



A proud teacher hugs two of her students, as they celebrate their good grades in the Higher Secondary Certificate exams published yesterday. Girls have again outshone boys in the exams. The photo was taken at Rajuk Uttara Model College.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

SPLENDID HSC RESULTS

Curtailed exams do the trick again

| BOARD | PASS RATE in % | GPA 5 | PASS RATE |
|------------|----------------|----------|------------------------|
| Dhaka | 96.2 | 59,233 | 95.57% |
| Rajshahi | 97.29 | 32,800 | BOYS 94.44 |
| Cumilla | 97.49 | 14,153 | GIRLS 96.67 |
| Jashore | 98.11 | 20,878 | |
| Chattogram | 89.39 | 13,720 | GPA 5 HOLDERS 1,78,522 |
| Barishal | 95.76 | 9,971 | BOYS 80,119 |
| Sylhet | 94.8 | 4,731 | GIRLS 98,403 |
| Dinajpur | 92.43 | 15,349 | |
| Mymensingh | 95.71 | 7,687 | |
| Overall | 95.57 | 1,78,522 | |

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Sitting for tests on three optional subjects and for fewer marks, HSC examinees of 2021 have achieved brilliant results as the pass rate and number of GPA-5 achievers in nine general education boards increased.

Students did not have to sit for tests in English, which is normally a compulsory subject, to determine success.

Unveiling the detailed results at a press conference yesterday, Education Minister Dipu Moni said various government initiatives have brought about positive changes in this year's results.

She said major reasons behind the successful outcome were students getting more time to prepare, having shortened syllabuses and fewer subjects.

The government fixed three subjects for each of the three disciplines -- business, science and humanities.

At the start of the programme, Dipu Moni received the results on behalf of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, who joined virtually. The PM also unveiled the results at the programme.

Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) exams for 2021 were held eight months later than the usual schedule as the government waited for Covid-19 infection rate to decrease.

As students did not need to take exams in compulsory subjects like English and Bangla, results of these were prepared

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Schools may reopen by end of month: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the country's educational institutions would be reopened at the end of this month if the Covid situation improves.

"We hope that the situation may change [improve] at the end of this month and then we can reopen schools, colleges and all other educational institutions," she said this while publishing the results of Higher Secondary Certificate and equivalent examinations 2021.

The PM published the results joining a function at International Mother Language Institute virtually from the Gono Bhaban.

Hasina said though online education was conducted during the pandemic, students were deprived of classroom learning and the company of their peers and friends at their institutions. "Our students are the worst victims of the coronavirus fallout."

Noting that there is reluctance among people about getting vaccinated, she asked all to take the vaccine shots to protect themselves from the dire consequences of coronavirus.

The PM hoped that Bangladesh would

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

GAS SHORTAGE

More interest in imports than exploration

Say experts at a discussion

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The gas shortage is a result of negligence towards gas exploration and the reliance on imported LNG something to be wary of, experts told a discussion yesterday.

Noted geologist Prof Badrul Imam said certain individuals with influence over the government agencies are more interested in importing gas from abroad.

The gas crisis is not inevitable at all, he told the virtual dialogue titled Gas-LNG Debate in Energy Supply: Costs and Consequences of LNG Import for the Power Sector.

A multi-client survey in the sea to explore gas has been in talks since 2015, he said. "We don't know why it hasn't been done. We repeatedly asked, but got no answer. It seems a vested quarter doesn't want our own gas explored. They are more interested in importing, and they have influence in the government agencies."

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

Will unveil all names today

Search panel chief says about recommendations for EC posts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The search committee will disclose all the names proposed for the posts of the chief election commissioner and other commissioners today, said its head, Justice Obaidul Hassan.

It also asked the political parties that have not proposed any names to submit those by 5:00pm today.

"We will accept proposals, only from political parties, till tomorrow [today]. The full list will be published

on the Cabinet Division's website later in the afternoon," Justice Hassan told reporters yesterday during the panel's meeting with eminent citizens at the Supreme Court Judges Lounge.

The committee had met 25 eminent citizens at the same venue on Saturday in two phases. They urged it to reveal all names proposed by political parties, professional bodies, and individuals. Besides, they suggested the committee disclose

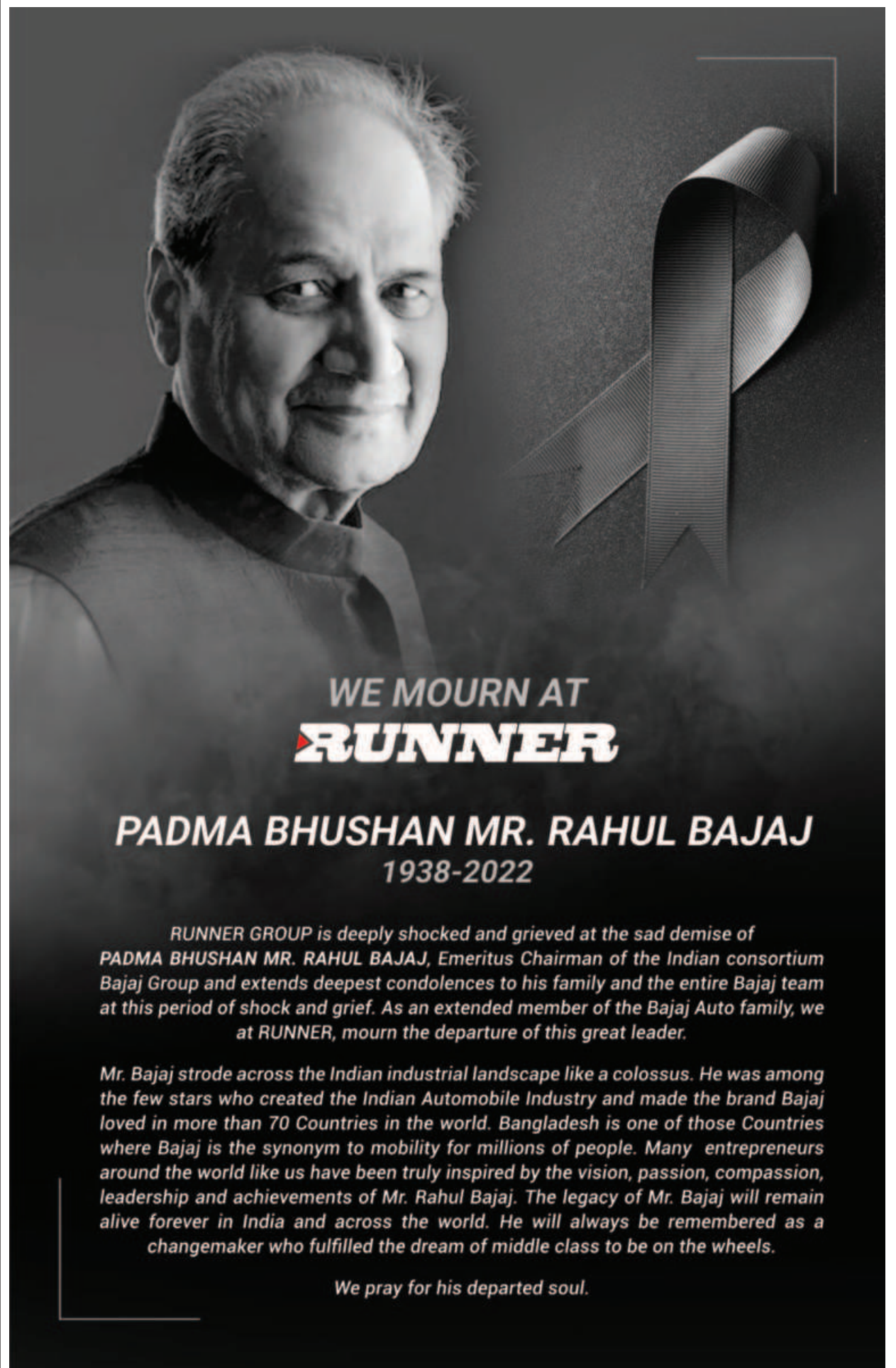
the names of its picks before sending the nominations to the president.

They said making the names public would ensure transparency in the EC appointments.

The search panel, however, did not say whether it would reveal its picks before the media.

The previous two search committees, formed in 2012 and 2017, did not disclose any names, ignoring demands from political parties.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Rohingya leader killed in camp

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

A top Rohingya leader was stabbed to death by a group of miscreants inside a camp in Cox's Bazar yesterday.

The dead is Mohammad Abul Kalam, an inhabitant of Camp-2 East of Block-B5, said Armed Police Battalion (APBn-14). Naimul Haque, commanding officer (CO) of APBn-14, said Kalam was beaten and stabbed by a group of Rohingyas men before his death.

The miscreants attacked him in front of his house around 5:45am. On information, policemen of Balurmath Police Camp rushed to the spot and rescued him, he said.

"He was sent to MSF Hospital. As his condition deteriorated, he was shifted to Cox's Bazar Sadar Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries around 8:30am," the policeman added.

AKM Emranul Haque Maruf, camp commander of Balurmath Police camp, said they were trying to arrest the people behind the murder.

28 more die, 4,838 get Covid-19

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health officials reported 28 deaths from Covid-19 yesterday.

The number of officially acknowledged deaths the previous day was 20, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The DGHS also reported 4,838 new cases yesterday, marking a steady decline for seven days in a row.

"But there is no room for complacency," DGHS spokesperson Nazmul Islam told an online briefing.

He added that the positivity rate was 14.85 percent.

With the latest count, the total number of cases rose to 19,09,664 and the deaths to 28,819.

Nazmul said he expected the educational institutions to reopen by the end of this month.



A winding queue of school students at MA Aziz Stadium in Chattogram city as the authorities inoculated them against the coronavirus with the second dose of the vaccine yesterday.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Metro seeks Tk 1,000cr more

This time to cover operation, maintenance cost

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Metro rail authorities have sought another Tk 1,000 crore from the government to cover operation and maintenance cost.

Dhaka Mass Transit Company Ltd (DMTCL), the executing agency of the country's first ever metro rail project, asked for the money even before beginning the metro rail's operation.

Receiving a proposal last year, the Road Transport and Highway Division had asked for some clarifications. As it failed to respond, the DMTCL was asked again on January 18 to come up with a reply by tomorrow.

"We have sought seed money to start operations because we won't be able to earn anything before the metro rail begins," MAN Siddique, managing director of DMTCL told The Daily Star last night.

Formally known as the Mass Rapid Transit Line-6, the elevated rail line is being constructed between Uttara Sector-3 and Motijheel.

Commercial operation of the Uttara-Agargaon section will begin on December 16 -- Victory Day -- this year. The full section will be operational by December 2023, as per a DMTCL announcement.

The original cost of the project was Tk 21,985 crore but the authorities last year sought a further Tk 11,487 crore for



additional work, including extension of the line up to Kamalapur and building spacious footpaths outside the stations for convenient entry and exit of passengers.

If the recent proposal for additional funds is approved, the cost of the fast-track project would amount to Tk 33,472 crore and the deadline would be December 2025 -- a year and half longer than the original one.

ANOTHER TK 1000 CRORE

Upon receiving DMTCL's proposal seeking another Tk 1,000 crore, the RTHD in October asked the agency to give its business plan, which was not submitted

till a January-18 meeting over the fare of the metro rail, and its operational and maintenance cost, sources said.

An RTHD official told the meeting that the division will need to know the fixed and operational cost of the metro rail, and the possible income from ticket sales.

The DMTCL was then asked to provide details on which sectors the Tk 1,000 crore would be used in.

At the meeting, DMTCL officials also said they have submitted a proposal over the fare to the committee concerned in December last year.

The meeting asked the committee to quickly finalise the fare.

Shishir first Bangladeshi trans-woman on NY Fashion Week ramp

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Tashnuva Anan Shishir on Saturday became the first Bangladeshi transgender woman to walk the ramp at the prestigious New York Fashion Week.

Shishir went to New York on December 2 to accept a Showtime Music Award as the best news anchor in North America. It was conferred on her on December 4.

Speaking to The Daily Star, Shishir, the first transgender news presenter in the country, said, "I was so surprised at how I was accepted here, whereas back home, I'm treated like a demon for who I am. Here, people don't look at me like I have two horns on my head. They treat me like they treat everyone else."

"I was feeling immense pride [on the ramp]. Not only was I representing my country, I was representing my entire community. At the end of the day, me and all those in the trans community work for the nation and to represent it, but we hardly ever get the chance. But I am thankful to have gotten a platform so prestigious to do so."

Shishir showcased the works of international designer Oscar Gonzalez Montañez.

HC asks govt to explain animals' deaths in safari park

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday issued a rule asking the government to explain in four weeks why the negligence of Gazipur's Bangabandhu Safari Park authorities in ensuring the animals' wellbeing should not be declared illegal.

The court also ordered the authorities concerned of the government to submit the inquiry reports on the incidents of animals' deaths before it through the attorney general's office as soon as possible. Deputy Attorney General Arobinda Kumar Roy told The Daily Star.

The HC bench of Justice Md Khasruzzaman and Justice Md Mahmud Hassan Talukder issued the rule and order following a writ petition filed as a public interest litigation by Supreme Court lawyer Harun Or Rashid Farid, seeking necessary directives on this issue.

Foolproof security at Ekushey Boi Mela: DMP

STAR REPORT

Police are set to ensure foolproof security at Ekushey Book Fair taking possible risk from militant groups into consideration, DMP Commissioner Shafiqul Islam yesterday said.

"Understandably militants might be worked up after the Avijit murder case verdict... Their top leader, Maj (sacked) Zia is still a fugitive. So, we are not completely eliminating security risks," he said, after visiting the fair premises at Suhrawardy Udyan.

The DMP chief hoped that nothing untoward would take place as the activities of militant groups are now almost at zero level.

Will unveil all names today

FROM PAGE 1

The new committee received names of 329 candidates till Saturday. Of them, 136 names came from political parties, 40 from professional bodies, and 34 from individuals. Ninety-nine names were sent via emails.

In Saturday's meeting with the eminent citizens, some of them suggested the panel take an initiative to include the parties that have not submitted any names, in the process.

The panel had written to all 39 registered political parties urging them to submit their nominations by February 11, but only 24 parties have proposed names for EC appointments.

Parties, including the BNP, the Communist Party of Bangladesh (CPB), and the Bangladesh Samajtantrik Dal, haven't suggested any names. "We have extended the time for them. Hopefully, they will respond positively," Justice Hassan said yesterday.

Contacted, Amir Khasru Mahmud Chowdhury,

a standing committee member of the BNP, said they would not propose any names as "people have no confidence in this search panel".

"We don't recognise this process of stealing the election. When we are waging a struggle to restore people's voting rights in the country, why would we engage in this process of stealing the election?" he asked.

CPB President Mujahidul Islam Selim said proposing names to the panel would not make any difference. "The final decision will be taken by the prime minister," he said.

The previous search committee, formed in 2017, had asked 31 political parties to propose five names each. In response, 26 parties, including the BNP and its alliance partners, proposed 125 names.

But this year, the search panel sought 10 names from each party.

THE MEETING YESTERDAY

Eighteen out of 23 invitees joined the meeting yesterday. With them, 43 eminent citizens participated in the meetings on Saturday and yesterday.

The panel had invited 60 eminent personalities to the meetings to take their opinions and proposals on the EC appointments.

Badiul Alam Majumdar, general secretary of Sushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan), recommended arranging a public hearing on the proposed candidates.

He told the panel yesterday it should make a primary list of 20 proposed names. Five of the candidates should be women. "The 20 names can be published as a public notice, and a public hearing can be arranged on the candidates."

"Then a shortlist of 10 candidates, including three women, should be published as another public notice. It should be done at least three days before sending the names to the president."

On the CEC, eminent

historian Muntasir Mamoon said since it is tough to get a neutral person who is also strict, a "fairly strict" person can get that appointment. "There is nobody who is acceptable to all."

Ekattorer Ghatak Dalal Nirmul Committee President Shahriar Kabir said he suggested 10 names to the committee, including those of women and members from the minority communities.

He also suggested the panel look for courageous and honest people, instead of only neutral people.

Noted educationist Muhammed Zafar Iqbal said, "I told the search committee to pick candidates who will remain accountable to their conscience".

Former election commissioner Brig Gen (retd) M Sakawat Hossain said, "Our election process and Election Commission have been destroyed. We need courageous people who can earn people's trust and can hold a free, fair and acceptable election."

He also said the search panel should reveal its final picks before sending the nominations to the president.

Briefing reporters after the meeting, Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam said the panel would hold its meeting on Tuesday. "It will make its final decision about the candidates there."

The six-member search committee was formed under the "Appointments of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners Act-2022" on February 5. It held its first meeting the following day and sought names for the EC appointments.

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

Today is the last day for the current EC, led by KM Nurul Huda, in office.

madrasa board and HSC vocational tests under the technical board, the combined pass rate was 95.26 percent.

Last year, a total of 13,71,681 students took the HSC and equivalent exams.

In 2021, about 95 percent of some 1.06 lakh Dakhil examinees under the madrasa board passed, while 92.85 percent of some 1.49 lakh candidates of HSC (vocational) exams passed.

A total of 4,872 madrasa students and 5,775 technical students got GPA-5.

Curtailed exams do the trick again

FROM PAGE 1

based on the GPAs of students' previous public examinations.

During the exams, students also had more choices in terms of questions to answer, which was another reason for the good results. Science exams had 32 marks in each paper, while humanities and business exams had 45 marks in each paper, said education board officials.

The exams for 2020 did not take place due to the pandemic and results

were prepared based on candidates' performance in previous public exams.

BRILLIANT RESULT

Last year, 11,15,705 students took the HSC exams between December 2 and 30, and of them, 95.57 percent passed. A total of 1,78,522 students got the highest grade point average of 5.

According to Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics, the pass rate in HSC exams this year was the highest since 1990. The second highest pass rate was 76.68

percent in 2014.

The pass rate was 71.85 percent in 2019 and 64.55 percent in 2018. A total of 47,286 students achieved GPA-5 in 2019, and 29,262 in 2018.

Dhaka education board chairman Professor Nehal Ahmed said English was a vital subjects for determining success rate of students. As exams were not held for the compulsory subject, it could have played a role in increasing the success rate.

He however could not say immediately whether

the success rate of 95.57 percent is the highest since the country's independence.

The Jashore board took first place in terms of pass rate and Chattogram was the last. Dhaka board topped the list in terms of GPA-5 achievers while Sylhet board was in the last place.

In nine foreign exam centres, 267 Bangladeshi students sat for the exams, 264 of whom passed. Ninety-two of them achieved GPA-5.

COMBINED RESULTS

Taking into account the Dakhil exams under the

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার

টেকসই ও নবায়নযোগ্য জ্বালানি উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষ (শ্রেডা), বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগ

আইইবি ভবন (১০ম-১১ তলা), রমনা, ঢাকা

www.sreda.gov.bd

নিয়োগ বিজ্ঞপ্তি

নং- ২৭.০২.০০০০.০১১.১১.০১.১৮

তারিখঃ ১৩ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২২খ্রিঃ

বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগের আওতাধীন "টেকসই ও নবায়নযোগ্য জ্বালানি উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষ (শ্রেডা)" এর অধীনে নিম্নোক্ত পদে সরাসরি নিয়োগের জন্য পদের পার্শ্ব শর্তে প্রকৃত বাংলাদেশী নাগরিকদের নিকট হতে দরখাস্ত আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছেঃ

| ক্রমিক নং | পদনাম ও বেতন স্কেল (জাতীয় বেতন স্কেল-২০১৫) | পদের সংখ্যা | শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা |
|--------------|---|----------------|--|
| ১। | সহকারী পরিচালক (জ্বালানি দফতর) টাকা ২২,০০০-৫৩,০৬০/- (৯ম গ্রেড) | ০১ (একটি) | (ক) কোন স্বীকৃত বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হইতে তড়িৎ বা যান্ত্রিক বা কেমিক্যাল প্রকৌশল বিষয়ে দ্বিতীয় শ্রেণি বা সমমানের সিজিপিএ-তে স্নাতক ডিগ্রি; এবং (খ) শিক্ষাবীর্ষনে ২ (দুই)টিতে প্রথম বিভাগ বা শ্রেণি থাকিতে হইবে; তবে কোন পরীক্ষায় তৃতীয় বিভাগ বা শ্রেণি গ্রহণযোগ্য হইবে না। |

২। চেয়ারম্যান, 'টেকসই ও নবায়নযোগ্য জ্বালানি উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষ (শ্রেডা)', বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগ, আইইবি ভবন, ১১ তলা, রমনা, ঢাকা বরাবরে জনপ্রশাসন মন্ত্রণালয়ের চাকুরীর আবেদনের মডেল ফরম অনুযায়ী আবেদন করতে হবে। আবেদন ফরম শ্রেডার নিজস্ব ওয়েবসাইট www.sreda.gov.bd এ পাওয়া যাবে।

৩। বয়সঃ ১৩/০৩/২০২২ তারিখে সর্বোচ্চ বয়স ৩০ (ত্রিশ) বৎসর। তবে মুক্তিযোদ্ধা/শহীদ মুক্তিযোদ্ধাদের পুত্র কন্যা/প্রতিবন্ধী প্রার্থীর ক্ষেত্রে বয়সের উর্ধ্বসীমা ৩২ (বত্রিশ) বছর।

শর্তাবলীঃ

- চেয়ারম্যান, শ্রেডা, বিদ্যুৎ বিভাগ, আইইবি ভবন (১১ তলা), রমনা, ঢাকা-১০০০ অনুকূলে ৫০০/- (পাঁচশত) টাকার ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে অর্ডারসহ আগামী ১৩/০৩/২০২২ বিকাল ৫.০০ ঘটিকার মধ্যে উল্লেখিত ঠিকানায় আবেদন পৌঁছাতে হবে। সরাসরি আবেদন নির্ধারিত সময়ের মধ্যে শ্রেডার অভ্যর্থনা কক্ষে রক্ষিত বস্ত্রে জমা দেয়া যাবে।
- খামের উপর পদের নাম অবশ্যই উল্লেখ করতে হবে। স্বাক্ষরবিহীন ও অসম্পূর্ণ আবেদন সরাসরি বাতিল বলে গণ্য হবে।
- গ) আবেদনপত্রের সাথে সদ্য তোলা পাসপোর্ট সাইজের ৩ কপি সত্যায়িত ছবি, সকল সনদপত্রের সত্যায়িত কপি এবং ১০ টাকা মূল্যমানের ডাক টিকেট যুক্ত প্রার্থীর ঠিকানা সন্নিবিষ্ট ১টি ফেরত খাম সংযুক্ত করতে হবে। মৌখিক পরীক্ষার সময় সকল সনদপত্রের এক সেট সত্যায়িত ফটোকপি সহ মূলকপি পেশ করতে হবে।
- ঘ) সরকারি/আধা-সরকারি/স্বায়ত্তশাসিত প্রতিষ্ঠানে চাকুরীরত প্রার্থীদের যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের মাধ্যমে আবেদন করতে হবে এবং মৌখিক পরীক্ষার সময় নিজ নিজ প্রতিষ্ঠানের অনাপত্তি সনদের মূলকপি অবশ্যই দাখিল করতে হবে।
- ঙ) লিখিত/মৌখিক পরীক্ষায় অংশগ্রহণের জন্য প্রার্থীদেরকে কোন প্রকার টিএ/ডিএ প্রদান করা হবে না।
- চ) নিয়োগের ক্ষেত্রে সরকারের সর্বশেষ বিধি-বিধান প্রযোজ্য হবে।
- ছ) কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শানো ছাড়াই বিজ্ঞপ্তিত শূন্য পদের সংখ্যা হ্রাস বৃদ্ধি এবং বিজ্ঞাপন বাতিলের অধিকার সংরক্ষণ করে।

সদস্য (প্রশাসন)

ও

আহ্বায়ক

জিডি-২৮২

নিয়োগ/পদোন্নতি বিষয়ক বিভাগীয় নির্বাচন কমিটি



Spring is here, so are its colours. Today is Pchela Falgun, which marks the first "official" day of the new season. Just like these glowing Palash flowers bring back the colours to its surroundings, this spring is expected to bring back hope, leaving behind the gloom of the season bygone.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR, ANISUR RAHMAN



Every division to get marine academy: PM

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government will establish one marine academy in each division of the country. "Our children will not only be trained here but also create the scope of employment both at home and abroad, and this is how our unemployment problem will be eradicated," she said. Hasina said this while speaking at the Mujib Borsho Graduation Parade of the 56th Batch of Bangladesh Marine Academy. Held at the academy in Chattogram, the premier joined it virtually from Gono Bhaban. The premier said the government has set up four marine academies in Pabna, Barishal, Rangpur and Sylhet this year in line with the global maritime demand. She described marine cadets as the "representatives" of Bangladesh and urged them to uphold the country's thousand-year-old civilisation and culture on the world stage.

Committee to fix economic life of all vehicles

Fourth meeting of taskforce to tackle road crash held

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A taskforce formed to tackle road crashes and bring discipline to the transport sector formed a committee to fix the economic service life of all vehicles, in a meeting yesterday. The committee is led by the BRTA chair. It will formulate recommendations to set the economic life of "all types of vehicles", including buses and trucks, Nazrul Islam, secretary of Road Transport and Highways Division, told this correspondent. The move comes around three years after a high-powered committee's recommendation in this regard. Currently, there is no fixed economic service life for such vehicles. Owners of decades-old buses and trucks exploit this loophole and run rickety vehicles. In yesterday's meeting, the taskforce led by Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal also decided to take strict action against illegal driving schools, sources confirmed. The government formed the task force in October 2019 to implement a 111-point recommendation, placed by a committee led by former shipping minister Shajahan Khan, to curb accidents and bring discipline on the road. Yesterday was its fourth meeting at the home ministry. Despite more than three years of formation, most of its previous decisions remain unimplemented. **UNIMPLEMENTED RECOMMENDATIONS** Though the transport authorities banned over 20-year-old buses and over 25-year-old goods-carrying vehicles in the capital in 2010, many such run-down vehicles still operate on the district and inter-district highways, posing severe risk of road crashes and environmental pollution.

Currently, there is no fixed economic service life for such vehicles. Owners of decades-old buses and trucks exploit this loophole and run rickety vehicles.

AT A GLANCE

- Ban on buses used for over 20yrs; trucks used for over 25yrs
- Removal of illegal three-wheelers from highways
- Strict action against illegal driving schools

In March 2019, a report prepared by the Shajahan Khan-led committee called for setting economic service life of buses, trucks, covered vans and human-hauliers and stop operation of buses used for over 20 years and trucks for over 25 years. Identifying old vehicles as a key reason behind road accidents, the report said such vehicles go out of order on the roads, which also leads to traffic congestion. Following the recommendation, BRTA in June last year held a meeting with experts, transport leaders, vehicle manufacturers and importers in this regard. The committee formed yesterday was tasked with providing recommendations about how the vehicles would be declared faulty after their economic life expires, a participant of the meeting said. Benazir Ahmed, inspector general of police, secretaries of different ministries concerned and transport leaders, including Shajahan Khan, participated in the closed-door meeting.

TAQI MURDER

8 held over attack on newspaper office

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

A court in Narayanganj yesterday placed eight persons on a one-day remand each over attacking a newspaper office on Saturday. The court of Senior Judicial Magistrate Kazi Mohammad Mohsen gave the order, said inspector Md Asaduzzaman of Narayanganj court. Earlier, police arrested the eight after raiding different areas of the city. The arrestees are -- Shyamol Saha Laxman, Krishna Paul, Md Nasir Hossain, Md Ibrahim, Liton Das, Md Faysal, Md Hasib and Billal Hossain. On Saturday noon, the office of local newspaper "Dainik Somoyer Narayanganj" at Chashara came under attack, allegedly by supporters of Ajmeri Osman, son of late Jatiya Party MP Nasim Osman, and a nephew of lawmaker Shamim Osman. Victims said the attack was in response to a news report over Ajmeri's involvement with the murder of teenager Tanwir Muhammad Taqi. The newspaper's editor and publisher Zabed Ahmed Juel said the news' content was based on the murder case's draft charge sheet, submitted by Rab in 2014. "Ajmeri's name

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Of renewed hope and reconciliation

Spring is in the air

DIPAN NANDY

There's a message floating in the air. Those who can read it know that spring is already here. For the rest, there's plenty of other signs too. The grey, colourless leaves are falling from the trees, covering their branches with younger ones. They are now home to the cuckoos, who are once again back with their melodies. After a particularly long and harsh winter, it seems like years since spring's been here.

Today marks the first "official" day of spring. Pchela Falgun, the first day of the season, which runs across two Bangla months -- Falgun and Chaitra. In 1585, Mughal emperor Akbar introduced 14 festivals -- one of which was the "Spring Festival". The festival has gone through a revival of sorts in contemporary era metropolitan Dhaka from Bangla year 1401. Earlier, Pchela Falgun was celebrated on the 13th of February. However, with the modification of the Bangla calendar it has been celebrated on February 14 for the last two years. That it falls on the same day as the Valentine's Day only makes the festivities blossom. One can even call the day the official "season of love". The colours of spring can mainly be found in the variety of flowers seen all over the capital on the day. Be it Ramna Park, Hatirjheel, or the Central Shaheed Minar, the flowers are everywhere, feeding the very soul of the citizens. Young women go traditional with "Basanti" coloured Sharis and crowns adorned with marigold-Palash, while men can be seen in colourful panjabis. The colours of the season reflect on the attires as well. Meanwhile, preparations are in full swing for the day's festivities. However, maintaining health guidelines is of utmost priority when it comes to everything organised by Spring Festival Celebration Council. Organisers have informed that the festival is scheduled for the morning at "Muktamancha" of Suhrawardy Udyan in the capital. Meanwhile, another programme has been organised at Shilpakala Academy. All in all, a festive mood is expected to prevail everywhere today. This is a welcome break from the gloom of the never-ending pandemic as well as the lonely winter that threatened to stay here forever.



Dhaka residents protest proposed water tariff hike

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Residents of Dhaka yesterday demanded cancellation of the Wasa initiative to increase water tariff by 20 percent. Under the banner "Bangladesh Sadharon Nagorik Samaj" they held a rally in front of Wasa Bhaban at Karwan Bazar. They also demanded resignation of the Wasa managing director for his "failure" to ensure supply of quality water at low cost. The speakers said though Wasa is increasing water tariff again and again, they have failed to improve its quality. Therefore, the decision to increase 20 percent tariff is an imprudent one. The rally was presided over by convener of Bangladesh Nagorik Samaj Mohiuddin Ahmed. Chief coordinator of Ganosamhati Andolon Zonayed Saki, leader of Communist Party of Bangladesh Ruhin Hossain Prince and convener of Janoshartha Rakkha Jatiya Committee Aminul Islam Bulu addressed the rally. The potential increase in water prices is expected to add to the woes of Dhaka residents after last November's diesel and kerosene price hikes and the continued rise in edible oil prices, which according to traders may increase further ahead of Ramadan.



Homeless Shamsuddin, around 65 years of age, makes a living by seeking alms in the Shahbagh area. But as he sits and waits for passers-by to come, he spends the time by resorting to a familiar comfort -- reading everything from whatever newspaper he can get his hands on.

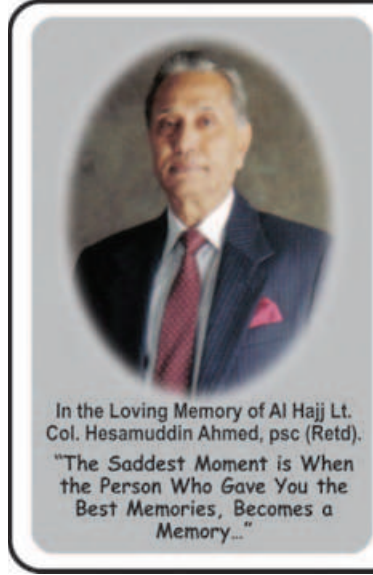
PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

PRAYER TIMING FEB 14



| | 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



10th DEATH ANNIVERSARY

Al Hajj Lt. Col. Hesamuddin Ahmed, psc (Retd.), served as a Secretary to the Government of Bangladesh in various ministries. He was the Administrator of the Dhaka Municipality, Chairman of RAJUK and other important corporations. Being the Founder President of the National Shooting Federation Bangladesh, the Founder Member and Founding Vice Chairman RAOWA, his contributions will always be remembered. He was associated with UCEP Bangladesh, SAHIC and various sports and social welfare organizations. In recognition of his remarkable contributions in the field of Sports development and social welfare he was awarded the National Sports Award (2003), Atish Dipannkar Gold Medal, Poet Sarojini Naidu Gold Medal, C R Das Gold Medal etc. -Dearly Missed & Always Cherished by Wife, Son, Daughter, Daughter in Law Son in Law & Granddaughters

2 children
to stay with
Japanese
mother: SC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Supreme Court yesterday directed that two children, Nakano Jasmine Malika (12) and Nakano Laila Lina (10) – who were brought from Japan to Bangladesh in February last year by their father, Bangladesh born US citizen Imran Sharif – will stay in the custody of their mother Japanese citizen Nakano Eriko.

The children will remain in custody of their mother until the family court disposes of the lawsuit lodged by Imran on February 28 last year seeking custody of the minors. Imran can visit them at convenient times, on consensus with Eriko, the SC said in the order.

FEB 7 UP POLLS

Cops yet to
arrest gun-
toting men

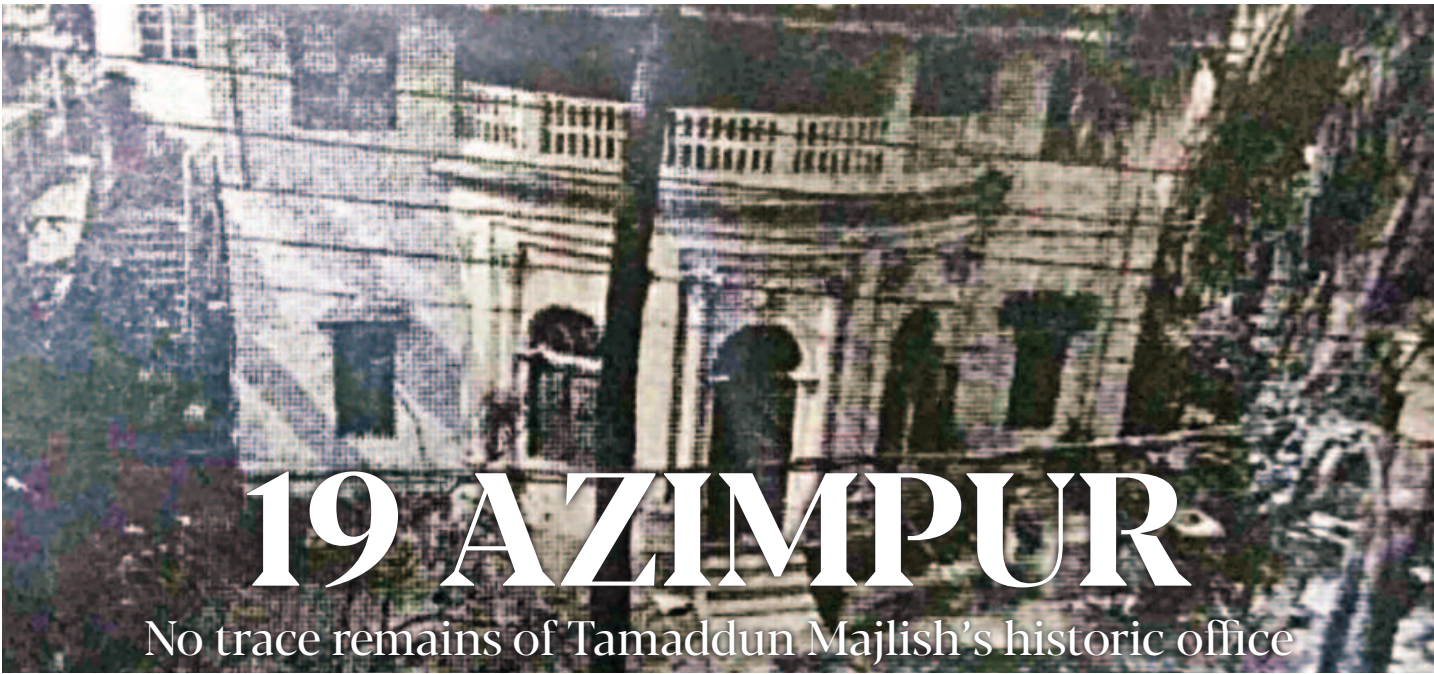
STAFF CORRESPONDENT,
Chattagram

Even after seven days, police could not arrest any of those who opened fire during a recent Union Parishad election in Chattogram.

Supporters of the ruling party-backed candidate Md Aktar Hossain and independent candidate Md Jasim Uddin, the shooters clashed at two centres during Khagoria Union Parishad election on February 7.

At that time, Nasir Uddin, Rubel and Joynal

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



19 AZIMPUR
No trace remains of Tamaddun Majlish’s historic office

The Language Movement did not just come to be. Behind the historic movement, that brought about a turn of events for Bangladesh, are a million stories – of people, of premises, of places. In this 10-part series, we explore some of the places and premises vital to the movement. Establishments that we’ve lost to time, buildings that today bear no sign of the glories they once played host to. For part two, we take you to 19 Azimpur, the office of Tamaddun Majlish and many others.



Besides the Majlish, 19 Azimpur also hosted the “Shainik” newspaper, monthly “Dyuti” and “Amader Press”. The first book on the movement was published from here as well. In 2005, the premise was turned into an apartment.

PHOTO: COLLECTED, PRABIR DAS

DIPAN NANDY

“When the Language Movement was still in its infancy, Principal Abul Kashem nurtured it with a mother’s care. We were inspired by his company, most of which was hosted by 19 Azimpur.”

Such was the significance afforded to 19 Azimpur by language veteran Gaziul Haque. Just 17 days after Pakistan’s inception, Tamuddun Majlish started its own journey from this very building. Throughout the early days of the Language Movement, the building played an important role.

But none of this can be found today. As modernisation set in on the capital, in 2005, the tidy, two-storey building was taken over by an apartment.

It stands close to the Azimpur Graveyard. Unfortunately there’s no memorial stone or even a sign



that would retell its historic significance to an unknowing passer-by.

During the early days of the movement, this building virtually became its headquarter. The first book on the movement was published from here. Along with Tamaddun Majlish’s

office, it hosted the “Shainik” newspaper, one of the main mouthpieces of the movement.

Tamaddun Majlish was founded by Principal Abul Kashem, who used to live at 19 Azimpur as well. The organisation got its start on September 1, 1947. Merely two weeks later, on

September 15, the first book of the movement “State Language of Pakistan: Bengali or Urdu?” was published from here.

On November 14, 1948, the first edition of Shainik was published. From 1952, the monthly “Dyuti” was published from here as well. With so many publications coming out from here, 19 Azimpur became a gathering spot for writers and intellectuals of the time.

The building also hosted two more important offices, those of “Amader Press” and “Tamaddun Library”.

According to historians, 19 Azimpur was central to numerous activities related to the development of various socio-cultural initiatives as well as the Bangla language itself. The establishment of Bangla College, implementation of Bangla curricular books, establishment of folklore organisation, and more were

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Coming home,
in coffins

Bodies of 3 migrant
workers arrive over the
last 3 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Body of another Bangladeshi migrant, who died of hypothermia on a boat while crossing the Mediterranean Sea to enter Italy illegally, have arrived home yesterday.

The body of Kamrul Hasan Bappy (21), of Shariatpur’s Naria upazila, arrived in a Turkish Airlines flight at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in the capital in the afternoon.

Fakhrul Alam, assistant director at the Expatriates’ Welfare Desk at the airport, confirmed it.

With this, bodies of three of the seven Bangladeshi migrants arrived home in the last three days.

The seven Bangladeshis were found dead by Italian Coastguard while conducting a rescue operation some 18 miles off the coast of Lampedusa, an uninhabited island near Lampedusa, on January 25, according to Reuters.

The boat carried a total of 273 Bangladeshis, said Bangladesh embassy in Italy. Earlier, bodies of Joy Talukder and Emran Howladar, both from Madaripur, were received by their families on Saturday and Friday.

Kamrul’s father Abul Bashar, who received his son’s body at the airport, said initially he was reluctant to send his son abroad in such illegal way knowing the danger.

However, Kamrul already made up his mind as he was “brainwashed” by a local trafficker, he said. “It’s an irreplaceable loss for me,” said the shocked father, adding that his son was earning good money at home by running a grocery.

He said Kamrul started his journey from Bangladesh on November 11 last year and initially reached Dubai on a visit visa, and from there entered Libya. Bashar alleged in Libya, his son was kept hostage by both Bangladeshi and Libyan traffickers for about two months before the boat journey. He said he had to pay Tk 7.30 lakh in

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD
Road Division, Lalmonirhat
+Tel: 0591-61770
Email: eerhdal@yahoo.com, eelal@rhd.gov.bd

e-Tender Notice

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will accept in e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

e-Tenders are invited in e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Executive Engineer (PE), RHD, Road Division, Lalmonirhat for:

Repair seal-coat work at ch. 2nd(p) & 3rd (p) km of Patgram By-Pass (Z-5904) Road under Road Division, Lalmonirhat during the year 2021-2022:

| Sl No. | Tender ID No. | Tender Ref. No. | Tender last selling | Tender closing date | Tender opening date | Tendering method |
|--------|---------------|-------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| 1. | 660287 | eGP-35/EE/LRD/2021-2022 | 02-Mar-2022 17:00 | 03-Mar-2022 13:00 | 03-Mar-2022 13:00 | OTM |

Reference No. 137
Date: 13-02-2022
GD-285

Khalid Saifullah Sardar
ID No. 602287
Executive Engineer (C.C.), RHD
Road Division, Lalmonirhat

Dhaka South City Corporation
Office of the Executive Engineer
Zone-02 (Khilgaon), Dhaka

Ref No. 46.207.014.24.02.08-2022

e-Tender Notice

e-Tenders are invited through e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Executive Engineer, Zone-2, Dhaka South City Corporation for the procurement of following packages, which will be available at e-GP website from 17/02/2022 at 22.00.

| Sl No. | Tender ID Ref. No. & Package No. | Name of works | Last selling date & time | Tender closing date & time |
|--------|--|---|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 | Tender ID-658233 Ref No. 46.207.014.24.02.79.2021 Date: 02-11-2021 Package- egpdscc/z2/btc22 | Repairing and maintenance work of different infrastructure under Zone 2 of DSCC (FY: 2021-2022) | 09-Mar-2022 17:00 | 10-Mar-2022 12:00 |
| 2 | Tender ID- 658305 Ref No. 46.207.014.24.02.078.2021 Date: 25.10.2021 Package- egpdscc/z2/w01 graveyard | Development work of Khilgaon Graveyard under Ward No. 01 of Zone 02 DSCC | 20-Mar-2022 17:00 | 21-Mar-2022 12:00 |

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

Saiful Islam
Executive Engineer
Engineering Division, Zone-02
Dhaka South City Corporation
eng.zone2dscc@gmail.com

ডিএসসিসি/পিআরডি/১৯১/২০২১-২২
জিডি-২৮৯

Taking the
easy way out?

Private hospital in Savar
falters with medical waste
management

AKLAKUR RAHMAN AKASH, Savar

Just a few days ago, this correspondent came across four children collecting medical waste from a temporary garbage station of Super Medical Hospital, a private facility in Savar.

With bare hands, they were gathering discarded materials like saline bags, syringes and testing kits.

While it’s well known that dumping medical waste in open spaces is a violation of medical waste management rules and poses various health hazards, this example helps paint the story of exactly how it can affect the most vulnerable children.

Talking to The Daily Star, one of the children said, “While separating the waste, needles pierce our hands and feet, for which we take tetanus shots three times in a year in advance.”

He also said they work for one Toslim Mia, who collects all kinds of waste from the hospital.

Contacted, Toslim Mia said the hospital authorities gave him Tk 2,000 monthly for collecting their waste for the last two years. Toslim said after separating the waste, it’s taken to a



warehouse, from where it’s sold to customers.

According to the waste management guidelines, the hospital is supposed to separate its waste into three separate bins to help with their safe disposal. But according to Toslim’s claims, the hospital fails to do this and rather pays him to do it.

Md Selim Raza, managing director of Super Medical Hospital, however, said they have an agreement with Prism Bangladesh Foundation, which is tasked with collecting medical waste from the hospital every day. “We pay Prism around Tk 17,500 each month for this service,” claimed Selim, adding that if any hospital worker dumps medical waste in another place, they will intervene.

Contacted, Mazharul Islam, programme coordinator of Prism Bangladesh, confirmed that they have an agreement with the hospital.

“If they (hospital authorities) give the waste to another organisation or person, they’re breaking

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Janata Bank Limited
Procurement Department
Head Office
48, Motijheel C/A
Dhaka-1000

**International Tender Notice for
Importing of 6,000 (Six Thousand) Reams
CBS-1 Security Cheque Paper**

Date: 13.02.2022

Tenders is invited from authorized Local Agents/Representatives on behalf of their foreign Principal/Manufacturers for importing of 6,000 (Six Thousand) Reams CBS-1 Security Cheque Paper.

| | | |
|-----|---|--|
| 1. | Tender No. | PD/DGM/Security Cheque Paper/2022. |
| 2. | Name of goods | Importing of 6,000 (Six Thousand) Reams CBS-1 Security Cheque Paper. |
| 3. | Source of fund | Bank’s own budget. |
| 4. | Eligibility of tenderers | Interested authorized Local Agents/Representatives will have to submit the following documents along with the tender: (a) Attested copy of up-to-date (2021-2022) tender license. (b) Attested copy of Bangladesh Bank Indenting Registration. (c) Attested copy of Indenters Registration Certificate from CCI&E Office. (d) Attested copy of up-to-date income tax certificate showing TIN number. (e) Attested copy of VAT registration certificate. (f) Attested copy of bank solvency certificate. (g) Attested copy of experience certificate for importing of CBS-1 Security Cheque Paper at any schedule bank in Bangladesh. Copy of work order will not be acceptable. |
| 5. | Cost of tender document | Tk 3,000/- (three thousand) only (non-refundable) in the form of Pay Order/Demand Draft from any branch of Janata Bank Limited favouring Janata Bank Limited, Head Office, Dhaka. |
| 6. | Amount of earnest money/tender security | Tk 2,50,000/- (two lac fifty thousand) only (refundable). |
| 7. | Name & address of the office selling tender document | Procurement Department, Janata Bank Limited, Head Office, 4th Floor, 48, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000 during office hour with an application in tenderers/bidders letterhead pad addressing the undersigned. |
| 8. | Date, time & address of the office receiving & opening tender document | Procurement Department, Janata Bank Limited, Head Office, 4th Floor, 48, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000. |
| 9. | Last date & time for selling tender document | 28.03.2022 up to office hours. |
| 10. | Tender submission date & time | 29.03.2022 up to 3:15pm (Local time). |
| 11. | Tender opening date & time | 29.03.2022 at 3:30pm , in presence of the tenderers, if any. |
| 12. | Name & address of the office inviting tender | Janata Bank Limited, Procurement Department, Head Office, 4th Floor, 48, Motijheel C/A, Dhaka-1000, Tel: 223387402, 223385718. |
| 13. | Special instructions: a) No tender document will be sold on the tender opening date. b) If it is not possible to receive and open the tender on the schedule date for any unavoidable circumstances, the same will be received & opened on the next working date at the same time and same venue. No further notice will be served in this regard. c) Any information regarding this tender may be known from the office of the undersigned. d) All activities in connection with this tender will be governed by ‘PPA-2006 & PPR-2008’. e) Bank authority reserves the right to accept or reject any or all tenders without assigning any reason whatsoever. | |

GD-286

Md. Shakhawat Hossain
Deputy General Manager



Omar Sani and Moushumi



Nusrat Imrose Tisha and Mostofa Sarwar Farooki



Bidya Sinha Mim and Soni Poddar



Bipasha Hayat and Tauquir Ahmed



Srijit Mukherji and Mithila

LOVE is in the air

SHAH ALAM SHAZU & SHARMIN JOYA

'Love' is an emotion, a life-altering experience. For stars in the showbiz industry, especially when they work together, it takes different forms, on and off-screen. Even though romance is never only limited to Valentine's Day, it is nice to stop and appreciate small gestures by your loved ones.

Zahid Hasan and Mou, having built a beautiful home together with two kids, finally divulged the secret behind their happy marriage, "Love is the most powerful force in the world. However, more than that, you need trust and respect in a marriage. This is why we are compatible," he smiles.

Tauquir Ahmed echoes similar sentiments. "Relationships also require sacrifices. You must always respect your partner," he says.

Tauquir Ahmed and Bipasha Hayat became friends while working together. Soon, their friendship blossomed into love. They have been happily married for many years, and have two children.

Mostofa Sarwar Farooki and Nusrat Imrose Tisha have set an example for couples in showbiz. They were recently blessed with a baby girl. "We are immensely passionate about our work," says Tisha. "We lead our lives with complete cooperation from one another. Without love, life is incomplete." Dhallywood stars Moushumi and Omar

Sani fell in love at the height of their careers. More than two decades later, they are still going strong, and have two kids. "For me, family is above all else, but I also make no compromises when it comes to my work. You need the heart and desire to make your relationships work," says Moushumi.

Mir Sabbir and Farzana Chumki got married on Valentine's Day. "If human beings could treat each other with more love and kindness, the world would be a better place," says Mir Sabbir. "Obviously, this day is special to us, and we take time off to appreciate each other."

Tasnuva Tisha tied the knot to Syed Asker on February 2, this year. They are spending time together at Syed's house in Nilphamari, for Valentine's Day. "He has been surprising me with gifts the whole week, marking Rose Day, Teddy Day and Chocolate Day, says Tisha. "On Promise Day, he promised that he will not fight with me. We also plan to go on rickshaw rides at TSC."

Newly married couple Bidya Sinha Mim and Soni Poddar are spending the day with their families. "Valentine's Day to me is for my loved ones, I will spend my time with them," says Mim.

Rafiath Rashid Mithila is busy shooting in Dhaka, while Srijit Mukherjee is in Mumbai. They do not have any special plans. "I miss him. I will spend the day with my daughter Ayra, and wear a saree. My parents will cook our favourite dishes, we will celebrate the day together," says Mithila.

Regardless of their plans today, the aforementioned stars echoed one sentiment: there is nothing wrong with spoiling your partner a little more in celebration of love.



Mou and Zahid Hasan



Syed Asker and Tasnuva Tisha



Mir Sabbir and Farzana Chumki

PHOTOS: STAR & COLLECTED

Arafat and Raba release PREMIKA

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Popular musician and producer Arafat Mohsin and influencer-turned-singer Raba Khan released their special Valentine's Day track "Premika" yesterday.

The song is the 5th track from their album "Muhurto", which is available on all streaming platforms worldwide, alongside Jhakanaka Project's YouTube channel.

"Premika", presented by Lovegen Bangladesh, has been shot in Cox's Bazar. Raba Khan wrote and tuned the song herself.



Ranveer Singh's '83' to release on two OTT platforms

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Ranveer Singh starrer and Kabir Khan directorial "83" is the second film to have release on two OTT platforms at a time. Netflix has the Hindi rights to the film, while the Tamil, Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam versions will stream on

Disney+ Hotstar. According to reports, the film will drop on both platforms by this month.

Although the film hit theatres last December, its box-office performance was hampered by the third wave of Covid-19.

Ranveer plays Kapil Dev in the film, which portrays India's victory in the 1983 cricket World Cup at Lord's.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

COUNTRYWIDE

BRAHMAPUTRA CHAR

Farmers buying diesel at higher prices

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Farmers living in remote char areas of Brahmaputra river in Kurigram's Chilmari upazila are buying diesel at Tk 83 instead of Tk 80 a litre. They are buying the fuel essential for running diesel-run shallow pump machines at higher prices as they have to walk around three to five kilometres on sandy char to fetch diesel from the mainland market.

So, they are buying it at higher prices from floating oil depots on the char. Not only the char farmers but also 500-600 boatmen are buying diesel at higher prices.

Around 1200-1500 barrels of diesel are being sold daily in the char areas of Chilmari, said local traders.

Hormuz Ali, a farmer of the remote Char Sholmari area, said he was buying diesel from oil vendors in Char at Tk 83 per litre. If he wants to buy diesel at the fair price

of Tk 80, he has to walk about five kilometres on sandy char to reach the mainland market.

Boro paddy season has started so the demand for diesel has also increased, he said.

Sekendar Mandal, another farmer from Shakha Hati area, a remote char on the Brahmaputra bed, it is the destiny of char people that they will buy goods at a high rate and sell their agri-products at a low rate.

They have been living in chars for ages accepting this harsh reality, he said adding, that "The government should take effective steps to provide fertilisers, seeds, pesticides and diesel to the char farmers at a fair price at their doorsteps."

"Now I need 35-40 litres of diesel every day. I am buying diesel from local oil vendors at Tk 83 per litre", he added.

Abu Sayeed, a boatman at Ashtami Char, said he needs

around 40-50 litres of diesel every day.

"I am buying diesel at higher prices from the local oil vendors on the char as I have no alternative," he also said.

All the boatmen like Abu Sayeed are running their boats buying diesel at a higher price, he added. "Sometimes I buy diesel from the mainland market at a fair price, but most of the times I have to buy diesel from local vendors at a higher price," said Sudhir Chandra Das, a fisherman of Faluar Char.

However, Shahjahan Ali, a diesel vendor on the Brahmaputra bed, claimed that they were selling diesel at Tk 81 each litre but not at Tk 83.

"We have to sell diesel at a higher price due to the additional cost of transporting oil barrels to inaccessible chars from the mainland. The char farmers have no objection to it," he said.



Farmers and boatmen crowd to buy diesel from local vendors at a higher rate in a remote char under Chilmari upazila of Kurigram.

PHOTO: STAR

Schools may reopen

FROM PAGE 1

be able to tackle the Omicron variant of coronavirus soon.

Hasina said her government is giving the utmost importance to technical and vocational education and setting up technical school in

every upazila across the country.

"Our students are very meritorious. If we can give them proper education, they'll be able to grab the job opportunities to be created at home and abroad following the fourth industrial revolution [4IR],"

she said.

Hasina said students will need job-oriented education as only the traditional academic degrees are not enough in the era of the 4th IR.

She has always given importance to science and technology education since

assuming power in 1996, the PM said.

To ensure multidimensional education, she said her government is now establishing university in every district, and setting up different types of universities.

Nurul Huda and other outgoing election commissioners paid a courtesy call on President Abdul Hamid yesterday.

I think I have worked

FROM PAGE 12

"I think I've worked successfully. I've conducted all the elections (during my tenure)," he said.

Asked about the fairness of the elections during his tenure, the CEC said, "Not all the polls were fully fair. In some cases, there were

incidents of violence and ballot snatching.

"We had to stop some elections and held those again."

Photo of a martyr

FROM PAGE 12

took the picture very quickly.

I went to Amanul's house in the evening and saw that the picture. A few copies of it were made and one was sent to The Azad because it was heard that the newspaper's editor Abul Kalam Shamsuddin had resigned from the provincial council.

I had also heard that the true story of the 21st February incident would be published in The Azad. And so, arrangements were also made to print the picture in the paper.

However, around two o'clock in the morning, The Azad's authorities, either Maulana Akram Khan or Sadrul Anam Khan (Khalil Mia), had

objected and the picture was ultimately was not published.

A copy of the picture was also sent to the students and was later published in a pamphlet brought out by them.

The pamphlets, however, were later seized by police.

Kazi Mohammad Idris was an employee of the

Information Department during the language movement in 1952.

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

Translated by Shamsuddoza Sajen

More interest in imports than exploration

FROM PAGE 1

Deltas tend to be gas-rich and there is no reason to believe that Bangladesh, being on the world's largest delta, is an exception, he told the event organised by the Centre for Policy Dialogue.

"Two-thirds of the country, namely the vast plains in the west and southern coastal areas, remain unexplored."

Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company Limited (BAPEX) has the capacity to drill three or four exploration wells each year, he said. "But they drilled one well in the

last two years. Aggressive exploration is needed to face the current and future situations.

"Before 2012, we used to say we cannot explore gas offshore due to a dispute with Myanmar. But now the dispute is over and we still don't do anything. Meanwhile, Myanmar explored many offshore gas sources after 2012."

He added that the dependence on imported LNG will crush the country's economy.

Buet Professor Dr M Tanim said there had been no notable gas exploration since 1999, the year the Bibiyana Gas field was

explored.

The BAPEX has not taken any big initiative by conducting seismic surveys in the new areas, he added.

CPD Research Director Khondaker Golam Moazzem and Senior Research Associate Abdullah Fahad presented a keynote at the dialogue.

Imported LNG is 24 times costlier than locally produced gas. The financial burden for imported LNG was about Tk 6,500 crore in the last fiscal year, said Moazzem. "The cost will be even higher this fiscal due to the rise in LNG prices."

In the short term,

LNG imports may need to continue to meet the existing demand, particularly for sectors where no immediate alternative is available, he said.

In the medium to long term, Bangladesh needs to consider the alternatives to LNG import. The country also needs to emphasise gas supply from domestic gas reserves.

High import prices will have an adverse impact on the consumer's purchasing power and LNG dependency is not environmentally sustainable, said CPD Executive Director Fahmida Khatun.



Russian Navy's diesel-electric Kilo class submarine Rostov-on-Don sails through the Bosphorus Strait yesterday on the way to the Black Sea past the city Istanbul as Sultanahmet mosque (L) and Hagia Sophia mosque (R) are seen in the background.

PHOTO: AFP

Swiss vote to ban nearly all tobacco adverts

AFP, Geneva

The Swiss yesterday voted to tighten their notoriously lax tobacco laws by banning virtually all advertising of the hazardous products, partial results showed.

Nearly 56 percent of voters and 15 of Switzerland's 26 cantons backed the near-total tobacco advertising ban, according to official results after all ballots had been tallied in 22 cantons.

Switzerland lags far behind most wealthy nations in restricting tobacco advertising – a situation widely blamed on hefty lobbying by some of the world's biggest tobacco companies headquartered in the country. Currently, most tobacco advertising is legal at a national level, except for ads on TV and radio, and ones that specifically target minors.

War ‘hysteria has reached its peak’

Says Kremlin, slams US war misinformation

AFP, Moscow

The Kremlin yesterday denounced US “peak hysteria” surrounding the Ukraine conflict but said Russian President Vladimir Putin and US leader Joe Biden had agreed to continue dialogue.

Speaking after new phone talks between Putin and Biden, the Kremlin's top foreign policy advisor Yuri Ushakov told a conference call: “Hysteria has reached its peak.”

Ushakov said that the US side had requested to arrange phone talks between Biden and Putin on Saturday even though such a call had initially been planned for Monday.

The two leaders spoke after Washington warned that an all-out Russian invasion of Ukraine could begin “any day”.

Russian leader Vladimir Putin on Saturday condemned such claims as a “provocation”.

Ushakov also complained about the US claims, saying that Americans even released “the date of the Russian invasion”.

“We don't understand why false information about our intentions is being passed to the media,” he told reporters.

Russia is demanding binding security guarantees from the West that includes a pledge to roll Nato forces out of eastern Europe and to never expand into Ukraine. Washington has flatly rejected the demands while offering to discuss a new European disarmament agreement with Moscow.

Meanwhile, Russia's ambassador to Sweden Viktor Tatarintsev told a Swedish newspaper that western sanctions wont hurt Russia.

“We have already had so many sanctions and in that sense they've had a positive effect on our economy and agriculture,” said the veteran diplomat.

In another development, a Russian anti-submarine destroyer chased off a US submarine near the Kuril Islands, forcing it to leave the country's territorial waters, Moscow said Saturday. The US military however denied the account.

Tunisia leader extends powers over judiciary

AFP, Tunis

Tunisian President Kais Saied yesterday officially replaced a key judicial watchdog and gave himself powers to sack judges, as well as banning them from going on strike.

Hours after the decree was published on Sunday, hundreds of protesters demonstrated in central Tunis to voice their fears of an independent judiciary.

Saied's decree came a week after he said he would dissolve the High Judicial Council (CSM), prompting a nationwide shutdown of courts by judges. Saied last July sacked the government, suspended parliament and seized a range of powers before moving to rule by decree, sparking fears for what had been seen as the only democracy to emerge from the Arab Spring uprisings.

Covid curb protests: Paris cops hold 81

AFP, Paris

Paris police said they arrested 97 people who defied a ban on a Canada-style protest convoy over coronavirus regulations to try block traffic in the capital, with 81 still in custody yesterday. Thousands of demonstrators from across France attempted to block traffic in the capital Saturday in a self-proclaimed “freedom convoy” of cars, trucks and campervans. Hundreds of them continued on to Brussels yesterday. The protest is one of several worldwide inspired by the truckers' standoff with authorities in Canada. In Canada, police yesterday said they have arrested more protesters opposing Covid-19 restrictions and blocking a key trade route along the border with the United States, more than 24 hours after authorities moved in to impose a court order.

Pakistan isn't part of a certain camp: PM

DAWN ONLINE

Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan yesterday dispelled the impression that Pakistan was more inclined towards China than any other country, clarifying that the country's strategic direction was to “maintain relations with everyone”. “We do not want to be in a position that implies as if we are a part of a certain camp,” the prime minister said while interacting with journalists, former diplomats and representatives of think tanks in Islamabad. Imran said he believed that Rawalpindi — home to the country's military establishment — was also clear about Pakistan's strategic position.



I can give my life for my brother and he can give his life for me. ... The conflict is in Yogi (Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath) Ji's mind.

Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra in response to the BJP's charge that there is a conflict between the siblings

GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH
Central Medical Stores Depot (CMSD)
Department of Health Services, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Dhaka.
Tender for Goods (Single Lot)

Ref. No CMSD/HSM-2113/ICT/21-22/Proc.-4/37
Dated: 13/02/2022

| KEY INFORMATION | | | | |
|---|---|---|-------------------------------------|---|
| 1 | Procurement Method / Document | ICT Open | | |
| FUNDING INFORMATION | | | | |
| 2 | Source of Funds | Development Budget (Aid Grant / Credit) | | |
| 3 | Development Partner | | | |
| PARTICULAR INFORMATION | | | | |
| 4 | Project / Programme Code | | | |
| 5 | Project / Programme Name | 4th Health Population & Nutrition Sector Program(HPNPSP) | | |
| 6 | Tender Package No | HSM-2113 | | |
| 7 | Tender Package Name | Procurement of "Blood Irradiator" | | |
| 8 | Tender Publication Date | 15/02/2022 | | |
| 9 | Tender Last Selling Date | 30/03/2022 | | |
| 10 | Tender Closing Date and time | 31/03/2022 11:00 AM | | |
| 11 | Tender Opening Date and time | 31/03/2022 11:50 AM | | |
| 12 Name and Address of the Office(s) | | | | |
| | -Selling Tender Document(Principal) | Central Medical Stores Depot, 30, Shahid Taj Uddin Ahmed Sharani, Tejgaon, Dhaka-1208. Tender Document will be delivered from the counter of CMSD to the tenderers or their local agents. | | |
| | -Selling Tender Document(Others) | CMSD | | |
| | -Receiving Tender Document | Do | | |
| | -Opening Tender Document | Do | | |
| 13 | Place/Date/Time for Pre-Tender Meeting | Central Medical Stores Depot (CMSD) 28/02/2022 11:50 AM | | |
| INFORMATION FOR TENDERER | | | | |
| 14 | Eligibility of Tenderer | Tender will be conducted through the International Competitive Tender (ICT) procedures specified in the tender schedule and PPA-2006 & PPR-2008. | | |
| 15 | Brief Description of Goods or Works | Procurement of "Blood Irradiator" - 01 No. | | |
| 16 | Brief Description of Related Services | As per Technical Specification | | |
| 17 | Tender Document Price | BDT 4,000/- (Bangladesh Taka four thousand) or USD 50.00 (United State Dollar Fifty) only. The method of payment will be in pay order from any scheduled Bank in Bangladesh. | | |
| 17 | Lot No | Identification | Location | Tender Security Amount in Taka |
| | Single Lot | Procurement of "Blood Irradiator" | Central Medical Stores Depot (CMSD) | BDT 8,00,000.00 or USD 9,000.00 or equivalent amount in freely convertible currency. |
| | | | | To be delivered on or before 12 weeks after opening of the letter of credit for foreign suppliers or after signing of the contract for domestic suppliers. Tenders offering delivery beyond 12 weeks will be treated as non-responsive. |
| PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS | | | | |
| 18 | Name of Official Inviting Tender | Mohammad Mukhlesur Rahman Sarker | | |
| 19 | Designation of Official Inviting Tender | Director (Joint Secretary) | | |
| 20 | Address of Official Inviting Tender | 30 Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmed Sharani, Tejgaon, Dhaka. | | |
| 21 | Contact details of Official Inviting Tender | Tel. No: 88-2-48115486 E-mail: cmsdstore@dhaka.net | | |
| The procuring entity reserves the right to accept or reject all tenders | | | | |

Director (Joint Secretary)
Central Medical Stores Depot(CMSD)
Health Services Division
Ministry of Health & Family Welfare
88-2-48115486
e-mail : cmsdstore@dhaka.net.

GD- 287

BANGABANDHU SHEIKH MUJIBUR RAHMAN MARITIME UNIVERSITY, BANGLADESH
We Strive for Maritime Excellence
Offers Globally Competitive Education Pertinent to the Needs of the Industry

ADMISSION OPEN

Bachelor of Maritime Studies (BoMS)

BSMRMU HIGHLIGHTS

- The first Specialized Public University of Bangladesh in Maritime sector
- Offers career-focused programmes with innovative, specialized courses
- Blends national and international facilities
- Merit based scholarship and award

CAREER PROSPECTS

- Academic career in maritime institutions at home & abroad
- Exclusive opportunity to build research career in Maritime field
- Career in fields related to ports, shipping, energy, fisheries, environment and planning etc.
- Legal consultancy on maritime affairs at home and abroad
- Port, shipping and shipbuilding industries, ship Surveyor, ship chartering, ship brokering etc

KEY DATES/EVENTS

Application Submission Deadline: 28 February 2022
Declaration of eligible list of candidates: 03 March 2022
Registration: 06-31 March 2022
Class Start: 03 April 2022

ELIGIBILITY

Ex-Cadets of Bangladesh Marine Academy, Chittagong, from 1st to 26th Batch.

PROGRAMME FEATURE

A 145 Credit Programme Breakdown is as follows:

- Pre-sea Training, Shipboard Training, Preparatory for CoC-3-126 Credit
- Course Work-06 credit
- Individual Study Programme-03 Credit
- Thesis-10 Credit

Application Procedure:

Applicants are requested to download the Application Form and send into the email address with required documents as requested in the Application Form.

To download admission form, please visit:
www.bsmrmu.edu.bd

Email: boms.admission@bsmrmu.edu.bd

Low-income people need a breathing space

Urgent measures needed to tackle rising prices and disappearing jobs

IT is most unfortunate that the rising prices of daily essentials are forcing the middle- and low-income people across the country to compromise on their standard of living. A report published by this daily on Sunday revealed stories of struggles and hardship as these families are finding it hard to make both ends meet with their limited income. Many families had to reduce their consumption of nutritious food to cope with the situation.

Reportedly, in many families, their only earning members lost their jobs during the lockdowns enforced in the past two years by the government to check the spread of Covid-19. While some of them could manage a temporary job, many still remain jobless or without a stable source of income. Meanwhile, soaring prices of essentials and hikes in transport fares and utility services have only added to their woes. Many are now trapped under huge debt which they are unable to pay off. For some, bearing the educational expenses of their children has also become impossible.

The government needed to come up with policies to support these people to cope with the pandemic's economic pain, but unfortunately it has failed to do so. Instead, the prices of almost all kitchen items—such as edible oil, fish, beef, etc.—and vegetables are soaring in the local markets. The hike in diesel and kerosene prices (imposed by the government in November last year) not only increased the transport fares and agricultural production costs, but also made shipping more expensive, which also affected the kitchen markets. And now, there are plans to further increase the utility costs for the households.

Experts have warned that the combination of these increased prices will take a heavy toll on the low- and middle-income people. According to them, since edible oil and several other essentials are imported, the prices of such goods have to be set in accordance with the global prices. However, the prices of locally produced goods should not increase. Experts have also given their opinions against increasing the utility prices. If the government withdraws or reduces subsidies from these sectors without addressing the governance issues and system losses, and without addressing the crisis of disappearing jobs and incomes, the ultimate burden will fall on the consumers.

During this pandemic, many low-income people have slipped into poverty, as several studies have found. If the price hikes of essential commodities and other non-food items cannot be checked right now, they will slip further below the poverty line. Therefore, we think the government should take into account the situation of the limited-income people and make policies that address their problems, not increase them.

An inexcusable failure to ensure road safety

Safety taskforce must be held accountable for lack of action

ONE issue that we have written extensively about is the lack of road safety in Bangladesh and the authorities' continued indifference to it. While the road safety movement by students in late 2018 prompted the government to enact the Road Transport Act 2018, it was not until November 2019 that the law came into effect. And yet, reports of continued crashes and casualties show how poorly implemented it is. For instance, according to the law, no driver can drive a vehicle unless he has an appointment letter from the recruiting transport owner. This directive, like many others, is widely ignored as bus/truck owners recruit drivers on a daily basis.

Another failed initiative by the government was to form a "high-powered taskforce," led by the home minister, which remains ineffective to this day. Its sluggish pace and lack of any sense of urgency are sharply contrasted by the fast march of deaths on our roads. As per a police report, 2021 saw the number of accidents and fatalities rise by a staggering 30 percent compared to 2020.

As we know, the most common reasons behind the increase are faulty vehicles, reckless driving, tailgating, non-implementation of traffic laws, etc. But these are merely symptoms of the disease that is the lack of seriousness of the authorities to ensure road safety. Since its formation in October 2019, the aforementioned taskforce has been mulling over the same nine decisions over and over again, with only one decision—to appoint a focal person from four ministries concerned to oversee the implementation of the other decisions—being fully implemented so far. Surely we would have seen some improvement in terms of road safety if the taskforce had been proactive and swift as they were meant to be?

Given that accidents and fatalities on our roads are still taking place every day, we hope the taskforce, which was set to meet on Sunday, will give us some solid answers as to why it has not been able to implement its decisions over the past two years, and also a timeline of when and how it intends to actually make moves which will make our roads safe. We will also urge the taskforce to prioritise the implementation of decisions which will have a direct and immediate impact, such as not allowing unlicensed or underage drivers to operate vehicles. Deaths on roads, preventable as they are, are occurring too frequently to justify their lax attitude.

What should be the priorities in the FY2022-23 budget?



MACRO MIRROR
Dr Fahmida Khatun is executive director at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD). Views expressed in this article are the author's own.

FAHMIDA KHATUN

THE economy of Bangladesh has fared very well despite the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. From 3.5 percent growth in FY2019-20, the economy recovered fast. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) recently announced that in FY2020-21, Bangladesh's GDP growth was 6.9 percent, which is very high compared to all the other economies. There are huge debates on the official GDP numbers in Bangladesh—the new GDP number for FY2020-21 is no exception. That said, we are undoubtedly on the path of recovery since the reopening of the global economy and the roll-out of Covid vaccination. So, in FY2021-22, exports saw a strong growth. There was also a rise in imports.

However, many sectors and individuals are yet to overcome the Covid-induced difficulties. Following the outbreak of the pandemic in 2020, the government had rightly undertaken a large number of expenditures to mitigate the economic losses suffered by the people and businesses in various sectors. A number of stimulus packages and support measures were announced for businesses, agriculture sector, health sector and social safety net programmes. To operationalise the stimulus packages through commercial banks, the government created liquidity for the banks through expansionary monetary policy measures. However, though large businesses and the export sector were able to make a comeback, small enterprises could not do so due to their inability to access the funds through stimulus packages. The poor and low-income families are still struggling to make their ends meet. Cash support for the poor has not only been inadequate, but the distribution has been flawed due to wrong targeting. The current price hike of essential commodities has worsened their situation. Inflationary pressure is hitting the poor and fixed-income households hard.

The finance minister will soon formulate the third Covid budget, which will be presented at parliament in early June this year. In view of the current circumstances, the budget for FY2022-23 has to address a number of ongoing and emerging challenges while striving to move forward with speed and quality.

Whenever the budget is discussed, the first issue that comes to everyone's mind is taxation. The budget is about mobilisation of resources through various ways, the most important of which is tax on people's income. This resource, in turn, is used mainly for



ILLUSTRATION:
BIPOLOB CHAKROBORTY

Given the important role of tax in financing economic activities of the government, its efficient collection and utilisation cannot be overemphasised. Unfortunately, tax effort has been unsatisfactory in Bangladesh and continues to fail to reach its potential.

development, providing various services to citizens, and the salaries of government employees. Governments mostly depend on resources from their citizens—be it tax, bank borrowing, or sales of national savings certificates. They receive support from abroad at times. They also take loans from international sources. Given the important role of tax in financing

objectives to be met within a system that is not strong enough to implement these and withstand obstructions in the way. Policymakers should not lose sight of reforms of the tax system and public institutions while designing the budget for the recovery. Capacity development of human resources and application of technology have to be a part of the reform

economic activities of the government, its efficient collection and utilisation cannot be overemphasised.

Unfortunately, tax effort has been unsatisfactory in Bangladesh and continues to fail to reach its potential. The tax-GDP ratio is only about 9.5 percent. Budgetary targets of tax collection are never met. The budget speech of the finance minister refers to several measures. However, the outcomes of those measures are not reported back in the following year's budget speech. There is no information in the budget speech on the additional number of taxpayers every year. Indeed, there is a need for knowing the accurate number of eligible taxpayers. Different numbers are quoted on various occasions, without the source of those numbers. This is not a difficult task, and the National Board of Revenue (NBR) may conduct a study to identify and estimate the number of eligible taxpayers. Based on such a study, the NBR can also design its plan for bringing the eligible taxpayers under the tax net. They can create awareness among the new taxpayers. The prospective taxpayers can also be mentally ready when they learn about their tax-related responsibilities.

Since the outbreak of the pandemic, the need for a robust fiscal framework has been felt much more than before. Higher revenue mobilisation and judicious higher expenditure are tough

measures.

On the expenditure side, the growth in government expenditure will have to take the inflationary pressure into account. Hence, the budget deficit will need to be lowered slightly than that of FY2021-22, which is set at 6.2 percent of GDP. Traditionally, it is targeted at five percent. In view of the need for higher public expenditures during the pandemic, it may be set at 5.5 percent of GDP in FY2022-23. Of course, due to the low expenditure capacity of the government, the budget deficit has usually been lower than the projection. As per data from the central bank, during July-September of FY22, the budget deficit was lower by Tk 4,428 crore, compared to that of the same period in FY21.

As for sectoral allocations, higher allocations are needed in a few sectors on a priority basis. Investment for the health sector is a high priority not only for dealing with the ongoing pandemic, but also for the overall strengthening of the health ecosystem in the country. Besides, recovering learning loss due to the pandemic, improvement of the education quality and skills development will also require more resources. Among others, rural infrastructure and social protection also deserve bigger allocations.

However, budget execution is what matters in the end. And it should be measured both for quantity and quality.

We must keep an eye out for Pakistan



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

MOSTAFIZ UDDIN

RECENTLY, I read that Pakistan, a major competitor of Bangladesh in garment and textile production, had hit record textile exports. The country posted an uptick in textile exports year-on-year of 40 percent in FY2021-22 to the level of USD 21 billion.

Pakistan's economic advisers are now suggesting that this figure will expand to USD 26 billion in the next fiscal year, and place the country's textile exports well beyond its pre-pandemic levels. What is driving this increase, and should Bangladesh be concerned?

There are several issues to consider here. Pakistan is targeting the same export markets as we are—namely the US and the EU, plus the UK. I saw someone on social media recently comparing Bangladesh, Pakistan and India in terms of garment exports, and suggesting that Pakistan had been the clear leader during the pandemic.

There is a reason for this. Factories in Pakistan reopened ahead of Bangladesh and India after the pandemic first emerged in early 2020, and they were able to draw orders from global fashion brands when our factories were closed. Some orders shifted to Pakistan from us and India. That said, in the latter half of 2021, Bangladesh's RMG sector rebounded strongly and ended the year with the strongest quarter on record.

Factories in Pakistan reopened ahead of Bangladesh and India after the pandemic first emerged in early 2020, and they were able to draw orders from global fashion brands when our factories were closed.

However, I think we should all be careful about reading too much into export performances during the pandemic, given that we were operating in exceptional times, the likes of which we may never see again. For this reason, I would argue that we need to wait until the back end of 2022, when I expect the dust to finally start to settle on the pandemic, to assess where we are in terms of our competitors, and whether Pakistan's record exports are a sign of things to come. By the same token, we will not know for some time whether the extra business Bangladesh won during the latter half of 2021 is here to stay.

Bangladesh does have a slight competitive advantage over its neighbour. Firstly, we remain ahead of Pakistan when it comes to issues such as compliance and safety. Our garment factories have invested millions of dollars in these areas, and it will take a while for our competitors in Pakistan to catch up. That said, Pakistan does boast a modern textile factory. Like Bangladesh, compliance is more of an issue when one goes beyond large, Tier 1 factories.

The second area is the broader issue of sustainability. It has taken a while, but I am finally seeing more and more RMG factories in Bangladesh embracing sustainability, recognising it for the genuine business opportunity that it is. Indeed, it is a prerequisite of doing business with modern fashion retailers. I don't think Pakistan is as far along its sustainability journey as Bangladesh, but again, it does boast some excellent success stories. Denim production is one, where it is a world leader in sustainability. Pakistan's huge organic cotton sector is another.

The third area is marketing and modernisation. Bangladesh's RMG sector

gets many more column inches in the international media than Pakistan—and India, for that matter. There is a huge interest in our RMG sector, and for this our industry leaders, including the BGMEA, must be given due credit. We are an open, outward-facing sector, and this has helped us win trust and credibility in the international fashion industry.

Finally, there is the subject of safety. For many years, sourcing executives were concerned about visiting Pakistan due to the lingering issues of terrorism. While these issues are now greatly reduced, it is only natural that executives will still tread carefully. The rebuilding process for Pakistan will take time, but we should all support it along this important journey.

Having said all that, if we ignore Pakistan's strengths, we will do so at our own peril.

What are these strengths? One is its access to raw materials, with Pakistan being one of the world's largest cotton growers. Also, with a well-run deep seaport and privatised airport operations, Pakistan is well-placed to meet stringent delivery targets from customers. I was pleased to see the recent launch of a direct shipping connection between Chittagong and Ravenna, Italy, with a sailing time of just 16 days. It is precisely these logistics investments that we need to make Bangladesh more attractive to buyers.

There is another way of looking at this issue. Instead of viewing Pakistan as a threat, we should see ourselves as regional partners. Both the countries could capitalise on their regional strength—especially in the current global political climate. Pakistan may be a competitor, but there is no doubt in my mind that together we will be stronger.

‘My agenda has been to uphold emocracy’

Election Commissioner Mahbub Talukdar speaks with Mohiuddin Alamgir of The Daily Star about various issues related to the outgoing Bangladesh Election Commission, as well as the elections held during its five-year tenure, which expires today. This is the last of a two-part series of interviews marking the occasion.

During the December 2018 election, opposition political parties alleged that their activists had been repressed, while ballot-box stuffing on the night before the voting day and some polling stations receiving 100 percent votes also made headlines. What is your take on these issues?

In the last parliamentary election, 213 polling stations reported having 100 percent votes cast. A BBC report also revealed that ballot-box stuffing had taken place on the night before the election day. Repression of opposition leaders and activists prior to the election has become a culture. There was a flurry of “ghost cases” against leaders and activists ahead of the election.

The 11th parliamentary election gave us nothing but the shame of failure. The chief election commissioner [KM Nurul Huda] claimed that “there was a level playing field,” but in reality, it did not exist. In the existing system, deputy commissioners act as returning officers; I don’t think it is possible for them to remain neutral when it comes to sitting MPs in the existing political culture. So, the election was not free, nor neutral, lawful or acceptable.

Could the Election Commission have investigated the allegations on its own? Why didn’t it?

It was an established truth that ballot-box stuffing took place on the night before voting day. Investigating that allegation did not require directives from a court or anyone. I assume there was no investigation because if the matter of ballot-box stuffing had been investigated, the responsibility would have fallen on the commission.

Why do you say that it was established that ballot-box stuffing took place?

The Election Commission did not protest the BBC report.

Did you ever discuss ballot-box stuffing at any of the commission meetings?

No, I didn’t discuss the matter.

The (outgoing) Election Commission was widely praised for holding the election to Cumilla City Corporation at the beginning of its tenure and the Narayanganj City Corporation election towards the end. But it was criticised for other local government elections, many of which were rife with violence and irregularities. Why did the commission fail with those elections?

During the Cumilla city polls, there was no outside interference as the commission was new. At the beginning, we were inspired to work independently. In the Narayanganj election, a scope was given to prove that free and fair election is possible under a political government. So, it was an exceptional case.

I closely observed the Gazipur City Corporation election. I prepared a detailed report on it, and [on behalf of the Election Commission] I alone conducted the Barishal city polls. I wanted to stop the Barishal election due to irregularities, but could not because of the lack of cooperation from my colleagues. The Chittagong City Corporation election became a model of irregularities.

Why couldn’t you keep the law

enforcement and local administration under control?

Law enforcement agencies and local administrations are not under the Election Commission’s authority, as per the existing electoral process. The commission is their temporary boss during the elections; their permanent bosses are the sitting MPs, who will be re-elected. In my view, the public administration and home ministries should be placed under the authority of the Election Commission before a parliamentary election.

Forty-two distinguished citizens have urged the president to constitute the Supreme Judicial Council (SJC) to investigate the allegations of election-related misconduct and financial irregularities in the present Election Commission. What are your comments on this?

I am not exempted from these allegations. So, I can’t comment on this.

On several occasions, you have publicly taken a different position than that of the rest of the Election Commission, regarding election irregularities, inaction of the administration, etc. Did you ever discuss these issues at the commission meetings?

Speeches are not recorded in detail in the minutes of the Election Commission meetings. Many of my important speeches did not find a place in the meeting minutes. In some cases, I asked to add my written statement to be attached to the minutes. I asked the CEC, other commissioners and the secretary several times through unofficial notes to add my speeches in the minutes, so that my dissent would not go unrecorded.

I placed several notes of dissent at the commission meetings. I even walked out of a meeting as I was not allowed to speak. Let me give you an example of the kind of situation I had to deal with.

About three months before the 11th parliamentary election, I wanted to place a written statement before the commission at a meeting, on some proposals to make the election free, fair and participatory. I informed the matter to the CEC through an unofficial note. In written format, I was informed that I could place the proposal at the 36th meeting of the commission. A copy of the proposal was sent to all the election commissioners.

Surprisingly, the CEC did not allow me to place the proposal at the meeting. It happened because three other election commissioners had requested the CEC not to let me place the proposal. They said my proposal was unconstitutional.

So, I placed a note of dissent at the meeting. In the note, I said freedom of speech and expression are my constitutional rights, and the Election Commission could not, in any way, deprive me of those rights. I also boycotted the commission meeting in protest of this unjust decision.

In reply to your media statements about election irregularities and violence, CEC KM Nurul Huda said you had a personal agenda. What is your comment on that?

I did have an agenda; my agenda was to make all elections in Bangladesh free, fair, neutral, lawful and peaceful. I will not avoid my responsibility if there is



PHOTO:
SK ENAMUL HAQUE

violence anywhere. With all my strength, I will prevent its recurrence. My agenda is to establish human rights through establishing voting rights. My agenda is to uphold democracy, which is the main directive of the constitution. Who wants to live without democracy?

In your book “Amlar Amalnama,” you mentioned that you and the CEC were colleagues before, and at that time, he committed an “act of insubordination.” Did this later cause any problems between you two in the Election Commission?

In 1998, I was working as an additional secretary at parliament, and KM Nurul Huda was joint secretary. Before my joining, there were two additional secretary posts at parliament. On a temporary basis, I was appointed as an additional secretary at the office of the Leader of the House Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, but I was attached as an additional secretary of the Parliament Secretariat. At that time, Nurul Huda sent a note to the then secretary of the Parliament Secretariat, describing me as an outsider, since I was not an additional secretary appointed in the designated post of the Parliament Secretariat, and he [Nurul Huda] was not obliged to obey my instructions.

The then Parliament Secretary Kazi Muhammad Manzoor e Mawla rebuked him and said his action was indicative of his insubordination. Nurul Huda did not say anything further on this. He was not from my wing either.

This happened 30 years ago. I don’t think it was an issue when we worked together in the Election Commission.

You were against the use of electronic voting machines (EVMs) in the last

general election. Do you think they should be used in the next one?

I have been against the use of EVMs since the beginning – doing so is not right if people are not used to the technology. It was promised there would be discussions with political parties on EVM use, but that promise was not kept.

To me, EVMs are still not reliable. During the Narayanganj election, I observed that they were quite slow. We should add Voter-Verified Paper Audit Trail [which allows voters to verify that their votes have been cast] to the EVMs to ensure reliability. As for using EVMS in the next election, that decision will have to be made in consultation with the political parties.

BNP has already said it will not participate in the next election without a caretaker government. In this situation, how acceptable will the election be under a political government?

I am worried about the next parliamentary election. It won’t be accepted nationally or internationally if the opposition parties do not take part in it. So far, elections held under caretaker governments have been acceptable. But now elections under a caretaker government are not possible without amending the constitution.

What steps should be taken to make the next parliamentary election free, participatory and neutral?

Consensus among the political parties is required to make the next parliamentary election free, fair and participatory. Political parties should have the will and cordiality towards the normal transfer of power. The law enforcement agencies should function under the Election Commission’s authority. Voters should be able to believe that they would be allowed to cast their votes without any hindrance and according to their wish. There is a need to amend the constitution and the rules to reform the electoral process. I want to say that only democracy can uphold human rights and human dignity.

You have written books like “Bangabhabane Panch Bachhar” and “Amlar Amalnama.” Do you have any plan to write a book on your experience as an election commissioner?

I have written a book titled “Nirbachannama” on my experience as an election commissioner. I don’t think it will be possible to publish this book, which is more than 1,200 pages, before my death.

Consensus among the political parties is required to make the next parliamentary election free, fair and participatory. Political parties should have the will and cordiality towards the normal transfer of power.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

1 Depth unit

7 Important times

11 “The Stunt Man” star

12 Pinhead

13 Actor Wilde

14 Be bold

15 Hand costs

16 Fall quaff

17 Minus

18 Nursery rhyme merchant

19 Role for Chris Hemsworth

21 Spots on TV

22 “Hear me?” on a radio

25 Signing need

26 Jazz’s Getz

27 Ducks

29 Brewed drinks

33 Valleys

34 Carried

35 Guinness of film

36 Ness nemesis

37 Wait to pounce

38 Tolerated

39 Hardens

40 School break

DOWN

1 Convergent

2 Be penitent

3 Civil wrongs

4 Liar’s lack

5 Flamenco cries

6 Crooner

7 “Frasier” dog

8 Driving aid

9 By now

10 Boat backs

16 Around

18 Acts sullen

20 Gardening aids

22 Lessen in worth

23 Ready for action

24 Relevant

25 Bike pair

28 Liner parts

30 Undermine

31 Queen – lace

32 Canary chow

34 Movie pig

36 Lot sight

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

SATURDAY’S ANSWERS

| | | | | | | | | | |
|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| 11 | | | | | | 12 | | | |
| 13 | | | | | | 14 | | | |
| 15 | | | | | 16 | | | | |
| 17 | | | | | 18 | | | | |
| | 22 | 23 | | 19 | 20 | | | 24 | |
| 25 | | | | 26 | | | | | |
| 27 | | | 28 | | | 29 | 30 | 31 | 32 |
| 33 | | | | | | 34 | | | |
| 35 | | | | | 36 | | | | |
| 37 | | | | | 38 | | | | |
| 39 | | | | | 39 | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| G | O | F | A | R | E | C | U | S | P | S |
| A | R | I | S | E | | O | N | T | A | P |
| S | I | N | K | S | | D | I | A | N | E |
| C | O | G | | T | R | E | | T | I | E |
| A | L | E | F | E | D | | U | N | D | |
| P | E | R | K | U | P | | I | S | I | S |
| | | | | | | | | | | |
| R | A | Y | S | | I | S | A | Y | S | O |
| A | R | M | | S | C | H | | M | A | R |
| N | A | B | | O | A | R | | B | U | N |
| O | B | A | M | A | | A | T | O | N | E |
| F | I | L | E | R | | M | O | L | A | R |
| F | A | S | T | S | | S | A | S | S | Y |

BECOMING A MINORITY COMMUNITY

Calcutta’s Muslims after Partition

After the February Riots of 1950, Calcutta remained relatively peaceful for around fourteen years. In 1964, however, the city once again became a site of communal violence. Since then the city has not witnessed any communal violence of that scale. But Calcutta remained volatile and the Muslims were targets of subtle everyday communalism and majoritarian aggression of different forms.

ANWESHA SENGUPTA

Calcutta: A Muslim City
Before the Partition of British India (1947), Calcutta (Kolkata) was as much of a Muslim city as it was a Hindu one. Muslims who came to this city belonged to diverse classes, various sects and spoke in different tongues. Bengali-speaking Muslims came to Calcutta from neighbouring rural districts and they found work in the service sector. Being the prime centre of education, Calcutta also attracted young men from elite Bengali Muslim families. Since the late 18th century and throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, Muslims also came from more distant lands: with the Nawab of Awadh and the ruling house of Mysore came big entourages of court nobles, service men, and intellectuals dependent on royal patronage; traders came from Kathiawar, Delhi, Lucknow, western India and Persia. The court language of the early colonial era being Persian, there were demands in the government services for upcountry Muslims for their language skills. Certain urban professions of colonial Calcutta were entirely dominated by the Muslims: the *khansama*, *darji* and *kasai* being cases in point. Their presence was also significant among the artisans, petty traders, and masons. Similarly, the city housed a world of Muslim intellectuals, journalists, white-collar professionals, and prominent politicians. The highly heterogeneous community of the Muslims was, by late colonial times, integral to the city life. Consequently, Calcutta in the first few decades of twentieth century emerged as the nerve centre of Muslim politics, activism, education and cultural activities.

Claiming Calcutta
When partition of British India became a settled decision, the Bengal Provincial Muslim League made a very strong bid for Calcutta in front of the Bengal Boundary Commission chaired by Sir Cyril Radcliffe. They pointed out that the Calcutta port was manned by the *Laskars* and much of Calcutta's glory was because of the flourishing jute trade. The *Laskars* were primarily Muslim sailors from Sylhet and eastern Bengal was the major centre for jute production. In other words, Calcutta glittered because of eastern Bengal. Therefore, Pakistan and not India had the stronger claim to the city. Though Muslims were numerically a minority in Calcutta, complex demographic arguments were also put forward by the League in support of their demand for Calcutta. Among other reasons, it was argued that since the major portion of the Bengal Presidency would become East Pakistan, it was only fair that they got the greatest city of Bengal. If it was impossible to include Calcutta in East Pakistan, the alternative was according to the Muslim League to declare it as a 'common' or shared city, belonging to both East and West Bengal, to Pakistan and India.

Such proposals were vehemently opposed by the Hindu Mahasabha and the Congress. Mahasabha leader N.C. Chatterjee described the League's claim to Calcutta as bizarre and redundant. Calcutta residents were predominantly non-Muslim who owned most of the residential buildings, paid the bulk of

Calcutta became an Indian city, turning the city's Muslims into a rather vulnerable religious minority, against the backdrop of the communal violence that erupted time and again.

Riots in the City
On August 15, 1947 Calcutta was peaceful and jubilant, to an extent that it seemed almost unreal. The special correspondent of the *Guardian*, reporting from Calcutta, wrote:
Hindus and Moslems, freely mixing with each other, are in Calcutta tonight wildly celebrating the approach of independence. The former scenes of communal battles are now happy meeting places for crowds of both communities who are shouting and dancing in the streets. No incident has been reported until a late hour tonight.

The cordial atmosphere, however, proved to be very short-lived. Within a couple of weeks the city was again in flames. Prof. Anisuzzaman, a child then, was in Calcutta at that time. He remembered:
[The riot] continued for three-four days. Gandhi sat for a fast as long as the violence continued. Suhrawardy toured the riot affected areas of the city. Some of the leaders of the ruling party and of the opposition tried their best to stop the carnage.

People were panicky. Little Anisuzzaman, down with high fever, had nightmares about being attacked by the Sikhs: 'I used to see that the Sikhs were coming along the Bright Street to kill us. I shouted: "The Sikhs are coming, the Sikhs are coming." His father decided to leave Calcutta and India for East Pakistan

influx of Hindu refugees from East Bengal further marginalised Muslims within the city. A large section of refugees coming from East Bengal squatted on abandoned Muslim properties. At times they forcibly occupied, with the help of the Mahasabha and other right wing parties/organisations, the mosques, graveyards, other *waqf* properties and houses where Muslim families lived thus displacing the minorities. Lalbagh Seva Samiti, a voluntary organisation situated in Raja Dinendra Street, Calcutta, for instance, claimed to have rehabilitated about 650 refugee families in 229 houses that were apparently lying vacant in the Lalbagh area. The Samiti was assisted by the North Calcutta District Committee of the Congress Party. The Lalbagh area incorporated Maniktala, Amherst Street and Beadon Street – i.e., areas that were the worst affected by the riot of 1950. It is obvious that the vacant and torched houses had Muslim occupants before February 1950.

After the February Riots of 1950, Calcutta remained relatively peaceful for around fourteen years. In 1964, however, the city once again became a site of communal violence. According to a BBC Report (January 13, 1964), more than 70,000 Calcutta Muslims fled their homes during these riots, more than a hundred of them were killed, factories were set on fire and there were widespread looting of Muslim properties. Since then the city has not witnessed any communal violence of that scale. But Calcutta remained volatile and the Muslims were targets of subtle everyday communalism and majoritarian aggression of

redrawn [in Calcutta] in the aftermath of partition.'

Leaving Home
For many of the city Muslims, staying put in Calcutta was no longer an option. Migration started early as some elite Muslims started moving out of Calcutta immediately after Partition. The 'Great Calcutta Killing' and the Noakhali and the Bihar riots (all in 1946) along with the ongoing communal carnage in Punjab and Delhi, had made them jittery about staying back in West Bengal as a minority. So, when Calcutta became a part of India, they chose to leave immediately. For many others, it was the 1950 Riot that worked as the ultimate push factor. Staying on was no longer a safe option and they had to migrate. Also, as a consequence of Partition, Dhaka became the major centre of Muslim politics of East Bengal, and Calcutta, like the rest of India, had a Congress government. Many of the prominent Muslim leaders therefore left Calcutta for Dhaka to start their political career in Pakistan afresh. Moreover, Dhaka, as the new capital of East Pakistan, had significant employment opportunities. So it drew in the bulk of the elite urban Muslim migrants. Also, accustomed to life in Calcutta as they were, going somewhere else apart from Dhaka was almost unthinkable for this urban elite group.

But, compared to Calcutta – one of the most magnificent cities of the British Empire, Dhaka was no more than a *muffasil* town. Naturally, leaving Calcutta was a crushing experience for many. In their autobiographies and memoirs, many erstwhile Muslim residents of Calcutta



The Selimpur (Dhakuria, Kolkata) Mosque.

PHOTO COURTESY: KNOW YOUR NEIGHBOUR



A dilapidated and dysfunctional mosque at Sulekha (Jadavpur, Calcutta). It is used as residence by few Hindu homeless people of the area. Jadavpur has several very important refugee colonies since Partition.

municipal and other taxes, and owned and operated the major industries and educational institutions of the city all these points were raised by Chatterjee in refuting League's claim.

Interestingly, few days before partition, a section within the Muslim League led by Khwaja Nazimuddin moved away from their demand for Calcutta. Moreover, they actively started mobilising others in the Party to give up the claim for Calcutta. Abul Mansur Ahmed, a journalist at *Ittehad* at this time who wanted Calcutta to be included in Pakistan, vividly described those days in his memoir:

Many leaders belonging to Nazimuddin-group used to come to the *Ittehad* office and tried to convince me against the keep Calcutta movement. They told me that if we did not claim Calcutta, East Pakistan would get Rs. 33 crore as compensation. With that amount of money Dacca could easily become New York.

The promise of 33 crores of rupees was alluring enough to tame the demand for Calcutta. Gradually, pro-League papers like *Azad* and *Morning News* became less insistent about the prospect of possessing or sharing Calcutta. The Boundary Commission also thought that Calcutta should be included in West Bengal and thus, with partition,

after this riot.

The city remained a site of intermittent violence against the Muslims for years to come. A general feeling of anxiety was punctuated with moments of intense conflict. Calcutta witnessed brutal communal riots again in the early months of 1950. From late 1949, communal trouble in East Pakistan was making headlines in the city newspapers. There was a notable increase in the number of refugees coming to West Bengal and Assam. They brought with them horrid accounts of Muslim violence accounts that were made by weaving together rumours and realities. It agitated the Indian Hindus. The situation worsened in both East and West Bengal towards early February. Following a chilling retributive understanding of justice, right wing organisations and their sympathisers in the city systematically started targeting Calcutta Muslims.

On February 7, 1950, Husan Ara Begum, a member of the West Bengal Legislative Assembly made another desperate appeal:

At the present moment, the Muslims of Calcutta are living under a pressure, I should say, of fear, specially at Maniktalla and Narkeldanga which I have visited personally. ... even last night they were harassed. Many of the Muslims of Paikpara have left their hearths and homes ... I am appealing to the honourable chief minister to protect the life and properties of those citizens who are looking up to him for help.

Despite such appeals, a full-fledged riot broke out in Calcutta on the very next day. Violence first erupted in the Maniktala (north Calcutta) area. Soon it spread across places that were within the jurisdictions of Beliaghata, Amherst Street, Entally and Tangra police stations. There were numerous instances of stabbing, loot, and arson that systematically targeted Muslims. Inflammatory leaflets and handbills were distributed, posters demanding 'blood for blood' were put up in certain parts of the city. The police proved to be ineffective on numerous occasions. The provocative speeches made by Mahasabha leaders like N.C. Chatterjee worsened the situation. They demanded an immediate exchange of population: that is, an exchange of the Muslim population of West Bengal with the Hindus of East Bengal. The demand implied that there was no space for Muslims in Calcutta or in West Bengal, irrespective of whether they wanted to stay here or to go to East Bengal. Such provocations along with the massive

different forms.

Beyond Riots
Since partition many of the Islamic institutions and symbols were systematically erased from the city landscape. Take the case of the Islamia College. Situated in central Calcutta, it was founded in 1926 by Governor Lord Lytton. This was a premier institution that promoted Islamic education as well as a more 'general' education to Muslim pupils. With Independence, the gates of the college were opened to all students irrespective of their religion. Moreover, the name of the college was changed from Islamia College to Central Calcutta College. The new name indicated its geographic location but attempted to erase a certain past associated with the institution. Partition severely affected the fate of the Calcutta Madrassah, another major institution for Islamic learning. I went to the Calcutta Madrassah in February 2012 and the librarian showed me a catalogue of the books that were available in the library back in 1927. He lamented that not a single book mentioned in the catalogue was now there in the library. 'Pakistan took it all. He continued: Who knows whether the books reached the Dhaka Madrassah or not. We have heard that they carried the books and the manuscripts on open trucks. Since the Calcutta Killings of 1946, Muslims' access to their religio-social spaces decreased rapidly. Every communal clash resulted in the desecration or forced occupation of mosques, graveyards, and *waqf* properties. The squatter colonies that developed on the southern fringes of the city Behala, Tollygunj, Kasba, Garia, Santoshpur often appropriated *waqf* lands. Hindu refugees, coming from East Pakistan because of majoritarian violence or for fear of it, saw Calcutta Muslims as 'soft targets' and often selected their properties for squatting. Writing in 1964, Nirmal Kumar Bose noted that many of the Calcutta mosques were then in a 'moribund condition' and some of them were used by the refugees for residential purposes.

Historian Joya Chatterji's work has shown how Muslim residents of Selimpur (Dhakuria, Calcutta) gradually lost their rights over a local graveyard. Similarly, part of a burial ground at Park Circus became a football ground over the years; a tannery was set up by the refugees coming from East Pakistan in parts of the burial ground after the riot of 1964. In another portion of the same burial ground football was played regularly. Thus, as Chatterji noted, "boundaries of sacred and ritual space ... were

remembered the despair and loss they had felt in their early days in East Pakistan. Many also recalled the apprehension among their family members about settling down in Dhaka. Anisuzzaman remembered the discussion that his father had with his brothers-in-law before leaving Calcutta. He repeatedly asked them about Dhaka: 'How is this city? Do people get bread and butter there? Is there electricity, tap water? How do people commute from one place to another? Are there trams and buses like Calcutta?' His longing for Calcutta was so acute that he ultimately did not go to Dhaka. He settled down in Khulna instead. Khulna Town was much nearer the border than Dhaka and hence was closer to Calcutta. The proximity to Calcutta gave him some solace: if Pakistan should ever become a part of India again, he could at least easily come back to his beloved city.

Those who left the city in these years were not necessarily residents of Calcutta by birth. Some of them were originally from areas that were now parts of East Pakistan. But they had grown up in Calcutta, studied in its colleges and universities, and had then started their careers in the city. Their social lives were intrinsically linked to the city. For them to leave the city was as tragic as becoming refugees.

The experience of the city's poor Muslims was significantly different. While the riots displaced them, they seldom left the country as they often lacked the necessary means for border crossing. They searched for security in areas within the city or in the suburbs where their coreligionists had some numerical strength. Therefore, the scholars of post-Partition Calcutta have identified ghettoising tendencies among Muslim residents. While certain localities like Park Circus, Tiljala, Rajabazar, Metiaburz and Khidderpore witnessed influx of Muslims from various parts of the city and became increasingly congested, the rest of Calcutta became a predominantly Hindu space. Poorer Muslims of Calcutta, depending on their networks and skills, also often migrated to the "Muslim pockets" of various districts of West Bengal.

Anwesha Sengupta is an Assistant Professor at the Institute of Development Studies Kolkata.

(This is a shorter version of an article with the same title, published in Tanika Sarkar, Sekhar Bandyopadhyay (Eds) Calcutta: The Stormy Decades (New Delhi, 2015). For references please see the original article.)

What to WATCH

T SPORTS & GTV
BPL
Eliminator
Chattogram Challengers vs
Khulna Tigers
Live from 12:30 pm

1st Qualifier
Fortune Barishal vs Comilla
Victorians
Live from 05:30 pm
T SPORTS
La Liga

Mallorca vs Athletic Bilbao
Live from 02:00 am (Tuesday)
VH1 INDIA
Serie A
Spezia vs Fiorentina
Live from 01:45 am (Tuesday)

BPL set for climax with fans up close

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League is about to reach its climax as the playoff stage begins at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur today. Chattogram Challengers take on Khulna Tigers in the Eliminator in the day's first fixture while Fortune Barishal and Comilla Victorians, the top two teams following the group stage, lock horns in the first Qualifier in the night game.

Meanwhile, some good news arrived for the local fans at last as the BPL authorities have allowed a limited number of spectators in the stands for the playoffs. .

Barishal, with six consecutive wins, possess momentum leading into the game. They are led by Shakib Al Hasan, who has bagged a record five consecutive man-of-the-match awards in the BPL.

Comilla, on the other hand, also played clinical cricket with young Mahmudul Hasan Joy and overseas players Faf du Plessis and Moeen Ali in superb touch. Comilla's Mustafizur Rahman has taken the most number of wickets and is expected to play a decisive role for his side.

"It will be tough as we know they [Fortune Barishal] are a good team but we know their strengths and we have also played some good cricket lately," Comilla's technical advisor and the Tigers' former head coach Steve Rhodes told media yesterday.

The winner of the first Qualifier will reach the final while the losing team will get another chance and face the winners of the Eliminator.

Meanwhile, both Chattogram and Khulna have confirmed the play-off spot in their final group stage games and are expected to provide a good contest with both sides featuring players like Will Jacks and Andre Fletcher, respectively, who are in scintillating form with the bat.



Selectors have work cut out

SPORTS REPORTER

The eighth edition of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) is nearing its end but as with any domestic cricket platform, especially of the T20 order, performances of local stars are significant for national selectors. Over the years, selectors have not found what they were looking for from the country's premier T20 tournament but this edition of the BPL have been able to throw in some names that give the selectors room to maneuver ahead of the Afghanistan series.

The performances of Munim Shahriar have garnered attention while Mahmudul Hasan Joy, having done well in the first New Zealand Test, has shown T20 merits. Youngsters such as Chattogram Challengers' Mrittunjoy flourished in his first BPL stint, bowling at the death while experienced domestic performer Nahidul Islam also made an impact so far.

Along with the performances of some of the more experienced names in the Tigers' T20I unit in Mohammad



Naim, Liton Das, Soumya Sarkar and Afif Hossain, combined with influence of veterans such as Shakib Al Hasan, Mahmudullah Riyad, Mushfiqur Rahim and Mustafizur Rahman, the team's think tank can draw a picture of what they need in the format.

Bangladesh have struggled with their opening slot at the T20 World Cup and before. With Tamim Iqbal opting out of the T20I setup for another six months, his Minister Group Dhaka teammate Naim Sheikh, who was a frontrunner to play in the Tigers T20 outfit before BPL began, looked out of sorts as his batting position flummoxed in the BPL while he could not take advantage when he played at number 3 or four.

On the other hand, Munim has shown his 'no-fear' approach at the top for Fortune Barishal. Despite having scored over 350 runs in the last Dhaka Premier League at a strike-rate fit for an opener, Munim was left unsold at the BPL draft before Barishal got him from outside the draft. Missing out on most matches this BPL due to contracting Covid-19, he has shown an ability to take on bowlers in the Powerplay, scoring 134 runs in four innings with a staggering strike-rate of 167.50.

Meanwhile, Soumya Sarkar, despite hitting one big knock -- an unbeaten 82 against Sylhet Sunrisers -- has not shown consistency after a poor run of games with the bat. And Liton Das, who did not play the Pakistan series at home, has shown

fluency after coming back from holiday and will be an automatic-choice as opener in Afghanistan series. Joy, who has also been used as an opener by Comilla in the last few matches, impressed with 207 runs in the tournament, showing his ability to go deep into the innings or pick up quick runs. Another player in the national setup in Mahedi Hasan, impressed with his pinch-hitting abilities at the top in a high-pressure game to keep selectors' eyes on him.

Anamul Haque, too, has impressed again in the BPL, this time hitting 280 runs in nine innings, although his side Sylhet failed to make the top four.

Among bowlers, Mustafizur Rahman has flourished, being the top wicket-taker with 17 so far in eight matches. Mrittunjoy, having played only six games so far, has managed 13 wickets with impressive death-over skills while his Chattogram teammate Shoriful Islam, despite some expensive overs, bagged 12 wickets in 10 games with some good displays as well. Khulna Tigers' Khaled Ahmed has had decent spells with the new ball but also went for runs while Comilla off-spinner Nahidul has kept batters guessing all tournament in the Powerplays, bagging 11 wickets overall with important displays.

With the white-ball series against Afghanistan coming up, the performances of the young faces give selectors ample food for thought.

Aus beat Lanka after super over drama

AFP, Sydney

Australia scraped past Sri Lanka to take control of their five-match Twenty20 series Sunday after late fireworks from the visitors forced their second clash in Sydney to a rare super over after it ended in a tie.

The match appeared to be heading Australia's way after Josh Inglis' 48 spearheaded them to 164 for six, and the Sri Lankan top order again failed to fire. But Pathum Nissanka's 73 and a breezy 34 off 19 balls from Shanaka sent the game to the wire.

With Marcus Stoinis bowling, Sri Lanka needed 12 off the last three balls to win. Maheesh Theekshana hit a six, then a single before Dushmantha Chameera smacked a four to tie the match and send it into a nail-biting super over.

Josh Hazlewood bowled the over for Australia with Shanaka and Dinesh Chandimal facing. After two dot balls, Chandimal was run out and Sri Lanka managed just five runs.



Opelka outlasts Isner in 46-point tiebreak

REUTERS

John Isner and Reilly Opelka played out a marathon 46-point tiebreak, the longest in ATP Tour history, at the Dallas Open on Saturday as Opelka edged out his fellow American 7-6 (9/7), 7-6 (24/22) to reach the final.

Isner was involved in the longest match of all time against Frenchman Nicolas Mahut in the first round of Wimbledon in 2010. The pair days before Isner took the fifth set 70-68.

"The crowd was definitely behind me," said the 36-year-old Isner. "It's kind of extra disappointing to not be able to get over the line in my backyard... (Opelka) is serving just massive. I don't think anyone can break him out there."

The big-serving duo fired down 60 aces between them and did not face a single break point in a match lasting two hours three minutes. "I lost track," said Opelka, the world number 23, who clinched victory on his eighth match point. "At one point it was 21-all... that's something I've never seen before, but if it was going to happen, it certainly would have been in this match."



Dorielton fires first hattrick

SPORTS REPORTER

Brazilian striker Dorielton Gomes struck the first hattrick of the ongoing Bangladesh Premier League during a span of only six minutes to steer title contenders Abahani to an emphatic 3-0 win over Rahmatganj MFS at the Shaheed Ahsan Ullah Master Stadium in Tongi, Gazipur yesterday.

With second win in three matches, Abahani joined league-leaders Sheikh Jamal DC on seven points, one point more than holders Bashundhara Kings and Saif Sporting Club, who suffered a 1-0 defeat to Sheikh Russel KC at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Flight Lt Matiur Rahman Stadium in Munshiganj yesterday.

The Brazilian forward, the top scorer of Independence Cup and Federation Cup, came out as the saviour for six-time champions Abahani in his typical fashion as the Sky Blues were under tremendous pressure from Fed Cup runners-up Rahmatganj.

Abahani took the lead against the run of play with Dorielton's glancing header off a Colindres corner in the 40th minute. Dorielton was then set up by Colindres to double the margin three minutes later. The Brazilian made no mistake to place the ball to the left-hand side of the goalkeeper Rakibul Hasan Tushar.

In the first minute of the first half's four-minute added time, the 31-year-old forward completed his hattrick, collecting a defence-split through-pass by Nurul Nayeem Faisal before dancing past goalkeeper Tushar. Dorielton celebrated his brilliant feat by taking off his jersey and spreading out towards the feet of Colindres.



Chelsea were crowned FIFA Club World Cup champions for the first time as Kai Havertz struck home a penalty deep into extra time to break the hearts of Brazilian club Palmeiras at the Mohammed Bin Zayed Stadium in Abu Dhabi on Saturday. Romelu Lukaku gave Chelsea a 55th-minute lead before Raphael Veiga equalised from the spot nine minutes later. Chelsea have now won every major club trophy since Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich took control in 2003.

PHOTO: TWITTER

Hockey gets new sponsor

SPORTS REPORTER

The Dhaka Mercantile Co-Operative Bank Limited has come forward to sponsor Bangladesh national hockey team for the upcoming AHF Cup, the qualifying tournament for Asia Cup 2022.

The tournament is scheduled to take place in Jakarta from March 11 to 20 with the top three teams joining the automatic qualifiers -- India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia and Pakistan -- in the Asia Cup.

"We thank the sponsors for coming forward to sponsor the national team," BHF's acting general secretary Mohammad Yousuf said at the cheque handover ceremony yesterday in presence of BHF president Air Chief Marshal Shaikh Abdul Hannan and DMCB chairman Abu Jafar Chowdhury.

The training camp with 28 players will start today at BKSP under interim coach Iman Gobinathan Krishnamurthy.



'I think I have worked successfully'
Says outgoing CEC



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The outgoing Election Commission has conducted its duties successfully and tried to work with neutrality within the law, said Chief Election Commissioner KM Nurul Huda yesterday. "There will be criticism and this is normal as per the culture of this country," he said. He made the statement while attending a programme in the capital. The Election Commission started distributing special NID cards among the freedom fighters from the programme.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5



A DAY FOR FLOWERS ... A girl smelling the flowers at a shop in the capital's Shahbagh, known as the city's floral hub, yesterday. As Pahela Falgun and Valentine's Day are being celebrated together today, flowers are the most in-demand item for the day -- whether given as a token of love or worn in the hair to greet spring.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON



Photo of a martyr

KAZI MOHAMMAD IDRIS

When I received the news of the shooting, I was in my office at the Provincial Secretariat. It was about four o'clock in the afternoon.

As soon as I got the news, I left the office and went to Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

There, I saw many people, including Dr Muhammad Shahidullah, Basanta Kumar Das, Dharendra Nath Dutt and Nellie Sengupta.

Many of the injured students were still lying on the hospital floor.

I saw Nuruddin's wife Halima, who was then a medical college student.

She told me that the body of the student whose skull had been blown up was kept in a room at the back of the hospital and there was no one there but a scavenger. Halima very carefully led me to the room where the body was lying on a bed covered with a sheet.

I saw the boy's skull -- completely blown up. It was a shocking scene.

I then asked Halima if the body could be photographed and if she could arrange it. She agreed.

A photographer named Amanul was then working in the Eden Building. I came out of the medical college and found him in front of the field. He was wearing a full sleeve Hawaiian shirt with a camera hidden inside. I explained the whole matter to him and asked him to take a picture.

It was decided that I would not go with Amanul. He would go alone with Halima. I introduced her from a distance. When she gave a signal, Amanul went there and

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5



JS body slams Biman for carrying goods on seats

Blames it for Tk 1,000cr damages to interiors of 8 planes

RASHIDUL HASAN

A parliamentary body yesterday came down heavily on Biman's respective top officials for causing damage to the tune of Tk 1,000 crore to the interiors of eight aircraft while transporting cargo since March 2020.

Many seats, entertainment systems, interior decoration, toilets, floors, overhead locker of four new Boeing 777-300ER, two Boeing 737 and two leased aircraft are badly damaged when the vessels meant for carrying passengers were used to ferry cargo when air travel nosedived for the pandemic.

"It is not acceptable," a member of the parliamentary standing committee on civil aviation ministry told The Daily Star after the meeting.

In a bid to make a profit of about several crores of taka, the Biman top management has caused damages of hundreds of crores of taka to the aircraft, the committee said.

"We came to know through media reports that the damages will cost Biman about Tk 1,000

crore to fix -- we also wanted to know whether any syndicate was involved in this process," another committee member told The Daily Star.

Subsequently, the committee has asked Abu Saleh Mostafa Kamal, the MD and CEO of Biman, to furnish details of the incidents in the next meeting, scheduled to be held within a month.

In a bid to make a profit of about several crores of taka, the Biman top management has caused damages of hundreds of crores of taka

An internal committee has been formed to investigate the matter, said Biman officials on condition of anonymity.

Meanwhile, Biman incurred a loss of about Tk 2,200 crore due to taking a lease of two Boeing 777 aircraft from Egypt in 2014 through a "non-transparent agreement", which was against the interest of Biman, the parliamentary body said at the

meeting yesterday.

A sub-committee of the parliamentary body led by Aslamul Haque, an Awami League member of parliament, came up with the findings and found involvement of then top officials of Biman in the lease process, a lawmaker told the correspondent.

After discussion of the sub-committee's report and statements of the former top officials of Biman, the committee sent all its findings to the Anti-Corruption Commission for taking action against the responsible persons following an investigation.

Leased from Egypt Air in 2014 for five years with stringent conditions that went against Biman's interests, the extended range planes remained grounded since 2017 due to engine defects.

The revenue collected from the operation of the two aircrafts was Tk 2,200 crore and the cost behind the two was Tk 3,300 crore, according to the civil aviation ministry.

In 2019, Biman got rid of the two leased Boeing 777-200ERs.

PK Halder has laundered Tk 80cr to Canada

ACC files charge sheet

CHAITANYA CHANDRA HALDER and EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

Proshanta Kumar Halder, the former managing director of NRB Global Bank, had laundered about Tk 80 crore to Canada, found the Anti-Corruption Commission in its probe.

Halder had amassed about Tk 426 crore beyond his known sources of income, according to the probe by Investigation Officer Md Salahuddin.

Based on the probe, Salahuddin, also a deputy director of ACC, on February 10 submitted a 56-page charge sheet to the Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court of Dhaka, an ACC official at the court told The Daily Star.

This is the first charge sheet in Halder's graft cases, the official said, adding that it will be presented before the court on February 20 for the next course of action.

As many as 13 people, including his mother Lilabati and brother Pritish, assisted him in his illegal acquisition of assets.

Halder, who absconded to Canada, acquired assets through various illegal ways in his name and under various real and fake companies and individuals, according to the charge sheet.

He also transacted money through 178 bank accounts. He deposited Tk 6,080 crore in the accounts and withdrew Tk 6,076 crore from them in his name and anonymously.

'Very important moment for all'

Says British envoy about next polls in Bangladesh

UNB, Dhaka

The next national election in Bangladesh is going to be a "very important moment" for all, said British High Commissioner to Bangladesh Robert Chatterton Dickson yesterday.

He said the polls would help the country build better and productive relations with its friends.

"There's ample capacity in Bangladesh to run a free and fair election," he said, reiterating that election needs to be "Bangladesh-led" and it is not for Bangladesh's friends to say how this process should run.

He said this at the "Meet the Reporters" programme hosted by Dhaka Reporters' Unity.

Dickson said the UK and its partners support the "plural and transparent" democracy.

Highlighting the importance of a credible Election Commission, he said it will be easier for everybody to have a "productive friendship" with Bangladesh if the election is carried out in a way which is "free, fair and credible."

At the programme, the British envoy also said their shared aim is to see "voluntary, safe and dignified" repatriation for the Rohingya as soon as conditions in Myanmar allow.

"Bangladesh continues to be extraordinarily generous in its response. The refugees have access to healthcare, food, shelter, and water and sanitation," Dickson said.

Describing the Rohingya crisis as a "tragedy for all involved," he said no one chooses to live in a refugee camp or to host a large influx of displaced people.

RUSSIA-UKRAINE STANDOFF

Biden-Putin talks yield no breakthrough

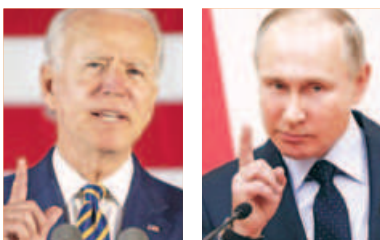
A dozen nations tell citizens to leave Kyiv

AGENCIES

Efforts to defuse the crisis in Ukraine via a frenzy of telephone diplomacy failed to ease tensions, with US President Joe Biden warning that Russia faces "swift and severe costs" if its troops carry out an invasion.

Russian leader Vladimir Putin slammed Western claims that Moscow was planning such a move as "provocative speculation" that could lead to conflict in the ex-Soviet country, according to a Russian readout of a call with French President Emmanuel Macron.

Speaking after new phone talks between Putin and Biden late on Saturday, the Kremlin's top foreign policy advisor Yuri Ushakov told



a conference call: "Hysteria has reached its peak."

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken yesterday said the diplomatic path remained open to end the standoff with Moscow but said the risk of Russian military action was high enough to warrant pulling US embassy staff out of Kyiv, reports Reuters. More than a dozen countries have urged citizens

to leave or avoid travel to Ukraine. Many of them have also been scaling back or evacuating staff from their Kyiv missions.

Ukraine, meanwhile, vowed to keep its airspace open to international travel despite warnings that Russian troops conducting drills near its borders could invade at any point, reports AFP.

The Dutch carrier KLM on Saturday became the first major airline to indefinitely suspend flights to the former Soviet republic because of the rising risks.

British Defence Secretary Ben Wallace has compared Western diplomatic efforts to head off the Russian invasion of Ukraine to the appeasement of Nazi Germany ahead of World War II.



The sign says, "Save me. I can't breathe. Polythene is choking my roots." Yet, the bottom of the tree and the bank of the Mayur river at Gallamari in Khulna city are littered with plastic, polythene and other waste. The pleas of environmentalists often fall on deaf ears. The photo was taken on Saturday.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN