.25 crore, awaits government approval.

Out of the BDT 846.25 crore, BDT 203 crore was kept for animal management and BDT 182 crore for purchasing animals for the safari park.

Despite protests from environmentalists, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change finalised the safari park project.

Asked about how they are going to manage the manpower for the third safari

'We are simply not equipped to run safari parks'

In conversation with Dr Reza Khan

PINAKI ROY

Eminent wildlife conservationist Dr Reza Khan said Bangladesh needs to open an independent department with a mandate to manage all the wildlife of the country, including those in safari parks and zoos.

"Bring all zoos, captive breeding centres, ecologically critical areas, eco parks or wildlife and game reserves under this new department. Let this department decide whether it wants a safari park for commercial purposes alone or one for education, research, tourism and wildlife propagation," Reza opined.

Bangladesh does not have a single internationally acclaimed wildlife vet, he said in a recent interview with The Daily Star.

Reza, who headed the Dubai Zoo for over three decades, said the safari park in Gazipur started operating without a proper masterplan and with unskilled employees.

"Safari parks in Bangladesh do not conform to world standards. They have destroyed natural forests and jeopardised the wildlife. A safari park or zoo must have a vision and a masterplan reflecting its mission. Wild animals from exotic origins can only survive when their proper habitats—with the same temperature and humidity as their countries of origin—can be created and maintained. Diet is a very important factor as well," explained Reza.

"For example, giraffes are not grazers but browsers. So, its diet cannot be only dry grass or pellet food—daily natural browsing opportunities must be provided. On the other hand, zebras cannot thrive in monsoon seasons. It is an animal of the open country or Savannah with semi arid conditions."

Browsers are herbivores which feed on leaves, soft shoots, or fruits of high growing, generally woody plants such as shrubs. Grazers, on the other hand, feed on grass or other lower vegetation.

The country also does not have a proper lab to test diseases that might affect wildlife, he argued.

"The Dhaka Zoo lab is of low quality with machines lying idle because they were bought without having anyone who has knowledge on how to operate them. The authorities also don't conduct regular check-ups or tests on animals kept at the zoos and parks," he said.

He added that periodical testing of the animals is necessary and that the reports should be publicly available for any reporter, researcher or member of parliament.

Bangladesh must, first and foremost, hire at least four wildlife experts from South Africa, Singapore or Malaysia.

About the situation in the Gazipur safari park, Reza said the government should stop the park's operation for the time being and form a committee with local and foreign experts to take stock of the park's situation and go forward with the recommendations made by the committee.

About the government initiative of another safari park in Lathitila forest, he said overseas consultant teams should be hired first to do a feasibility study. Based on that, the government should decide if they really want to build a man-made amusement facility inside an existing natural forest with unfamiliar animal species that can destroy the existing habitats of local wildlife.

"When they import African animals, they cannot also import the African environment. It is easy to create an artificial atmosphere for exotic animals in a zoo, but it is hard to create such an environment in a bigger space like a safari park. If we bring animals from Africa and keep them here without recreating their habitat, we make them vulnerable," said Prof Anwar Hossain.



medical board, which provided a set of recommendations to resolve the problems, including increasing the manpower to provide round-the-clock service to the wildlife. At least three veterinary surgeons are in need of urgent appointment for the park right now, they suggested.

But in reality, the safari park has been suffering from a lack of skilled manpower since the beginning.

According to Amir Hossain Chowdhury, chief conservator of forests (CCF), the entire forest department has only three veterinarians.

"We have deployed a veterinarian for Gazipur Safari Park, one for Dulahazara Safari Park and another for Sheikh Kamal Wildlife Centre. We would not be able to deploy more vets for the Gazipur park even if we wanted to," he said.

Regarding skilled manpower, Chowdhury said, "When the project was first undertaken, some training was arranged for the staff. But other than that, the forest department does not have people with skills to oversee and provide necessary services to the wildlife."

Currently 58 employees are deployed for the entire Gazipur safari park, which is spread over 3,810 acres of *sal* forest. A total of 32 employees are full time staff while 26 are working on hire (outsourcing) under the Gazipur Safari Park project.

"Since the beginning, the safari park has been running on a trial and error basis," he admitted.

Experts also recommended examining the feed and fodder for the animals. However, when asked about the quality of food at the safari park, Amir Hossain said, "As the park does not have a lab, it was

park as they do not have skilled manpower for existing two, Amir Hossain Chowdhury said, "Once the project is okayed by the government, we will recruit people."

"Why do need only three safari parks?" asked Prof Anwar Hossain. "The government should have run only one safari park with Bangladeshi animals first, ensuring international standards, instead of importing these foreign animals and putting their lives at risk."

Speaking about the government decision, Sharif Jamil, General Secretary of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolon (BAPA), said, "Establishing a safari park in a reserve forest will eventually lead to the destruction of the forest and its natural habitats."

Ishtiaq Uddin Ahmed a, former chief conservator of forests who also served as country representative of IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) said, "As the masterplan is ready, that means they will establish the park anyway."

"We are witnessing a disaster at Gazipur safari park as we failed to ensure proper management and habitat for alien species brought into our safari park. I fear this will repeat in the new park too. Without focussing on more safari parks, the government should focus on conservation of local species which are already endangered and on the verge of extinction," he said.

Our Gazipur correspondent Abu Bakar Siddique, Mymensingh correspondent Aminul Islma and Sylhet correspondent Dwoha Chowdhury contributed to the story.



"Besides, the surrounding area (around the park) is heavily industrialised. The fumes from battery-run auto rickshaws and fuels in addition to the presence of lead caused a chemical reaction," he said.

There are around 1,500 animals of 70 different species in the safari park. In the beginning, a total of 25 zebras were brought to the park. Their number increased to 50 over the years. However, since 2017, 32 zebras have died, forest department sources said.

Currently, there are 70 animals of seven different species in the African safari within the safari park.

"The African safari has only 60 acres of space but it needs at least 180 acres now, as the number of animals has increased manifold," said an official of the Gazipur safari park.



YOUR ADVOCATE

Formation and functions of a Collective Bargaining Agent

The leaderships of both the CBA and the management of the organisation require high degree of professionalism, prudence, sense of relevance, mutual respect, openness, consideration about the overall and holistic betterments of the organisation, negotiation skill, legal knowledge, understanding of good market practices etc. in order to successfully end an industrial dispute.

This week Your Advocate is Barrister Omar Khan Joy, Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh. He is the head of the chambers of a renowned law firm, namely, 'Legal Counsel', which has expertise mainly in commercial law, family law, labor law, land law, constitutional law, criminal law, and IPR.

Query

The workers of our establishment are planning to form a Collective Bargaining Agent (CBA) within the organisation. As management, we would like to know about the formation of a CBA and its functions under law(s).
Sirajul Alam
Dinajpur

Response

Thank you for your query. Pursuant to your query, firstly, it is important to understand that the formation and functions of Collective Bargaining Agent (CBA) come under the purview of the Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 (hereinafter referred to as "BLA 2006") and the Bangladesh Labour Rules, 2015 (hereinafter referred to as "BLR 2015"). The right to collective bargain is considered as a fundamental right of the workers. By virtue of section 2(52) of the BLA, 2006 a CBA is essentially a trade union of an establishment, which acts as the agent of the workers for collective bargaining with the management in such establishment. From the query, it is not clear whether your establishment already has any trade union of workers or not. In case if there is already a trade union, the said union will automatically be considered as the CBA of your establishment. For an establishment having more than one trade unions, the unions shall, by way of nominating an election commissioner amongst themselves, initiate steps for election of the CBA. If the same is not the case, the Director General of Labour Department shall, upon application being made in this regard by the trade union or by the employer, hold a secret ballot,



within a period of 120 days from the date of receipt of the said application, in order to determine as to which trade union shall be the CBA for the establishment. A CBA's tenure is for 2 years in case of an establishment. Upon formation of the CBA as aforesaid, it shall be entitled to perform the following functions under section 202(24) of the BLA, 2006:

- a. bargaining with the employer in matters of the state of joblessness, conditions of work or environment of work of the workers;
- b. representing all or any of the workers in any proceeding;
- c. giving notice, and declaring, a strike in accordance, with the provisions of the BLA, 2006;
- d. nominating representatives of the workers in any welfare institution or provident fund and in the board of trustees of the workers' participation fund; and
- e. conducting litigation on behalf of

The process starts with mutual discussion and if the same is not settled then the matter is attempted to be resolved through conciliation.

any individual worker or a group of workers subject to their approval. Further, an employer or a CBA can opt to take assistance from a specialist in order to perform the respective activities. It is common for any CBA to issue a 'charter of demand' to the management demanding certain rights, privileges and benefits in terms of their working conditions. Once a charter of demand is produced by the CBA, the management and the CBA, need to go through certain consecutive and clearly defined processes in order to reach a settlement. The process starts with mutual discussion and if the same is not settled then the matter is attempted to be resolved through conciliation. In case if the conciliation also fails, the matter is solved either through arbitration or through the labour court proceedings. Resolution of industrial dispute through the above stages is a crucially important task for both the management and the CBA for

ensuring the continuity of smooth and healthy operation of the organisation. The leaderships of both the CBA and the management of the organisation require high degree of professionalism, prudence, sense of relevance, mutual respect, openness, consideration about the overall and holistic betterments of the organisation, negotiation skill, legal knowledge, understanding of good market practices etc. in order to successfully end an industrial dispute. Once a CBA is formed, it shall arrange for training sessions for the executive committee members of the CBA and the management for better understanding of their respective roles and duties. Pertinently, the employer shall be required to allot an office room for the elected CBA in accordance with the establishment's infrastructure. Moreover, the room shall be in conformity with ventilation system and there shall be facility for workers to move conveniently in and outside the establishment. Moreover, the employer shall provide required number of office chairs, tables, cabinets, power supply, electric ceiling fans, lights, notice boards, etc. in the office room of CBA. It is imperative to mention that upon requests of the CBA, the employer shall deduct from the wages of the workers who are workers of the establishment and also part of that CBA union, such amount for the purpose of subscriptions to the fund of CBA union with the approval of every individual worker named in the demand statement furnished by CBA and shall keep the sum so deducted separately. Even members outside the CBA union can pay subscriptions by receipts. In this regard, the employer shall deposit the deducted sum as stated in the account of the CBA union concerned within next 15 days from the date of deduction. Although the law is silent on how this money shall be used, but it can be safely stated that this subscription money may be utilised by the CBA for covering their administrative, management and operational costs.

LAW WATCH

Legal annotations regarding virtual company meetings during pandemic

Virtual presence is not prohibited as long as personal presence or presence by proxy is ensured.

PARAG PASHA AND MARUF HASAN TAMAL
With the pandemic, almost every type of functionary came to a standstill except the very essential ones. But as life must go on, the humankind has found ways to carry on with life. Mega corporation Grameenphone held its 23rd annual general meeting of 2020 on its very own digital platform, not in-person. This is a whole new scenario for the

have laid down provisions of certain meetings. Amongst different meetings, there is Annual general meeting (AGM) which requires a notice period of 14 days in writing and Extraordinary general meeting (EGM) which requires that of 21 days. Notice may be served personally or by registered post. The meeting may be called by shorter notice if so agreed in writing by all

becomes clear that it does not intend or mean physical presence as such. However, for procedural clarity, the company's Article can stipulate the procedure of virtual presence and virtual voting. Every company is statutorily required to draft minutes of all proceedings of general

information or any other matter to be recorded in handwritten or typed or in any other form of writing or printing, such information/matter can be recorded electronically, subject to such information or matter being accessible for a subsequent reference. Again, section 9 of ICT Act, 2006 imposes additional requirements for retention of electronic records which essentially are as follows: (a) the preserved electronic records shall be accessible in future; (b) such records shall be maintained in such original format in which they had been generated/ sent or received; (c) mechanisms enabling determination of origin/destination, date, and time of sending and receipt of electronic records in question, are in place. Accordingly, assuming that the digital copies satisfy the requirements for maintaining electronic records under sections 6 and 9 of ICT Act, 2006, they are to be deemed to be valid and enforceable records in Bangladesh.

However, section 88 of the Companies Act, 1994 stipulates that in case any special or extraordinary resolution is adopted in such a meeting, a copy of every special and extraordinary resolution shall, within fifteen days from the passing thereof, be printed or typewritten and duly certified under the signature of an officer of the company and filed with the Registrar who shall record the same. Therefore, although the meetings and other activities can be conducted both virtually and remotely, this filing requirement will make physical presence necessary. So it can be inferred, a virtual general meeting is possible as long as it addresses the required statutory reports and agendas and is signed by the Chairman of the meeting or the Chairman of the next meeting and in case of any special or extraordinary resolutions adopted in such meeting it is within fifteen days from the passing thereof, that they be printed or typewritten and duly certified under the signature of an officer of the company and filed with the Registrar for recording purposes.

The writers are Research Associate and Research Intern respectively at A.S.& Associates.

corporate sector of Bangladesh, considering general meetings can be tagged as the most vital function for the smooth operation of a company. But this also gives rise to a legal question, which is, whether the current legal frameworks surrounding the corporate realm are accommodating of such changes or not. A company calls for several types of meetings based on different events and requirements, sections 81 to 89 and schedule -1 of the Companies Act 1994

members entitled to attend and vote. Therefore, an electronic copy of the notice can be sent personally to the shareholders through email as long as the notice is in written format. Any meetings need different persons of the company to be present. Regarding presence in the meeting, presence in person (here the Bengali text of this provision stipulates "personal presence") or by proxy is required. Therefore, virtual presence is not prohibited as long as personal presence or presence by proxy is ensured. As this provision goes, it

Every company is statutorily required to draft minutes of all proceedings of general meetings and meetings of its directors to be entered in books kept for that and other purposes.

meetings and meetings of its directors to be entered in books kept for that and other purposes. Any such minutes shall be signed by the chairman of the meeting at which the proceedings took place or by the chairman of the next succeeding meeting as evidence of the proceedings. Here a question of physical presence arises. However, Section 6 of the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Act, 2006 grants functional equivalence to, and establishes the principle of non-discrimination for electronic records in Bangladesh. The said section in essence provides that if any law provides for any



Shomoyer Sathey, Prithibir Pothe Down the memory lanes of journalism

Sirajul Islam Quadir. ISBN: 9789848065235 Published by Papyrus, 2021

Quadir describes the terror and anxiety with eloquence, slowly taking the reader through the experience of being hauled in on such a charge.

REVIEWED BY AFSAN CHOWDHURY

Sirajul Islam Quadir is both an individual and a representative of his time says Prof. Sirajul Islam Chowdhury in his ever-elloquent words put together in the forward to the book. The book is a part memoir and part professional reflection built around Quadir's life as a journalist from the 70s till now. It is unreservedly informative and non-judgmental. Perhaps the fact that he has been in news agency journalism (Reuters) has played a role as in that media genre its news, not opinion, that matters. But the articles are not

Chowdhury says that Quadir was eminently suitable to be a teacher but he chose to report on contemporary events. There is a certain dedication attached to such choices and that applies to Quadir too. But the articles compiled here are not anonymous. The writer is present in them which gives a face to the words which media agency reports often lack. The articles are primarily notes on his professional life and the encounters he made. The functions and the pleasures of media life are told engagingly and anyone who wants to know how the machine called

being similar to what his own children had experienced when away from their mother for a while and reuniting later. They all gave signed declarations not to get involved with 'subversive activities' and were let go. Ethics and values and salaries too: An interesting article in the book is a conversation between the author and a senior veteran member of the AP new agency Arnold Zeitlin. The discussion was about the structure, principles and functioning of the media. This is an important piece because the issues are put in perspective by both. Point is, most discussions on media are carried out by media workers but are read by the consumers who may have a different idea about how media works and its challenges. This article is a good way to get introduced to the issue because the internal understanding of the structure, bereft of the often inevitability of profession can cause a distance between the worker and the consumer. Whether they lay in the conceptual realm of what media function is can thus be the question that is central to the topic of understanding what media is. Its meaning is both significant and it also carries meanings that are specific to the group consuming the product. Media is not a social service but a professional trade of facts; hence an economic entity too. Unless sponsored by the government or a business house, it can't survive unless it goes commercial. However, the perspective of the readers is probably that the media is a social activist agency and will fight against injustice and political democracy even before acting professionally. In between, there may be many other visions at work. Together they make up the multiple faced worlds of media. Media therefore could well be an evolving space and that needs to be framed. Quadir has written an excellent narrative from an insider's perspective which is mercifully free of political rants. Instead, he has talked of media matters and encounters including visits to China and Russia where we meet expatriate Bangladeshis in a very far away land. Essentially, he remains a journalist. The book was a pleasant read which deserves more readers and more discussions on media and the self.

Afsan Chowdhury is a journalist and academic who has authored and co-authored over 30 books.

The discussion was about the structure, principles and functioning of the media. This is an important piece because the issues are put in perspective by both.

media works from inside could use this as an interesting introduction.

Encounter with Sheikh Mujib: Yet the most significant article in the book doesn't deal with the media but an incident of the pre 1975 era when he and a few others got caught up in some extreme Left politics albeit marginally, but even worse as they got arrested. Quadir describes the terror and anxiety with eloquence, slowly taking the reader through the experience of being hauled in on such a charge. He describes the time spent on police custody and also what their family was going through in that period. This includes raids by search parties at some of their homes. What makes the story so significant is their encounter with Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. It is difficult to imagine such a situation today that the head of the government would meet a bunch of young boys who have been accused of terrorism. The meeting took place at Sugandha-near Sheraton Hotel- which served as Sk. Mujib's political office. He talked to them more like a guardian and they as delinquent nephews. The author describes the great leader and how he felt the sense of being in front of the Father. He describes the emotions as

just a mouthpiece of his time and work. Prof.

Before the Last Breath

MOHAMMAD SHAFIQUIL ISLAM

After so many years, more than a decade or so, when you pass my home, don't forget to take a look at the humble roof of haystack and wattle if not the humble me waiting to have a look at your eyes for an epoch. You must remember how I ran short of words in worshipping your eyes, those two eyes that can calm down a fighting bull with a single look. I'd ask you to sit before me for hours without taking your look away so I could see you and your eyes being oblivious of the whole world. Forgive me I'm talking only of your eyes but you're more than my self. A sky within my heartland still counts days and months on your arrival. Now the world has come to a standstill but I want everything to move. Only to have a look at those eyes and see you once more I still breathe. I know I won't be able to walk up to the country road you'll travel along



but a tiny wooden window with two old crumbled planks on two sides help me see grasshoppers playing in the orchard and a few wayfarers as I keep looking through the window every day, the only act I can do. Nowadays my eyes betray me because I can't see properly anymore. Grasses in the field seem to be turning yellow, grasshoppers skinnier

but all the coconut and betel-nut trees and their leaves around my hut know how I keep looking at the country road with my unblinking eyes. The road bordered by trees takes a different look just before the evening when the sun bends in the western horizon and small wind stirs leaves. Keeping awake for months and years and sitting by the creaky window, I search my soul I lost ages ago when the world encountered a storm. I'll wait until the second apocalypse, I'll wait even if I'm utterly blind. Now the source of my living are memories of the time we spent together looking at each other talking of silence amidst a play of light and shadow and if in the world of melancholy a ray of hope still sojourns at my door, it's a second dream in which you pass the country road before evening when you steal a glance to exchange the last look with the dying soul sitting by the window, straining his eyes and wheezing for the last breath.

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Beach Bodies

NADEEM ZAMAN

North Avenue beach was crowded with the Gold Coast moneyed, the downtown young and rich, the tanned, tight-bodied volleyballers, all of them white, and a healthy portion of the rest of the city's masses, a United Colors of Benetton sampler, among which numbered the five of us. School was out for the summer, the next three months sprawled before us like the city from the Skydeck of Sears Tower.

I didn't want to take off my clothes. My body was hairy and flabby and jiggled everywhere. My plans to go on a diet were repeatedly thwarted by my mother, who would wail as if I'd died or threatened leaving home if I didn't eat every meal she put in front of me. And when she did, I ate them, ate them without remorse, ate them with my mind cleansed of thoughts of diets, my stomach devouring all my mouth sent its way and shrieking joyously for more.

Malik was the "beachiest" of us all. Naturally thin, his arms and legs were roped with muscles he didn't put a day's work into shaping or maintaining. We watched without looking as he stripped down to the baggy swim-shorts he had on under his pants and revealed a body that could put him on the cover of a fitness magazine.

"What?" he said, catching us. "You want this?" Then howling with laughter he went splashing into the water.

"Let's go," Teddy yelled, throwing off his sneakers. Amir went next. He was a strong swimmer and dived into the waves and was underwater a long time before his head popped up just before the cordon marking the swimming boundary.

Zeeshan stepped in up to his ankles with his pant cuffs folded. He looked like an elder chaperoning rowdy nephews, a boy become a man too soon, as he stood gazing the horizon with arms crossed at the wrists at his back.

I was the last to join. One by one I took off my shoes, and then my socks. The warm

sand gave under my heels. The only times I'd been to the beach was when we visited my mother's people in Chittagong, and there, on the shores of the Bay of Bengal, I recalled the gray sands being wet, cool, and hardened like cement.

The water bit with fangs of ice. Shock gripped my ankles and weakened my knees. I wanted to run back out to the comfort of the hot sand, but I stayed.

Teddy yowled, cursed the cold, laughing maniacally, then went under. Malik was the thrashing swimmer that slapped the water and rotated his head from side to side without ever immersing it. Amir was a beautiful, sinuous sight, slithering just beneath the surface as he slinked along, then broke through and went a few yards in backstrokes, and then flipped over for a combination of breaststroke and freestyle. I knew how to swim, but stood frozen at waist-level water while the cold relieved my lower body of sensation.

The crowd had thickened. Many of the volleyballers were in the water, as were the steady flow of new arrivals to the beach. A thick clot of people surrounded me. Children shrieked, rode the shoulders of parents. Swimmers took the waves and undulated on them like debris. Couples dunked each other's heads. The day grew hotter by the seconds, and my lower body had finally begun to adjust to the tundra below the water's surface. I held my breath, closed my eyes, and took a quick, baptismal dip. The water felt good on my head after the heat of the sun. My scalp cooled down. I opened my eyes for a fraction of a second to a forest of legs of all colors and sizes and shapes in a murk of bluish green. I came



back up, gulped air, and rubbed my eyes.

"Not so bad, is it?" The voice was a woman's, coming from in front of me.

My eyes were still clearing. A group of teenagers was in a raucous game of splashing each other a foot to my left, their sprays catching my face and making it difficult to keep my eyes open. I moved a few paces to my right. I didn't see my friends anywhere, and our clothes and shoes were unattended on the beach.

"Once you're in it gets better," said the voice, closer now. I saw through a parting between people a young woman, but older than me, swim over and stand up inches from me. Her hair was pasted to her head.

She covered her face with both hands to remove the water, opened her eyes, and smiled.

She wore a thin white t-shirt over her one-piece swimsuit. She was big and her breasts pressed heavily against the swimsuit and the sodden t-shirt. Exotropia took her left eye on a seemingly wayward search but I knew she was looking at me.

"Hey, you're not bad looking," she said. "Want to swim with me?"

If I had had the presence of a mature mind, if I had been ten or twenty years older, free of the baggage of teenage angst about reputation and caring about who I was seen talking to, I'd make note of that moment. It was my first compliment from a woman, my first sensation of being told she found me attractive. Instead, I was stricken. I feared from the deepest depths

of my being seen talking to this woman with her weird eye and her unsexy body. I would never tell my friends that she'd told me I was good-looking - or rather, not bad looking - then have them guffaw and jeer that of all the women out there on the beach I'd been singled out by the ugliest one. Told me something about myself, they'd badger, didn't it. I'd rather go back down under water and stay until my lungs burst.

I looked over at our clothes. Zeeshan was there now, sitting, smoking a cigarette. Seconds later, Malik walked up and started putting his clothes back on. He waved at Teddy and flipped him off, and Teddy, shaking himself like a big, shaggy dog, ran out of the water.

"Ready to go?" said Amir, appearing at my side. He might have seen the woman, as his eyes followed mine for a brief glance. She wasn't there. I couldn't tell when she'd left, and as best I could I gave the vicinity a sweep. No sign of her. The crush of people had gotten worse, and every strange face and body looked like the next one. Even with 20/20 vision I wouldn't be able to spot her, her wandering eye which had found me, selected me out of hundreds, and deemed me worthy of a compliment, unaware of the gift she'd given me.

We put our clothes back on over our wet bodies and sat drying on the sand before Zeeshan would let us in the car.

It was hot enough that within ten minutes we were sweating, our scalps and necks burning, and we started heading back.

People flocked endlessly to the relief of the water, in groups, in couples, in families, by themselves, and someone else out there was finding someone not bad-looking, and making their way to tell them.

Nadeem Zaman is the author of the novel *In the Time of the Others* (long listed for the 2019 DSC Prize in South Asian Literature) and the story collection *Up in the Main House & Other Stories*. His fiction has appeared in journals in the US, Hong Kong, India, and Bangladesh.

WOMAN TRAPPED

in spiral to renew passport

I rushed to the national museum and stole the only Mughal era document that had Moghbazar written on it. Turns out, the place is called that because the Maghs of Arakan had settled there, maybe.

SHOAB AHMED SAYAM

The following is part of an interview of a woman who is still trying to collect all 634 documents to get her new passport.

I had offered him everything I had, and it still wasn't enough. I shared every single detail of my life, and even then, he was so unsatisfied.

"Why's your face like that? Get a new picture, or no passport," he said, looking straight into my eyes. Was he implying I'm ugly or unphotogenic? It didn't matter; all that mattered was how to satiate his desires.

"Also, you need a birth certificate," he informed me.

"Yeah, it's right here," I replied.

"No, are you dumb, too? That's the old one. It's not valid anymore."

And so, I ran for the birth registration office, to prove once again that indeed, I was born.

"Where were you right before you were born?" the birth officer asked.

"In Moghbazar," I answered.

"No. You were in your mother's womb. Where was the womb?"

"In Moghbazar."

"And where exactly is this Moghbazar? Why is it called that? You need to provide a historical document of the area to get your certificate."

I rushed to the national museum and stole the only Mughal era document that had Moghbazar written on it. Turns out, the place is called that because the Maghs of Arakan had settled there, maybe.

"Where did you get this? Okay, never mind, nice. Now, I need your parents' birth certificates," he told me.

"They're dead."

"Oh, then get me their death certificates. Also, make sure you get attested copies of their burial documents from the graveyard."

At this point, I was hell bent on seeing this through. I got everything he asked for and more, and finally, I was reborn. With the certificate, I returned to the passport office, this time with swagger.

The officer looked at the certificate and said, "You got what I asked for, great. Your face still looks weird. Also, I'll need an attested copy of your 'akika' certificate. You do have that, right?"



Schools to be shifted to shopping malls to avoid closures

The idea has already earned massive support from all walks of life as people finally found a way to send their children back to schools.

MAHUBUB ALAM MUNNA

The country has broken records for keeping schools, colleges and universities closed for the longest time after local scientists discovered that Covid thrives and is transmitted only in educational institutions.

"If you go to a crowded shopping mall, you have only one percent chance of being infected, but if you go to school or wherever students go, you have 99 percent chance of contracting the Rona," Isaac Nalek, the lead scientist, said in the groundbreaking report.

Reports from all over the country suggest that most of the people who got seriously ill due to Covid somehow directly or indirectly got infected when they attempted to enter the premises of those institutions. Hence, schools, colleges and universities – the epicentres – were kept closed as they made the populace more vulnerable to infection than anywhere else, apparently.

"The more you open educational institutions, the higher the infection rate goes," illiteracy minister of Chapasthan briefly narrated the positive correlation between education and infection.

Since necessity is the father of invention and being a land of new inventions and discoveries, Chapasthan wasted no time in finding a solution to this unending closure.

To avoid unwanted closures, the idea of relocating educational institutes to various malls and fairs has been proposed for the authority's approval.

The idea has already earned massive support from all walks of life as people finally found a way to send their children back to schools.

Satireday caught up with the person who generated the idea, Jony.

"As several Chapasthani studies have found that Covid only lives in educational institutions and hence these institutions

have been kept closed for, like, forever, why don't we rebuild or relocate these to some malls and fairs which are absolutely virus-free?" he asked.

"If we don't do it now, our students may become TikTokers as they are in a long-distance relationship with books and education," he added.

For the first time in Chapasthani history, guardians were all on the same page. They think that this is the only way to keep educational institutions open despite mild or severe Covid surges.

"This is actually a unique idea that, we believe, will eventually help us get back our students to school in the form of shopping malls and fairs. Those virus-free areas can be the new realm of knowledge and wisdom. Thank you all who were involved in bringing this revolutionary idea," said a guardian, whose child was on the verge of becoming a TikToker.



BPL

The GOAT tourney at evoking nostalgia

KHALID HOSSAIN

Remember the time when you had to flee the streets impromptu to dodge "a stunner" right after you or one of your mates had hit a well-timed lofted shot, which triggered the arrival of a certain Stone Cold Steve Austin as the sweet sound of timbre preceded a crash?

From batter Will Jacks shattering the neighbourhood building's glass during net practice at the Sylhet International Cricket Stadium to Mohammad Shahzad puffing away at the heart of Mirpur, the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) has managed to rekindle nostalgia like no other platform in recent memory.

Did Shahzad, the Afghan wicketkeeper-batter playing for Minister Group, foresee on the morning of that fateful day, as he breathed the fresh air of Dhaka while enjoying a cup of coffee, that he'd be in the news for vaping, i.e. smoking an e-cigarette, later in the day?

And that too when it had rained abruptly, leading his side's game to be abandoned as the aroma of bhuna khichuri converged from Puran Dhaka and Uttara to fill the evening air in an around the stadium? Is the Afghan even aware of the long line of cricketers in the past -- the likes of Graham Gooch, Shane Warne, Chris Gayle, Ian Botham, Michael Clark, Hardik Pandya and so on -- who made the news for publicly smoking, the act which may cause lung cancer at the cost of making the smoker appear "cool"?

As Shahzad again took a lungful of Dhaka's high quality air on the "morning" after while enjoying a fine cuppa black coffee, could he even recall that he was reprimanded by match officials the night before?

Who knows? But Shahzad better be aware that we condemn the heinous act of vaping.



PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

THE WRITER IS A RECOVERING NOSTALGIC SINCE MAY LAST YEAR AND DOESN'T ENCOURAGE OTHERS, ESPECIALLY PROFESSIONALS, TO DIVE INTO RANDOM MEMORY LANES WITHOUT A SITTER.