



**B1 Food prices keep rising**  
Food inflation up 5.6 percent in Jan



**P3 Book fair buzzing**  
Day 2 sees large crowd



**P9 See doctor for 'paranoia'**  
Russian diplomat tells West over Ukraine crisis



**P15 New reality for Barca**  
Play against Napoli in Europa League first time

## CHEMICAL STORES, PLASTIC FACTORIES Long wait for relocation

SUKANTA HALDER and MOSTAFA YOUSUF

The government's move to relocate hazardous chemical warehouses and plastic factories from the congested neighbourhoods of Old Dhaka remains in limbo, 11 years after the initiative was taken in the aftermath of the Nimtoli inferno.

Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation drafted a plan on relocating the chemical warehouses elsewhere after at least 124 lives perished in the chemical-induced fire in Nimtoli of Chawkbazar on June 3, 2010.

However, the BSCIC took eight years to finally take up the project and decided that the businesses would be shifted to the city's outskirts in Keraniganj.

The project was revised after another devastating fire in Chawkbazar's Churihatta killed 71 people in February 2019. The authorities, at that time, decided the project site would be in Munshiganj.

The work progressed slowly since then.

The project, titled "BSCIC Chemical Industrial Park", was scheduled to be completed by June this year, but project officials say they need an extension of at least one year.

They mainly blame delays in selecting the relocation site and land acquisition for the slow pace of the work.

In the meantime, fear of another disaster like the ones in Nimtoli and Churihatta remains.

Seventy percent of the 310-acre project's land development work has so far been completed, Project Director Muhammad Hafizur Rahman told The Daily Star recently.

He said the structural work would start in June.

The project also involves construction of a drainage system, boundary walls, fire station, a Central Effluent Treatment Plant (CETP) and two jetties.

Officials said the government planned to build two temporary sites in Tongi and Shyampur for the warehouses and factories, but the plan could not be executed.

In a survey in 2019, the Dhaka South City Corporation found 1,924 chemical warehouses in Old Dhaka. Ninety-eight percent of those were found to be "moderately risky", said the survey report.

Locals said the number would be much higher as owners of many other residential buildings rent spaces for warehouses taking advantage of lax monitoring by the authorities.

According to Bangladesh Environment Conservation Rules-1997, no industrial units using hazardous chemicals or goods can operate in and around a residential area.

After the Churihatta tragedy, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader had told reporters that the prime minister instructed to relocate the chemical warehouses and industries.

Around the same time, then DSSC mayor Sayeed Khokan said legal action would be taken against building owners if they were found renting spaces to chemical warehouses.

In 2017, BSCIC submitted a project proposal to the industries ministry on relocating hazardous businesses to Dakshin Brahmankritto area of Keraniganj.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

### CHEMICAL WAREHOUSES

- Initiative taken 2010
- Project proposal 2017
- Project revised 2019
- To miss June 2022 deadline
- Officials say it will need 1 more year



Red chillies being dried in the open near the Jamuna in Kalitala Groyen Badh area of Bogura's Sariakandi upazila. Officials of the Department of Agricultural Extension say char areas in the upazila are suitable for chilli cultivation, but local farmers are not happy because of low prices this year. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

## Essentials' prices go up ahead of Ramadan

MOHAMMAD SUMAN, Chattogram

Like clockwork, the prices of Ramadan essentials like edible oil, chickpea, dried pea, date and sugar have started to spiral in the lead-up to the holy month despite higher imports.

But the reason for the price rises this year appears to be a new one: an upward trend in the prices of the commodities in the global market, brought on by lower production in the exporting countries and higher shipping freight, according to traders and importers.

Import data from the Chattogram Custom House supports this, too.

Between December last year and January this year, the average import cost of palm oil released through the

port stood at Tk 109,980 per tonne and that of soybean oil Tk 118,149 per tonne. A year earlier, it was Tk 69,860 and Tk 73,899 per tonne respectively.

During the period, the average import cost of sugar was Tk 51,332 per tonne, up 25.9 percent year-on-year. Similarly, the average import cost of chickpea increased 16.8 percent year-on-year to Tk 54,320 per tonne during the period.

"There is no sign of shortage in supply of Ramadan items such as chickpea, pea and sugar -- there is ample stock," said Rafikul Islam, an importer and wholesale trader at Chattogram's Khatunganj market, one of the largest commodity hubs in the country.

The import of all essential

commodities except edible oil have increased by 5 to 30 percent in the first seven months of the fiscal year, according to data from the Chattogram Custom House.

More than 9.16 lakh tonnes of edible oil including crude oil, soybean oil and refined palm oil were imported through the Chattogram port in the seven months to January, down 9.8 percent year-on-year.

Between July last year and January this year, about 1.44 lakh tonnes of chickpeas and about 3.05 lakh tonnes of dried peas were imported. A year earlier, their imported quantities were 1.33 lakh tonnes and 2.92 lakh tonnes respectively.

About 4.13 lakh tonnes of sugar were imported, up 35.4 percent year-on-year, according to Chattogram Custom House.

Some 49,350 tonnes of date, a non-negotiable Ramadan item, was brought into the country during the period, up 7.2 percent from a year earlier.

But retailers suddenly placed more orders before the wholesalers keeping Ramadan in mind, resulting in a slight

SEE PAGE 2 COL 8



BAPPI LAHIRI  
1952-2022

## Alvida, disco king

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA, New Delhi

The man beloved for the song "Chalte chalte mere yeh geet yaad rakhna/ Kabhi alvida na kehna" (As you walk remember this song of mine/ Don't ever say farewell) bade his final farewell, leaving the Indian subcontinent's music lovers shocked and saddened.

Bappi Lahiri or as his fans called him, Bappi Da, who set those lyrics by Amit Khanna to soulful music in the Hindi film "Chalte Chalte", passed away at the age of 69 on Tuesday night in Mumbai's

MORE ON PAGE 6

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

## EC search panel cuts list down to 50

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The search committee, tasked with recommending 10 names to the president to form the next Election Commission, shortened the proposed list of 322 to some 50 people.

The committee is yet to decide whether it will publish the final 10 names to be recommended before sending them to President Abdul Hamid, sources in the committee said.

They added that whittling down the 50 names to 10 is a Herculean task as the proposed persons should be neutral, courageous and capable enough to hold a free and fair election.

The search committee held a marathon meeting yesterday to review the names proposed by political parties, professional bodies and individuals.

The committee will hold its next meeting on Saturday at 11:30am at the Supreme Court Judges Lounge to finalise the names, Md Shamsul Arefin, secretary (Coordination and Reforms) of Cabinet Division, told journalists after yesterday's meeting.

He declined to say anything further.

"We have shortened the list from 322 to some 50. We are hopeful of shortening it

further in the next meeting and submitting the names to the president by the stipulated time," a member of the search committee told The Daily Star, wishing not to be named.

The Cabinet Division, which is giving secretariat support to the committee, received 322 names and placed those before the committee to shorten the list.

After the formation of the six-member search committee on February 5, it held its first meeting on the following day and asked political parties, professional bodies and individuals to submit their nominations for chief election commissioner and four election commissioners.

The committee also held discussions with eminent citizens, media personalities and election experts in four rounds and following their recommendations, all proposed names were published on the Cabinet Division's website. But it was not disclosed who proposed each name.

The citizens also suggested that the final list to be sent to the president be made public beforehand so that people could express their views about the nominees.

According to the law, the search committee will propose two names for each post and the president will pick five names from those.

## Schools can open for students of class-VI and above

Says NTAC

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The National Technical Advisory Committee (NTAC) on Covid-19 yesterday said all educational institutions could be reopened now for students of class six and above as the transmission of the virus declined significantly.

The committee made the observation at a meeting with Education Minister Dipu Moni last night.

"As the overall Covid situation has improved significantly, we have opined that educational institutions can be opened now maintaining health protocols strictly and ensuring double dose vaccine for all students," Dr Mohammad Shahidullah, president of the NTAC, told The Daily Star after the meeting.

He, however, said no recommendation was made for resumption of classes for primary students.

Meanwhile, the education ministry will hold a press conference at the secretariat at 11:00am today regarding the opening of educational institutions, said a ministry

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

## You will be Remembered...

we are deeply shocked & mourn



**Mr. Ekram Uddin Mollah**

(Born : 30th January 1991 - Died : 17th February 2019)

We remember him in honor of the 3<sup>rd</sup> death anniversary of **Mr. Ekram Uddin Mollah**, the honorable director of the **Osman Group of Industries**. We pray for the forgiveness of the departed soul in the court of Almighty Allah and pray by the grace of Allah will dwell in Paradise.

Board of directors of Osman Group of Industries,  
A multitude of entrepreneurs, executives and employees

**Osman Group of Industries**

## 2 brothers die in Oman car crash

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two Bangladeshi brothers died in a road accident in Oman's Sinaw city, around 200km from Muscat, early Tuesday.

Two other teenagers, also Bangladesh, were injured in the accident. One of them is in critical condition.

The dead were identified as Jara, 14, and Adib, 12, originally from Mymensingh. Their mother is a doctor at Sinaw Hospital.

Injured Jihad, 14, son of Sheikh expatriate businessman Jasim, took his father's car out around 3:00am, according to the Bangladesh embassy and community organisers.

He picked up Jara, Adib and Atiq, son of expatriate businessman Md Karim, from their homes.

As the roads were empty, Jihad drove at high speed. He lost control of the steering and crashed the car on Adam Road, leaving Jara and Adib dead on the spot.

Jihad was taken to Muscat's Khoula Hospital last afternoon in critical condition. Atiq was admitted to a local hospital in Sinaw. The bodies of the two brothers were kept in a local morgue.

They are all students of Bangladesh School in Sinaw. None of the four had driver's licenses.

## Pollution causing more deaths than Covid: UN

REUTERS, Geneva

Pollution by states and companies is contributing to more deaths globally than Covid-19, a UN environmental report said, calling for "immediate and ambitious action" to ban some toxic chemicals.

The report said pollution from pesticides, plastics and electronic waste is causing widespread human rights violations and at least 9 million premature deaths a year, and that the issue is largely being overlooked.



Ukrainian troops take part in a military drill outside the city of Rivne yesterday. Ukraine staged military drills and defiant displays of flag-waving patriotism yesterday as Nato warned Russia is continuing to mass forces for a possible invasion.

PHOTO: AFP

# 318 illegal brick kilns still polluting Dhaka air

DoE DG tells HC; experts say it's being under reported

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Some 318 illegal brick kilns are still running and polluting the environment in Dhaka and four other surrounding districts -- Gazipur, Manikganj, Narayanganj and Munshiganj.

Mobile courts also shut down 95 others since November last year to January this year, Abdul Hamid, director general of Department of Environment, told the High Court yesterday.

Around 800 brick kilns, which were polluting the environment in Dhaka and its surrounding districts, have been closed since 2019 to December 2021, he told the court during the virtual hearing of a writ petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh in 2019 seeking necessary directives to curb air pollution.

The DG submitted a compliance report to the HC saying that the DoE is conducting mobile court drives against the illegal brick kilns and collecting compensation from their owners for damaging the environment.

The DoE has been running ads on national dailies to make people aware of effectively control, reduction and prevention of the air pollution and about their responsibilities in this regard.

A draft of Air Pollution Control Rules 2022 has been prepared for effectively controlling and reducing the air pollution and the draft has been sent to the public administration ministry on January 30 for taking the next course of action, he said in the report.

According to the compliance report, there are 112 illegal brick kilns in Dhaka, 11 in Manikganj, 26 in Munshiganj and 123 in Narayanganj.

However, the deputy commissioner of Dhaka told the HC that 128 illegal brick kilns are running in Dhaka after 27 were shut down.

The DC of Gazipur informed the HC that the district has 46 such brick kilns.

The bench of Justice Md Ashfaqul Islam and Md Iqbal Kabir Lyton asked the DCs to submit the lists of illegal brick kilns

through swearing affidavits and fixed February 23 for further hearing on the petition.

Deputy Attorney General Kazi Mynul Hasan told The Daily Star that his office would submit the affidavits to the HC next week.

Manjil Morshed, petitioner of the writ, told The Daily Star that they knew about the brick kilns being operated illegally. "All we wanted to have is the exact number of the kilns and break the hibernation of DoE officials. Now we want the DoE to shut down the kilns."

Sharif Jamil, general secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, told The Daily Star that the actual number of the brick kilns was far higher than the number submitted to the court.

Many of the kilns have been built encroaching on Dhaka's river. The coal used at the kilns have high level of toxic sulfur dioxide. They are also destroying the topsoil, which is crucial for rice production, he said.

## Schools can open

FROM PAGE 1

circular yesterday.

Earlier in the day, Education Minister Dipu Moni said the government is going to resume in-person academic activities in all educational institutions this month.

Speaking at a programme in Chandpur, she said they were yet to fix the date for reopening of educational institutions.

She said they would talk with the prime minister about the matter. "But all students will have to maintain Covid health protocol."

The minister's comments came two days after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said educational institutions would reopen at the end of this month if the Covid-19 situation improved.

Following a sharp rise in the Covid infection rate in the country, the government shut down all schools and colleges for two weeks from January 21. The closure was later extended to February 21.

However, Unicef on January 28 urged governments across the world to keep schools open to avert a learning catastrophe and put children back on the learning track.

Partial classroom teaching resumed in the country on September 12 last year after a 543-day closure caused by the pandemic. This was one of the longest school closures in the world.

As many as 39.63 lakh

primary and 39 lakh secondary students in the country were at the risk of learning loss due to the long school closure, according to a joint study by Power and Participation Research Centre and Brac Institute of Governance and Development, published on October 19 last year.

The closure left academic calendars in disarray.

The government cancelled Primary Education Completion Examinations and Junior School Certificate exams for 2020 and 2021 as well as the HSC exams of 2020.

Last year's SSC and HSC exams were held on curtailed syllabuses with fewer subjects.

Following the closure, the government launched TV education programmes through the state-run Sangsad Television channel for secondary and primary students. Later, it asked all schools to introduce online education.

Most of the students in urban areas have access to learning through the internet, but the digital divide has so far proved to be a great disadvantage for the underprivileged learners, mainly for a lack of devices and poor access to the internet.

At the end of last year, the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education asked all secondary schools to start giving assignments to students.

## Long wait for relocation

FROM PAGE 1

The Executive Committee of the National Economic Council (Ecneec) approved the project, spanning 50 acres and worth Tk 201.81cr, on October 30, 2010.

In the face of protests from locals over land acquisition and following the Churihatta tragedy, BSCIC changed the project site to Sirajdikhan of Munshiganj.

In April 2020, Ecneec approved a revised project worth Tk 1,615 crore as the number of plots increased to 2,154 from 946. The area of land to be acquired also rose to 310 acres.

## Alvida, disco king

FROM PAGE 1

CritiCare Hospital.

It was left to two Bengalis -- actor Mithun Chakrabarty and singer-composer Lahiri -- to introduce and popularise disco dance and songs in Bollywood in the 1970s and 80s. Any list of chart-busting and foot-tapping song and dancing track in Bollywood will be incomplete without Mithun and Bappi.

Lahiri was under treatment for a month and was discharged just last Monday. But his health deteriorated on Tuesday and he was brought back to the hospital.

"He had multiple health issues. He died due to OSA [obstructive sleep apnea] shortly before midnight," Dr Deepak Namjoshi, director of the hospital, said yesterday.

Bappi is survived by

Project Director Hafizur Rahman said the land filling suffered delays due to disruptions in supply of earth, collected from Chandpur, over the last few months.

Nurul Mostofa Khokha, president of Bangladesh Chemical and Perfumery Merchant Association, said they submitted all necessary papers to the project authorities for 1,500 plots two years ago.

"We were promised 200 acres of land there. All we need is land. Once everything is ready, we will relocate our businesses there," he said.

He said they were facing

difficulties in running their businesses as the government stopped renewing their licences after the Churihatta incident.

Shamim Ahmed, president of Bangladesh Plastic Goods Manufacturers and Exporters Association, told The Daily Star that they would relocate their businesses to the site once the land development work was over.

"We are interested in relocating our structures there. We expect the land price will be reasonable. Otherwise, it will worsen our woes," he said.

He also said 90 acres of land have been allocated for them in the chemical park.

A separate relocation project for plastic industries, also in Munshiganj, has seen only 1.47 percent progress so far, according to the BSCIC website.

On February 1 this year, the High Court bench of Justice Farah Mahbub and SM Maniruzzaman directed the government authorities to submit a list containing the names of buildings in Old Dhaka with chemical warehouses, stores, and factories.

The court, in response

to a writ petition, also ordered the authorities to submit a report, stating the progress in setting up permanent and temporary chemical storage sites, by April 17.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environment Lawyers Association, said the government's decision to set up two temporary sites for the relocation was nothing but "a mockery with the lives of people".

"They should have accelerated the work in Sirajdikhan where all chemical factories and industries would move. Delays in the relocation

process means negligence for the lives of Old Dhaka people who have faced one tragedy after another," she told The Daily Star.

Essentials'

FROM PAGE 1

increase in the prices of goods at the wholesale markets, Islam said.

In Bangladesh, Ramadan is scheduled to begin on April 2.

However, his import cost for commodities has also gone up of late.

For instance, it cost Islam Tk 40,326 per tonne to import dried peas in January, an increase of 37.6 percent from a year earlier.

Similarly, the import cost of chickpea was Tk 46,000 per tonne last year; this year, it was Tk 54,126 per tonne, he said.

As a result, the prices of all essential commodities have started creeping up.

The wholesale price of soybean oil has increased by Tk 350 per maund (about 37.3 kilograms) in a month to about Tk 6,100.

Similarly, palm oil now costs about Tk 5,600 to Tk 5,650 per maund, an increase of about Tk 400-Tk 420 in a month.

The price of sugar, another essential commodity, is now selling at Tk 2,660-Tk 2,680 a maund, up from Tk 2,600 a month back.

The wholesale price of chickpea has increased by Tk 150 per maund to about Tk 2,150. Similarly, dried peas are selling at Tk 20-30 per maund higher at about Tk 1,700 per maund.

## Khairuzzaman released 6 days after arrest in KL

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Former Bangladeshi high commissioner Mohamed Khairuzzaman, who was arrested six days ago from his residence in Kuala Lumpur, was released yesterday.

Khairuzzaman's lawyer Ngeow Chow Ying said no conditions were tied to his release.

Following his arrest, Kuala Lumpur said there was a request from Bangladesh for his arrest but Dhaka said he was arrested for violating immigration laws.

## 5 kidnappers arrested, 4 fishermen rescued in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Chattogram

Rapid Action Battalion 7 said they arrested five kidnappers and rescued four abducted fishermen from a fishing trawler on Tuesday night.

Rab claimed the gang was active in the Bay of Bengal's Chattogram-Hatiya channel where they kidnapped deep-sea fishermen for ransom.

The arrestees are ringleader Kamal, 35, Nur Nabi, 26, Shameem, 24, Anni, 31 and Ferdous Majhi, 35.

While addressing a press conference yesterday Lieutenant Colonel M Yousuf of Rab 7 said upon information from the arrestees, they rescued the fishermen from a trawler moored in the Karnaphuli river. A case was lodged in this connection.

## Bangladesh-US joint air force exercise from Feb 20

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Air forces from the US and Bangladesh will participate in a joint exercise in Dhaka and Sylhet next week to bolster regional stability.

According to a statement of Pacific Air Forces on February 11, US airmen from 374th Airlift Wing, Yokota Air Base in Japan, and Bangladesh Air Force (BAF) will participate in exercise "Cope South 22" from February 20-25 at BAF Kurmitola Cantonment, Dhaka and operating location-Alpha in Sylhet for a Pacific Air Forces sponsored bilateral tactical airlift exercise.

Approximately 77 US airmen along with two US Air Force C-130J Super Hercules from 36th Airlift Squadron will join 300 Bangladesh armed forces members and two Bangladeshi C-130Js for the exercise.

## 10th grader abducted in Patuakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Police in Patuakhali are trying to rescue a female class 10 student and arrest a 22-year-old man accused of kidnapping her on February 2.

The victim's mother filed a kidnapping case with Rangabali Police Station on February 3, accusing one Russell Mridha and two others unnamed. She also said the accused had demanded Tk 50,000 as ransom.

Officer-in-charge (OC) of Rangabali Police Station Md Jaglul Hasan yesterday said a case was filed in this regard and efforts are on to arrest the accused and rescue the victim. He however did not know about the ransom.

The victim's mother, came to Patuakhali Press Club on Tuesday to seek journalists' help.

Full versions of these stories are available at [www.thedailystar.net](http://www.thedailystar.net)



Throughout the day, a good number of people were seen visiting the fair, browsing through catalogues and buying books of their choice.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## DU to hold 'D' unit entry exams for 2021-22

DU CORRESPONDENT

Amidst much debate, Dhaka University General Admission Committee has decided to hold D-unit entrance exams, under the social sciences faculty, only for admission seekers of academic year 2021-2022.

The decision was taken during a meeting yesterday, with VC Prof Md Akhtaruzzaman in the chair. Deans of the social sciences and arts faculties, Prof Zia Rahman and Prof Abdul Bashir, confirmed the news to this correspondent over phone.

The meeting made decisions about entrance exams of 2022-23, as per which four units will be formed: arts, law and social sciences; science; business studies; and fine arts.

## SUICIDE PREVENTION

# CID working with Facebook, TikTok

MUNTAKIM SAAD

To prevent suicides, Criminal Investigation Department (CID) has recently started working with Facebook and TikTok to get information about social-media users who are vulnerable to self-harming tendencies.

In the last week, CID received data of 13 profiles on the platforms and have initially rescued eight persons, according to officials at CID's Cyber Police Centre. However, the specialised wing of police found that rescuing people who are psychologically vulnerable is one job, but counselling them is a separate matter.

To address this, CID yesterday organised a conference titled "Discussion to find ways to prevent suicide and create awareness to develop mental health among citizens of Bangladesh."

Mental health experts and police personnel talked at the event. The move comes days after the death of businessman Abu Mohsin Khan.

Rezaul Masud, special superintendent of CID's Cyber Intelligence and Risk Management cell, said after getting online profiles of vulnerable people, identifying the victims is the first priority.

He said males were found to be more vulnerable than females, with their ages ranging from 16 to 32. "Victims need psychological support rather than policing support. Family detachment is the key factor behind such situations," he observed.

Quoting BBS report, the official said death by suicide (1.8pc) is more common in the country than death by road accident (1.5pc).

In the last four years, since the launch of the National Emergency Service 999, it has been possible to prevent 1,492 suicides, said Mohammad Tabarak Ullah, additional deputy inspector general of police (National Emergency Service). However, in response to phone calls, police recovered 1,135 bodies of those who had died by suicide, he added.

Mohammad ASP Mahmudul Islam Talukder at the Cyber Police Centre, told The Daily Star that if someone tries to take their own life by going live or posting status or photos, Facebook and TikTok will inform two officials of CID's cyber police and the helpdesk.

On basis of their information, CID would try their best to save the victims, he added.

## RAPE OF O-LEVEL STUDENT

# Charges framed against accused

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka tribunal yesterday framed charges against Fardin Iltekhari Dihan, lone accused in the case filed over rape and murder of an O-level student at Dhaka's Kalabagan in January last year.

Dihan, now in jail, pleaded not guilty and demanded justice, after Judge (in-charge) AM Zulfikar Hayat of Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal-7 of Dhaka read out the charges to him, court sources said.

The tribunal fixed March 16 for starting the case's trial.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

## Day 2, book fair is already buzzing



DIPAN NANDY

There was no way to understand that it was just the second day of the Amar Ekushey Bô Mela yesterday. Not even a weekend afternoon, the day saw a sizeable crowd visiting the fair as soon as its gates opened. Throughout the day, the fairgrounds saw these visitors having a chat over some tea and buying a good number of books.

"A lot of people were present in the evening. This is definitely positive for us," said Masud Rana, manager of Abosar Publications. "While the sales aren't great yet, it's not bad at all. We can safely say from this that the coming days are only going to get better."

During his visit, this correspondent came across cultural personality Ramendu Majumder at Suhrawardy Udyan. Holding several freshly-bought books, he told The Daily Star this year's layout has been nice and that he feels comfortable moving around. "I would like to propose something for the fair's future. The stage at Bangla Academy that hosts cultural programmes and seminars can be brought to Suhrawardy Udyan so that more people can attend them."

**A lot of people were present in the evening. This is definitely positive for us. While the sales aren't great yet, it's not bad at all. We can safely say from this that the coming days are only going to get better.**

Masud Rana, Manager of Abosar Publications

According to Bangla Academy, 18 new books were published at the fair on Wednesday.

Among them are Mujahidul Islam Selim's "Muktijuddher Kathakata: Bhule Thaka Hobe Aporadh" (Agami), Sajjad Hussain's "Soumitrakhor" (Chhapakhana Bhoot), Ghulam Murshid's "Bidyasagar Dusho Bachhar" (Abosar) and Muhammad Zafar Iqbal's "Ami Poramanob" (Somoy).

In the afternoon, a discussion titled "Golden Jubilee of Independence: Bangladesh in Progress of Development", was held at the main stage, where Subhash Singh Roy presented an essay.

PRAYER  
TIMING  
FEB 17



	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



Footpaths, conventionally meant to aid pedestrians to walk safely, have turned into a rampant marketplace. In Panthapath, blocking more than half the width of the pavement, an array of shoes are elaborately laid out, while pedestrians have to wade through the huddled space, even amidst the pandemic. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ



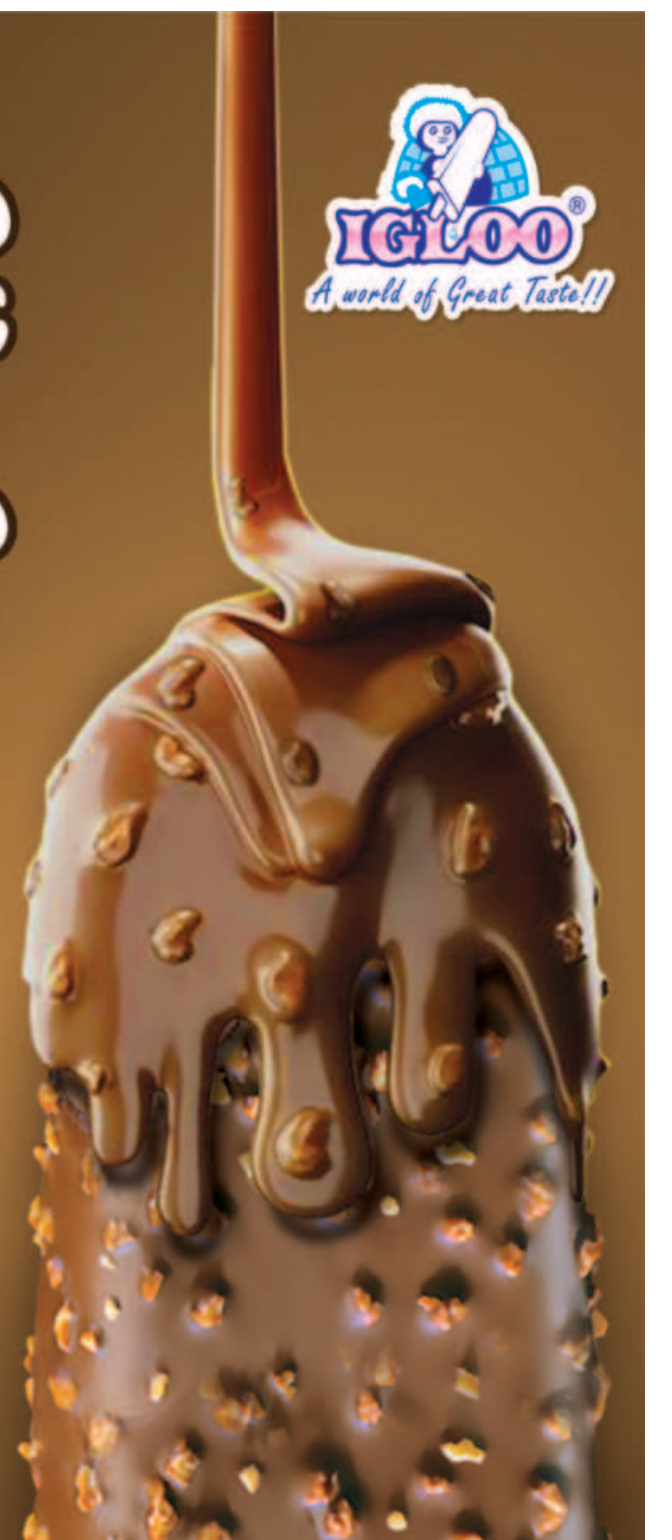
Mushfiqa Kamal (Bullu), wife of Late Kamal Ahmad was born on 18 July, 1950 and returned to Allah (SWT) on 8 February, 2022. Inna Lillahi Wa Inna Ilayhi Rajiun. May Allah (SWT) accept all her good deeds and grant her the highest station in Jannah. Those who knew her will remember her as a devout and pious woman, a devoted wife, a most caring and loving mother and grandmother. She was creatively talented, entrepreneurial and involved in numerous charitable activities and was also the Chairperson of KARIKA for 3 years. She touched each and every heart that she came across.

Her passing has left a void in the hearts of her family and friends. However, it is in these moments, we must remember that the strength of our faith will lift us up and believe in Allah's (SWT) plan. As mere humans, we may not be able to see the plan now, but as Muslims, we accept it and rejoice in the knowledge that Allah's (SWT) wisdom can do no wrong.

Her faith and kindness were her defining qualities which she instilled in her children and grandchildren. For that, they will always be grateful and pray to reunite with her one day in Paradise.

Zubair, Amer, Anika, Shanila, Tonyrma, Mitali, Istiaque, Ishrak and all her loving grandchildren.

GET INDULGED  
IN THE INFINITE  
CRAVING OF  
TRIPLE LAYERED  
CHOCOLATE



## No more first dose after Feb 26

FROM PAGE 16  
Instead of registration, the first dose vaccine recipient with no document or prior registration will be given a vaccine card as proof of taking the vaccine, he said.  
He also said that February 26 will be the last date of administering the first dose of the Covid-19 vaccine.

Starting on January 27 last year, the government has so far inoculated 10.12 crore (87 percent) of the 11.92 crore people, which is 70 percent of the total population.  
The government had an initial target to inoculate 80 percent population with Covid-19 vaccines, which was revised last month.

On the last day (February 26) of first dose vaccination, there will be three makeshift vaccine centres in each union and ward in municipality areas, five mobile vaccination teams in each upazila and 20 in each district.  
Each of the teams will have a target to inoculate 300 people with their first

jobs.  
Besides, there will be 30 mobile teams in each city corporation in Dhaka metropolitan while 40 in Narayanganj City Corporation, 60 each in Barishal, Sylhet, Cumilla and Mymensingh city corporations.  
Each of the teams will have a target to inoculate

500 people.  
At the beginning of the briefing, Dr Nazmul Islam, spokesperson of the DGHS, said that the transmission has been declining very slowly.  
Yesterday, the DGHS has reported 15 Covid-19 patients died and 3,929 new cases. The positivity rate was 12.20 percent.

## Ain Parishad

FROM PAGE 5  
Sharok, on February 22, the speakers raged on in protest of the attacks. It started with Anowara Khatun, who demanded a resolution in Pakistan Gana Parishad's next session.

Abul Kalam Shamsuddin, the then editor of Daily Azad, was the first one who signed their resignation from the Parishad in protest of February 21's violence the next day.  
This same building, on whose place Jagannath Hall's October Smriti building stands today, collapsed on October 15, 1985, killing 39 students and staffers.

It used to have a memorial plaque of the Ain Parishad, but even that's not there anymore. The plaque can now be found at Ducsu.  
Bapon Golder, a resident student of the hall, said, "Some of us know that the Parishad once stood here, but the same cannot be said for all. There are no plaques or anything of that sort to memorialise this piece of history."  
"I think the hall authorities should start working on this," he said.

## No safari park in Lathitila

### Urge speakers at roundtable

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Speakers at a roundtable in Sylhet yesterday urged the government to step back from constructing a safari park at Moulvibazar's Lathitila forest.

"Legal action should be taken to stop the Lathitila safari park from happening. Dialogue should also be conducted with the government to discourage this project," said Bangladesh Environment Network (BEN) founder Nazrul Islam, while addressing the Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa) roundtable in Sylhet.

"Beneficiaries of the park are pressuring the government, making them give in even amid protests." The environment ministry approved the master plan of the Lathitila safari park project worth Tk 846.25 crore. Bapa President Sultana Kamal said, "We have a tradition of sacrificing lives for the protection of resources. We gave our lives for the protection of language on February 21. This time we have to commit to resources like nature."

Sharif Jamil, Bapa general secretary, said, "The project is being planned in the name of forest protection without punishing the people who failed to do so."

## DDT stored for 37yrs finally being cleared

FROM PAGE 16  
ministry and hopefully we will get the approvals soon," he added.  
The project official said the process of destroying the pesticide was very complex and

time-consuming. Only a few countries have plants to destroy this harmful substance, he added.  
In 2007, an initiative was taken to destroy the DDT under the Pesticide Risk Reduction Project in

Bangladesh.  
On November that year, a FAO team visited Bangladesh. The team visited again and met senior officials on March 2, 2015.  
After the meeting, FAO Representative in

Bangladesh Mike Robson promised to bear the pesticide destruction cost.  
In mid-1984, the Bangladesh government inked an agreement with the Pakistan government to import 1,000 tonnes of

DDT powder from Pakistan under the "Public Health Programme" project to control malaria in the country. A consignment of 500 tonnes arrived in 1985, according to the commerce ministry documents.

**গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার**  
জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, ঠাকুরগাঁও  
(স্থানীয় সরকার শাখা)  
[www.thakurgaon.gov.bd](http://www.thakurgaon.gov.bd)  
**দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি**

তারিখ: ০১ ফাল্গুন ১৪২৮  
১৪ ফেব্রুয়ারি ২০২২

স্মারক নম্বর: ০৫.৫৫.৯৪০০.০০৯.১৮.০০০.২১.৫৬

ঠাকুরগাঁও জেলার ইউনিয়ন পরিষদসমূহে কর্মরত গ্রাম পুলিশদের (মেম্বার ও মহস্তাদার) ২০২১-২০২২ অর্থ বছরের জন্য পোশাক ও অন্যান্য সরঞ্জামাদি সরবরাহের নিমিত্ত খর্চ সাপেক্ষে প্রকৃত ব্যবসায়ী/পোশাক সরবরাহকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হতে সীলমোহরকৃত খামে দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাবে।

ক্রম	বিবরণ	বিস্তারিত বিবরণ
০১	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	স্থানীয় সরকার, স্থানীয় সরকার, পল্লী উন্নয়ন ও সমবায় মন্ত্রণালয়, ঢাকা।
০২	দরপত্র আহ্বানকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান	জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, ঠাকুরগাঁও।
০৩	সম্মত সংস্থার নাম	জেলা প্রশাসক, ঠাকুরগাঁও।
০৪	অর্ডার উইল	অনুসন্ধান বাস্তবায়ন মঞ্জুরি নং-০৪, হিসাবের খাত নং-১৩৭০১০১/১২০০০১০৩৮/১৩৩৩১০৩
০৫	ক্রয় পদ্ধতি	উন্মুক্ত দরপত্র পদ্ধতি (ওটিএম)।
০৬	দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের স্থান	(ক) বিভাগীয় কমিশনারের কার্যালয়, রংপুর বিভাগ, রংপুর, (খ) স্থানীয় সরকার শাখা, জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, ঠাকুরগাঁও ও (গ) পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, ঠাকুরগাঁও।
০৭	দরপত্র গ্রহণের স্থান	(ক) বিভাগীয় কমিশনারের কার্যালয়, রংপুর বিভাগ, রংপুর, (খ) স্থানীয় সরকার শাখা, জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, ঠাকুরগাঁও ও (গ) পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, ঠাকুরগাঁও।
০৮	দরপত্র বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	১ম পর্যায় ১৬/০৩/২০২২ খ্রিস্টাব্দ তারিখ বিকাল ৫.০০টা। ২য় পর্যায় ১৬/০৩/২০২২ খ্রিস্টাব্দ তারিখ বিকাল ৫.০০টা।
০৯	দরপত্র জমাানের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	১ম পর্যায় ২০/০৩/২০২২ খ্রিস্টাব্দ তারিখ দুপুর ১২.০০টা। ২য় পর্যায় ১৬/০৩/২০২২ খ্রিস্টাব্দ তারিখ দুপুর ১২.০০টা।
১০	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	১ম পর্যায় ২০/০৩/২০২২ খ্রিস্টাব্দ তারিখ বিকাল ৪.০০টা। ২য় পর্যায় ১৬/০৩/২০২২ খ্রিস্টাব্দ তারিখ বিকাল ৪.০০টা।
১১	কার্যের বিবরণ	(১) ফুল শার্ট একটি ও হাফ শার্ট একটি (মিল সহ) সোজার স্ট্রাইপসের সরকারি কর্মকর্তাদের সরবরাহের জন্য মোটামুটি কয়েক সেটমত ও পকেট চন্দনামত এক টেকসই সোয়াইসে জঙ্ককৃত [সোজার ব্যাচ (মেম্বারদের জন্য) পারপেল কালাস, Four Pointed Cross ফাঁকি কালাস, Four Pointed Cross ফাঁকি কালাস, আকাশী রং এর রিবন এবং গ্রাম পুলিশ সেমি-সাদা রং এর হাফ এবং মেম্বারদের জন্য] সোজার ব্যাচ পারপেল কালাস, আকাশী রং এর রিবন এবং গ্রাম পুলিশ সেমি-সাদা রং এর হাফ। (২) ফুল শার্ট দুইটি (ফাঁকি সহ) সরকারি কর্মকর্তাদের সরবরাহের জন্য মোটামুটি কয়েক সেটমত জঙ্ককৃত (৩) মহিলা গ্রাম পুলিশদের জর্জেট শার্ট, পেটিকোট ও ব্লাউজ (মিল সহ) (৪) বেস্ত (৫) মথার কাপ মেশামসহ (৬) লামনার বাঁশী (৬) উলের সোয়েটার (মহিলা গ্রাম পুলিশের জন্য কার্ভিগান) (৬) কাপড়ের জুতা (১০) মোজা (১১) সাইড ব্যাগ (১২) উত্তমানে ৪.৫০ ক্রেস্টে চার্জার টর্চ লাইট (১৩) ছাচা (গ্রাম পুলিশের মেশামসহ) (১৪) হেইন কেট (১৫) একটি উন্নতমানের বাই-সাইকেল।
১২	কার্যের মেয়াদ	যুক্ত সম্পাদন নোটিশ প্রাঞ্জির ৩০ (ত্রিশ) দিন।
১৩	দরপত্রের শর্তাবলী প্রয়োজ্য।	
১৪	দরপত্র সিদ্ধিউলের মূল্য	নগদ ২,০০০/- (দুই হাজার) টাকা অক্ষরকৃতভাবে।
১৫	দরপত্র জামানত	দরপত্রের সাথে দাখিলকৃত মেট্রিক মুলের উপরে দরপত্র জামানত হিসেবে ৫% অর্থ যে কোনো ফরমসিদ্ধি ব্যাঙ্ক হতে জেলা প্রশাসক, ঠাকুরগাঁও এর অনুমূল্যে ব্যাঙ্ক ড্রাকট/পে-অর্ডার (ফেরতকৃত) দাখিল করতে হবে।
১৬	দরপত্র সম্পাদনকারী অফিস	জেলা প্রশাসকের কার্যালয়, ঠাকুরগাঁও।

দরপত্রের বিস্তারিত বিবরণ ও শর্তাবলী সিদ্ধিউলে বর্ণিত আছে। অসহী সন্দর্ভাধীন নিখারিত/উল্লিখিত তারিখের মধ্যে অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে ০৯:৩০ থেকে ১২:৩০ পর্যন্ত স্থানসমূহ হতে উল্লিখিত মূল্যে (অক্ষরকৃতভাবে) নিজস্ব প্যাকেট আবেদনের মাধ্যমে দরপত্র সিদ্ধিউল করা করতে পারবেন।

স্বাক্ষরিত/-  
মোঃ মাহবুবুর রহমান  
জেলা প্রশাসক  
ঠাকুরগাঁও  
ফোন: ০৫৬১-৫২০১১  
dcthakurgaon@mopa.gov.bd

## Sainik's role

FROM PAGE 16  
in a forest. Later in the early morning, we went to Nawabganj and found a shelter there. After spending some days in different shelters outside Dhaka, I came back to Dhaka.  
Tamaddun Majlish had

an extensive network outside Dhaka, and our local leaders actively participated in organising the Language Movement in different districts. Many of them were also arrested.  
Mohammad Abdul Gafur was the editor of the

Weekly Sainik during the Language Movement.  
Source: *Bhasha Andolon Shachhallish theke Baanna* (Ed. Mostofa Kamal, Bangladesh Co-operative Book Society Ltd, 1987)  
Translated by Shamsuddoza Sajen

## Bagerhat mayor

FROM PAGE 5  
for embezzling government funds and making illegal appointments.  
Besides, Tarun Kanti Ghosh, assistant director of Khulna ACC office, filed two cases with the district ACC office.  
One case was filed against 18 people, including

the mayor, for illegally appointing 17 people and embezzling over Tk 1.26 crore from the government treasury.  
Another case was filed against the two for embezzling Tk 1 crore by failing to complete construction of two projects.

## RCC mayor's

FROM PAGE 5  
Korean official that they're unaware of the procurement. The Korean company then sent nine documents which showed that the company was communicating with a fake email address that used the mayor's name.  
The mails showed that the Koreans asked the Koreans to send \$30,000 to bank account in Philippines and \$48,893 to one in the UK.  
The mayor said the

embarrassing part for him is that the Korean company submitted an allegation to the Bangladesh embassy in Seoul against him.  
"We aren't clear yet whether the Korean company officials are involved or they were swindled by a third party, but we can guess they faced international frauds," the mayor said.  
He also said internal findings have revealed that the communications were carried out from Africa.

## Charges

FROM PAGE 3  
The victim's father on January 7 last year filed the case with Kalabagan Police Station against Fardin.  
According to the case statement, Fardin manipulated the girl into going to his flat and raped her when his family members were away.

At one stage, the victim bled profusely and fell unconscious. Fardin then took her to a hospital to deflect blame, the complainant alleged.  
On January 8 of the same year, he gave his confessional statement before a Dhaka court.

## 7 killed

FROM PAGE 5  
was killed and eight others were injured as a bus hit a truck parked beside Dhaka-Mymensingh highway at Kazirshimla yesterday. In another incident, Rina Khatun (50) and Shariful Islam (18) were killed and two others injured when a CNG-run auto-rickshaw and a truck collided on Mymensingh-Jamalpur road at Gaturi Bazar.  
In Chattogram, Papon Barua (40) was killed and five were injured as a CNG-run auto-rickshaw and a human haulier collided head-on at Noapara in Raozan yesterday.  
In Muktagachha, Mahin Mia (19) died when a lorry hit his bike at Borohisya Bazar on Tuesday night.

**Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited**  
Based on Islamic Shari'ah

Operations Wing  
Procurement of  
Computer Hardware  
And Accessories Department  
20, Dilkusha C/A (9th floor), Dhaka - 1000.

### TENDER NOTICE

Sealed Tenders are hereby invited by Islami Bank Bangladesh Limited from reputed Companies / Distributors / Local Agents / Partners / Dealers / Resellers for supplying, installing, commissioning, migrating, and maintenance of E-mail system (Professional/ Enterprise edition) with required Hardware & Software for the bank under the following terms and conditions:  
The intending bidders have to apply in their letter head pad for purchasing tender document for supplying, installing, commissioning, migrating, and maintenance of E-mail system (Professional/ Enterprise edition) with required Hardware & Software for the bank. The tender document will be sold upon payment of Tk. 3,000/- only in cash (non-refundable) from 20.02.2022 to 21.03.2022 during office hours and tender will be received at the office of the undersigned during office hours up to 3:00 PM on 22.03.2022. Technical offer(s) will be opened at 3:15 PM on the same date in presence of the Bidder(s) or their representatives (who may like to attend) at the office of undersigned. A pre bid meeting in this regard will be held on 03.03.2022 at 11.00 AM at Procurement of Computer Hardware and Accessories Department, 20, Dilkusha C/A (9th Floor), Dhaka - 1000. Details information relating to the Tender are available at Bank's website: [www.islamibankbd.com](http://www.islamibankbd.com) or in the form of hard copy at the office of the undersigned.  
FAVP & Head of Department

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
Office of the Executive Engineer  
Education Engineering Department  
Manikganj  
[eed.manikganj.gov.bd](http://eed.manikganj.gov.bd)

### e-Tender Notice (Open Tendering Method)

Notice No. EED/Manikganj/2021-22/27 Date: 16-02-2022

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

SL No.	Tender ID	Name of works	Last date and time of selling documents	Tender closing date/time	Tender opening date/time
01	652359	Repair and Renovation works of Office of the District Education Officer, Manikganj (FY-2020-21) at Sadar Upazila under Manikganj District	06-March-2022 16:00 BST	07-March-2022 12:30 BST	07-March-2022 12:30 BST
02	652360	Repair and Renovation works of Office of the Executive Engineer, Education Engineering Department, Manikganj at Sadar Upazila under Manikganj District	06-March-2022 16:00 BST	07-March-2022 12:30 BST	07-March-2022 12:30 BST
03	652364	Re Construction of Boys Hostel (Semi Pucca) (FY 2018-19) to Ghior Govt College at Ghior Upazila under Manikganj District	06-March-2022 16:00 BST	07-March-2022 12:30 BST	07-March-2022 12:30 BST
04	652365	Vertical Extension of Existing Academic Building in/c necessary works of Ibrahimpur Ishwar Chandra High School at Harirampur Upazila under Manikganj District	06-March-2022 16:00 BST	07-March-2022 12:30 BST	07-March-2022 12:30 BST
05	652368	Repair and Renovation works at Joymontop High School at Singair Upazila under Manikganj District	06-March-2022 16:00 BST	07-March-2022 12:30 BST	07-March-2022 12:30 BST
06	652369	Repair and Renovation works at Panishail High School at Singair Upazila under Manikganj District	06-March-2022 16:00 BST	07-March-2022 12:30 BST	07-March-2022 12:30 BST
07	652370	Repair and Renovation works at Baliyati Ishwar Chandra High School at Sadar Upazila under Manikganj District	06-March-2022 16:00 BST	07-March-2022 12:30 BST	07-March-2022 12:30 BST
08	652371	Repair and Renovation works at Afroza Ramjan Girls School and College at Sadar Upazila under Manikganj District	06-March-2022 16:00 BST	07-March-2022 12:30 BST	07-March-2022 12:30 BST
09	652372	Construction of Shahid Minar of Ibrahimpur Ishwar Chandra High School at Harirampur Upazila under Manikganj District	06-March-2022 16:00 BST	07-March-2022 12:30 BST	07-March-2022 12:30 BST

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.  
The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks branches up to 16.00 BST on 06-March-2022.  
Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

**Mujahidul Islam Alif**  
Executive Engineer  
Education Engineering Department  
Manikganj  
[ee\\_man@eedmoe.gov.bd](mailto:ee_man@eedmoe.gov.bd)

**Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
Govt. Brojomohun College, Barishal  
College Road, Barishal  
Website: [www.bmc.gov.bd](http://www.bmc.gov.bd)

Memo No. cedp/bmc/otm/2021-22/02 Date: 16/02/2022

### e-Tender Notice 02/2021-2022

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

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Name of works	Last date and time of tender security submission	Tender closing date & time
1.	654050	Procurement of Air-conditioner at Brojomohun College, Barishal.	03-Mar-2022 13:00	03-Mar-2022 14:00
2.	62627 (Re-Tender)	Procurement of Furniture & Fixtures for Classrooms & Seminar rooms at Brojomohun College, Barishal.	03-Mar-2022 13:00	03-Mar-2022 14:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.  
The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks' branches up to 02-March-2022 16:00.  
Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

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## RCC mayor's documents faked for \$78,893 fraud

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Unknown fraudsters used fake documents of Rajshahi City Corporation (RCC) and its mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Liton to sign a \$10.12 million firefighting truck procurement deal with a Korean company.

Shinshin Global Company Limited, believing that it was communicating with RCC officials, sent \$78,893 to bank accounts in Philippines and the UK to close the deal.

According to the fake deal, RCC would procure the trucks from the company for \$10.12 million.

The information was revealed by the mayor, also a presidium member of Awami League, yesterday during a press conference at Rajshahi Nagar Bhaban.

"We're completely unaware of the deal. Even we have no authority to sign such a deal with a foreign company," Liton said.

He said the corporation has lodged a general diary with Boalia Police Station and informed the cybercrime unit of police, along with the government high-ups.

The story started developing from December last year, when a top official of the Korean company called RCC engineering adviser Md Ashraful Haque to enquire about the procurement of eight firefighting trucks.

After consulting with the mayor, Haque informed the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



The East Pakistan Ain Parishad raged with heated debates protesting the February 21 attack. The Parishad's building used to stand on the spot where Jagannath Hall's October Smriti Bhaban stands today.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

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 five, we take you to the East Pakistan Ain Parishad, on whose place the Jagannath Hall stands today.

### GRAFT CASE

## Bagerhat mayor sent to jail

### Supporters block highway

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Bagerhat

A Bagerhat court yesterday ordered to send Bagerhat Municipality Mayor Khan Habibur Rahman and former municipality secretary Rezaul Karim to jail in a corruption case.

The order was issued by District and Sessions Judge Rabiul Islam. After a lengthy hearing, the judge denied the accused's bail request.

Meanwhile, as Habibur Rahman's bail was denied, his supporters blocked the Khulna-Bagerhat highway for over an hour.

On November 25, last year, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) filed a case against Mayor Khan Habibur Rahman and former secretary Rezaul Karim

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

# Ain Parishad was there for the movement

DIPAN NANDY and SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

On February 21, 1952, the protesters had two programmes to press home their demand for Bangla as a state language. One, the section 144 had to go, and two, taking a memorial plaque to the East Pakistan Ain Parishad.

After the police opened fire during the rally that tried to overrule the curfew, the second programme never got the chance to take place. But even though the protesters never reached it, their fire still reached the Parishad. On the day, 35 MPs walked out of the Ain Parishad's budget session.

Today, the Ain Parishad premises doesn't exist anymore. In its place stands Dhaka University's Jagannath Hall. But sadly, there's no sign or memorial plaque



remiscing how it once stood there with pride.

It can be known from Golam Quddus' "Bhashar Larai and Rashtra Bhasha Andolan" that on the day, the Parishad's session began with nine ministers and 83 members, along with the Speaker. Before it, Muslim League held a party meeting at the Parishad building.

As the sound of gunfire flew in, Abdur Rashid Tarkabagish immediately left the premises and headed out for DMCH. After observing the situation there, he came back to the premises and gave a speech

protesting the violence.

During his speech, he told the Speaker, "Before responding to questions let me just say we cannot hold this session here when our hopes for the future, our students are dying to police fire. This needs to be investigated first, before we resume the session."

The same was echoed by Congress' deputy leader Dhirendranath Dutta, and he was joined by Abdur Rashid Tarkabagish, Manoranjan Dhar and more.

They soon got into a heated argument with Speaker Abdul Karim, after which the MPs of Muslim League and Congress walked out. At 5:10pm, the session was halted.

According to MR Mahub's Ekushey'r

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

## 7 killed, 22 hurt in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Seven people were killed and 22 were injured in road accidents in two districts during the last two days.

In Mymensingh, Murtaza Khatun (60) and her granddaughter Jannat (4) were killed when a covered-van ran them over while they were crossing Dhaka-Mymensingh highway at Mehrabari yesterday, said police.

Meanwhile, seven army men were injured when their Dhaka-bound vehicle fell into a roadside ditch in the same area as the driver lost control over the steering yesterday, said Boraduba Highway Police Station OC Ali Hossain.

They were rushed to Combined Military Hospital in Mymensingh.

In Trishal, a seven-month-old girl, Sinnatur,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

## Ctg doctor fighting for life at ICU

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A doctor is fighting for her life at the ICU of Chattogram Medical College Hospital. She was injured after being hit by an auto-rickshaw at Kazir Dewri on Tuesday.

The injured -- Samina Akter -- is a doctor at Bangabandhu Memorial Hospital of USTC, said police. She was returning home by a rickshaw around 10:30pm when the accident occurred.

Dr Noman Khaled Chowdhury, neurosurgery head at CMCH, said her condition was critical.

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# Remembering Bengal's queen of melody, SANDHYA MUKHOPADHYAY

“The love of my listeners is my greatest award”.

Sandhya Mukhopadhyay to Indian media, two days before she was hospitalised.



ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Legendary Bengali singer Sandhya Mukhopadhyay passed away at the age of 90 on February 15, following a massive cardiac arrest, leaving behind legions of mourning fans across borders.

She was born and brought up in Kolkata, and took her first singing lessons from her parents Narendranath Mukhopadhyay and Hemaprabha Devi. She was a trained classical singer, who with equal ease took to different forms of singing — from playback to folk songs, Rabindra Sangeet, and bhajans.

Sandhya Mukhopadhyay, through a legacy of over 280 songs, took Bengali songs to new heights, whether it was playback singing for films or songs released during Durga Puja.

Her first recording was in 1945 and her first album of Durga Puja songs was released in 1948. Soon, she got offers for playback singing in Bengali films. Her first playback singing was for the film, “Samapika”, released in 1948.

She went on to sing for around 17 Hindi films before returning to Kolkata and settling there as an



Sandhya Mukhopadhyay has left behind a legacy of over 280 songs.

PHOTOS: COLLECTED

Unfortunately, her recent refusal of the Padma Shri and the controversy that ensued, is probably what made her known to the rest of the world, when she deserved to be an international legend, rather than simply a Bengali icon.

The eminent songstress represented an entire era in Bengal, where love was expressed through songs, and love songs necessarily meant Hemanta Mukhopadhyay and Sandhya Mukhopadhyay duets. She was clearly aware of her stature, and that is why she had the courage to refuse the award.

Intriguingly, there were rumours that Lata Mangeshkar and Sandhya Mukhopadhyay shared a bitter relationship — and because of the relationship, Sandhya Mukhopadhyay could not establish herself in Bollywood.

However, in her autobiography published in 2001, Sandhya Mukhopadhyay had stated that those rumours were complete lies.

Reportedly, the two singers shared a great bond with each other, and Sandhya Mukhopadhyay chose to be in Kolkata herself. She

sang the duet “Bol papiha bol” with Lata Mangeshkar in the 1951 film, “Taraana”.

Pitting the two singing legends against each other is unnecessary, as noted by celebrated Bollywood playback singer Abhijeet Bhattacharya. “Like Lata Mangeshkar, Sandhya Mukherjee (Mukhopadhyay) was the incarnation of Saraswati. These voids can never be filled,” he told Indian media yesterday.

Although Sandhya Mukhopadhyay's importance in the world of music can be talked about for days on end, her greater legacy was that of a humble artiste, whose passion for her craft was unparalleled. Her melodies will continue to inspire musicians for generations to come.



The eminent songstress had turned down the Padma Shri.

eminent playback singer in Bengali cinema. Her most significant duets were with Bengali singer Hemanta Mukhopadhyay, especially when she did playback for renowned actress Suchitra Sen.

She worked with leading music directors, including SD Burman,

Madan Mohan, Naushad, Anil Biswas and Salil Chowdhury. Some of her iconic songs are “Ei Poth Jodi Na Shesh Hoy”, “Madhumaloti Dake Aaye”, “E Shudhu Gaaner Din”, “Ghum Ghum Chand”, and “Ke Tumi Aamare Dako”, among many others.

Lovingly called “Gitasree”, Sandhya Mukhopadhyay received the National Film Award for best female playback singer for the films, “Sandhya Deeper Sikha” (1965) and “Jay Jyanti” (1972).

Among countless other accolades, she was conferred West Bengal government's highest recognition, Banga Bibhushan, in 2011.

Sandhya Mukhopadhyay will be remembered by millions for her role in the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh.

In Kolkata, she was actively involved in creating awareness about the issues of the people of the then East Pakistan. She helped musician Samar Das in setting up the Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra, which played a

crucial role in relaying Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's message to the people.

Her songs for Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra were crucial in Bangladesh's Liberation War as they motivated the Mukti Bahini soldiers and also mobilised the masses by

phire elo tomar, swapner swadhin Banglai”, on Swadhin Bangla Betar Kendra.

It was a powerful reminder of the

**Her first recording was in 1945 and her first album of Durga Puja songs was released in 1948. Soon, she got offers for playback singing in Bengali films. Her first playback singing was for the film, “Samapika”, released in 1948.**

creating a patriotic fervour.

She joined leading artistes to perform concerts free of fee to raise money for the 10 million refugees who were forced to take shelter in India.

In January 1972, when Bangabandhu returned from prison to a newly independent nation, he was greeted by the song “Bangabandhu

sufferings and sacrifices Bangladeshis underwent during the Liberation War.

Written by Abidur Rahaman and composed by Sudhin Dasgupta, one of the most prolific composers from West Bengal, the song was made memorable by the beautiful voice of Sandhya Mukhopadhyay.

## Farewell to the man who made billions dance

### Bappi Lahiri passes away at 69

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

Think of the world's greatest Disco artistes — Donna Summer had 17 studio albums, while Gloria Gaynor had 18.

In 1986 alone, Bappi Lahiri recorded 180 songs for 33 albums, entering the Guinness Book of World Records.

The man responsible for bringing the iconic sound of disco to the subcontinent passed away on Tuesday night at 11:45 pm, at a hospital in Mumbai. He was 69 years old at the time of passing, and had had been ailing for many weeks, suffering from obstructive sleep apnea.

“Shri Bappi Lahiri Ji's music was all encompassing, beautifully expressing diverse emotions. People across generations could relate to his works,” wrote India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Twitter. “His lively nature will be missed by everyone.”

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also prayed for the salvation of the departed soul, in her condolence message.

When you think of Bappi Lahiri, chances are that you think of his unusual demeanour — a musical legend who modelled himself after the outlandish pop culture of the 80s, adorning gold chains and a striking choice of clothing and apparels. To those close to him, however, his heart of gold far outshined his exterior glitz.

Bappi Lahiri was born as Alokesh Lahiri on November 27, 1952, to father Aparesh Lahiri and mother Bansuri Lahiri. His father, who was also a well-known music director, and his maternal uncle, the legendary Kishore Kumar, inspired him to pursue music.

From the age of 3, Bappi Lahiri started playing the tabla, eventually picking up many eastern classical instruments.

When he finally entered the music industry in the early 70's he had to compete with the juggernauts of the industry, including the likes

of Laxmikant-Pyarelal and R D Burman.

‘Bappi da’, as he was endearingly known, attributes his first success to the ‘Saraswati’ of Indian music, Lata Mangeshkar. Lata had previously worked with his father in some projects. “She sang my first composition in a Bengali film, ‘Daadu’. If she hadn't sung for me, I'd have been swept away by the competition”, Lahiri had said in multiple interviews.

The music director had found success in films like “Zakhmee” (1975), “Chalte Chalte” (1976), and “Suraksha” (1979). However, his breakout success came in 1982 blockbuster “Disco Dancer”, which sent an entire subcontinent into frenzy over his disco tracks like “I am a Disco Dancer”, “Jimmy Jimmy Aaja Aaje” and “Koi Yahaan Nache Nache” were chartbusters, turning Bappi Lahiri into one of the most sought-after music directors of the 80's.

Throughout the years, Lahiri sang in many languages, often reinventing his style of music without straying too far from his signature, flamboyant style.

He often infused tunes from folk songs and made modern renditions, as evident in songs like “Yaar Bina Chain Kaha Re”, which was inspired from “She Jon Shona Chine Na”.

Besides his illustrious film career, Bappi Lahiri also collaborated with international icons like Samantha Fox, Boy George, Snoop Dogg, MC Hammer and Akon, among others.

“Raat Baaqi”, “Chirodini Tumi Je Amar”, “Bambai Se Aaya Mera Dost”, “Oo Laa Laa”, “Chalte Chalte Meri Yeh Geet Yaad Rakhna”, “Yaad Aa Raha Hain” are only a few of his notable songs, among hundreds of super-hits.

Bappi Lahiri is survived by his wife Chitrani Lahiri, son Bappa Lahiri, and his daughter Rema Lahiri.

His passing is not only the end of an era, but an entire genre in India — as no one could truly recreate his Disco ‘magic’ in Bollywood. However, following the maestro's own lines “Chalte Chalte Meri Ye Geet Yaad Rakhna”, we shall never truly say goodbye to him — he is omnipresent every time we listen to his groovy masterpieces.



Bappi Lahiri (middle) with Lata Mangeshkar and Kishore Kumar.

A young Bappi Lahiri with Lata Mangeshkar.

Bappi Lahiri and Mithun Chakraborty revolutionised the Indian film industry with “Disco Dancer”.



🕒 Bappi Lahiri was born as Alokesh Lahiri in 1952.

🕒 He started playing the tabla from the age of 3.

🕒 In 1986 alone, Bappi Lahiri recorded 180 songs for 33 albums, entering the Guinness Book of World Records.

🕒 Kishore Kumar was his maternal uncle. The duo later recorded 200 songs together.

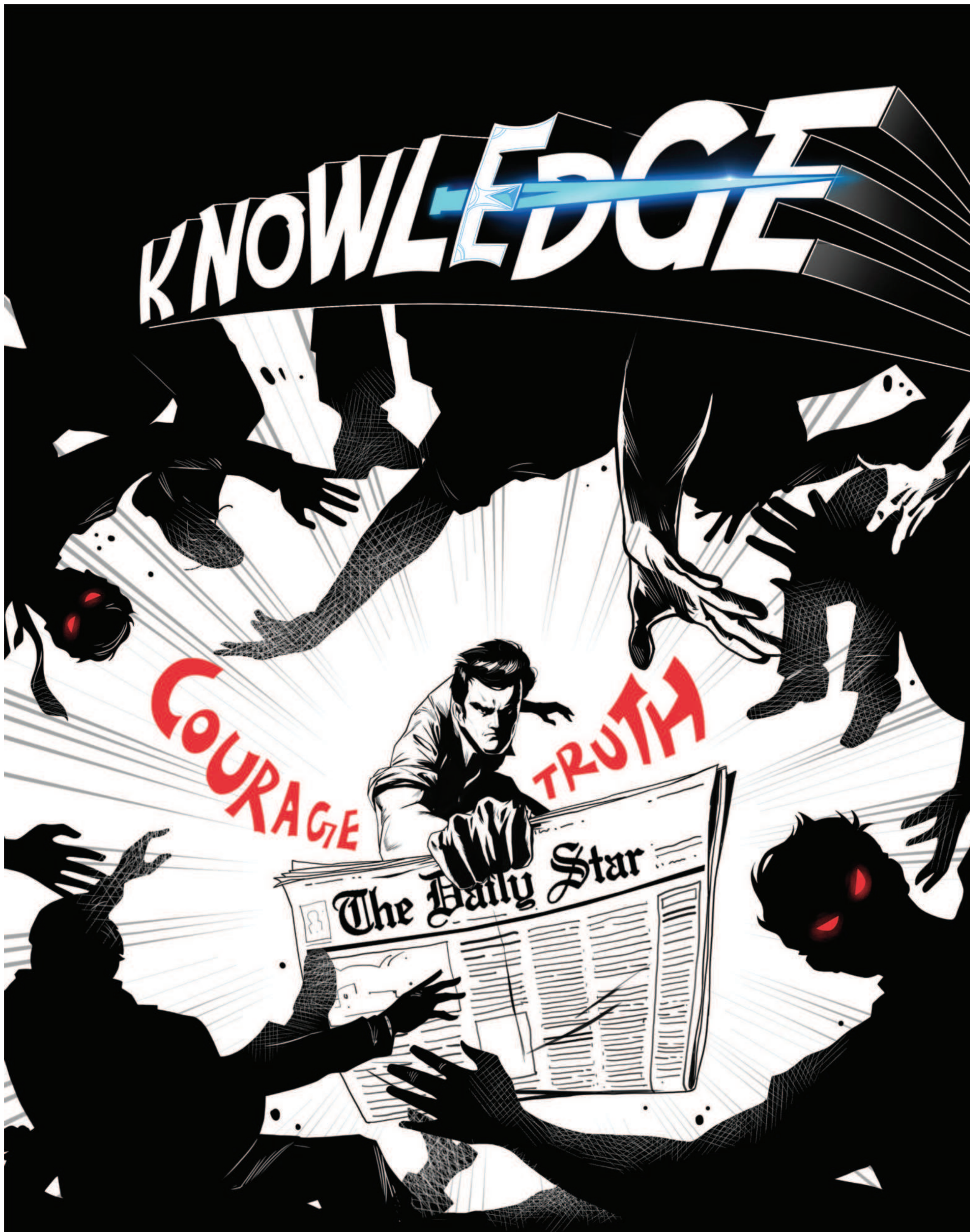
🕒 Bappi Lahiri sued the US band Truth Hurts in 2002 for lifting riff from his song ‘Kaliyon Ka Chaman’. He won credit in an LA court.

🕒 He once stated that he wanted Ranveer Singh to portray him in a biopic

🕒 2006 was the first time he sang for another composer, in film “Taki No 9211”.

🕒 In a season of Indian Idol, he revealed that Elvis Presley was his styling information.





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## Heavy rain leaves 34 dead in Brazil

REUTERS, Rio De Janeiro

At least 34 people died after heavy rain hit Petropolis, a city in the mountainous region of Brazil's Rio de Janeiro state, local government said yesterday.

City streets were flooded by downpours, while landslides also resulted in fatalities.

President Jair Bolsonaro, who is traveling to Russia, said on Twitter he had asked ministers to help the city and the victims of the storm.

Rio de Janeiro's Governor Claudio Castro went to Petropolis on Tuesday night.

"We are in Petropolis articulating all the help needed at this time," Castro wrote on his Twitter account.



Syrian firefighters extinguish fire following artillery shelling by the Syrian regime on a fuel depot affiliated to the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) jihadist group yesterday in the northwestern rebel-held town of Dana. At least three civilians were killed in the shelling, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

PHOTO: AFP

## HIJAB ROW IN SOUTHERN INDIA Security tight as schools reopen

AFP, Udupi

Schools reopened in southern India under tight security yesterday with public gatherings banned following protests over Muslim girls wearing the hijab in classrooms.

Tensions have been high in Karnataka state since late last year when at least four schoolgirls were prevented from wearing the Muslim headscarf, sparking protests that have since spread across India.

In an attempt to calm tensions, Karnataka's state government temporarily closed schools last week.

This came as the Karnataka High Court imposed a temporary ban on the wearing of all religious symbols in schools while it considers the headscarf ban.

As classrooms reopened in the state on Tuesday and yesterday, police with batons were deployed outside several schools.

Authorities also imposed Section 144 -- a law that prohibits gatherings of more than four people -- in several districts.

## Covid cases decline by 19pc

Says WHO as just over 16m new infections, about 75,000 deaths reported worldwide last week

ALJAZEERA ONLINE

The number of new Covid-19 cases worldwide has dropped by 19 percent in the past week, while recorded deaths remain stable, according to the World Health Organization's (WHO) latest report on the coronavirus pandemic.

The United Nations' health agency said late on Tuesday that "just over 16 million new cases and just under 75,000 new deaths were reported" globally during the week of February 7 to February 13.

The Western Pacific was the only region to report an increase in new weekly cases, a rise of about 19 percent. Southeast Asia recorded a drop of about 37 percent, the biggest decrease across the six WHO regions.

The biggest number of new cases was seen in Russia. Cases there and elsewhere in Eastern Europe doubled in recent weeks, driven by a surge of the hugely infectious Omicron variant.

Meanwhile, the number of deaths rose by 38 percent in the Eastern Mediterranean region and by about one-third in the Western Pacific, according to the WHO's weekly report.

WHO said that all other coronavirus variants, including Alpha, Beta and Delta, continue to decline globally as Omicron crowds them out.

Among the more than 400,000 Covid-19 virus sequences uploaded to the world's biggest virus database in the last week, more than 98 percent were Omicron.

WHO said the BA.2 version of Omicron appears to be "steadily increasing" and its prevalence has risen in South Africa, Denmark, the UK and other countries.

Health officials have noted, however, that Omicron causes milder disease than previous Covid-19 variants and in countries with high vaccination rates, hospitalisation and death rates have not increased substantially, even with Omicron's spread.

## COVID-VACCINATED MOMS Strong protection for babies: CDC

AFP, Washington

Babies born to mothers fully vaccinated against the coronavirus during pregnancy were around 60 percent less likely to be hospitalised with severe Covid, a new study by the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said Tuesday. Such an effect had been hypothesized -- because of the transfer of antibodies through the placenta during pregnancy and through breast milk after birth -- but wasn't backed by real world evidence until now. The CDC carried out a study involving 379 babies aged up to six months, who were hospitalized in 20 pediatric centers from July 2021 to January 2022. The authors studied the odds of Covid-19 vaccination among mothers whose babies were hospitalized with the disease (176 infants) compared to the odds of vaccination among mothers whose babies were hospitalized for non-Covid reasons (203 infants), who were a control group. The study further found that completion of a two-dose vaccine series later in pregnancy was more protective than earlier in pregnancy -- 80 percent compared to 32 percent.

## STEM CELL TRANSPLANT First woman 'cured' of HIV: researchers

REUTERS, Chicago

A US patient with leukemia has become the first woman and the third person to date to be cured of HIV after receiving a stem cell transplant from a donor who was naturally resistant to the virus that causes AIDS, researchers reported on Tuesday. The case of a middle-aged woman of mixed race, presented at the Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections in Denver, is also the first involving umbilical cord blood, a newer approach that may make the treatment available to more people. Since receiving the cord blood to treat her acute myeloid leukemia -- a cancer that starts in blood-forming cells in the bone marrow -- the woman has been in remission and free of the virus for 14 months, without the need for potent HIV treatments known as antiretroviral therapy. The two prior cases occurred in males who had received adult stem cells, which are more frequently used in bone marrow transplants.



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## Russia mocks West over war 'paranoia'

AFP, United Nations

The Kremlin and senior officials yesterday made fun of Western media for running with February 16 as the "invasion date" when Russia might attack Ukraine, some even went further suggesting western leaders should see a doctor for their war "paranoia".

"I'd like to ask if US and British sources of disinformation ... could publish the schedule of our upcoming invasions for the year. I'd like to plan my holidays," Russia's foreign minister spokeswoman, Maria Zakharova wrote on social media.

Western intelligence had warned that Moscow could choose Wednesday to escalate an ongoing separatist conflict in Ukraine. Some media, citing those reports, specified Russian attacks could begin early Wednesday morning.

"The night passed as usual. We slept peacefully. In the morning we started the day calmly and professionally," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said yesterday.

On Tuesday, Russia's deputy ambassador to the United Nations told western leaders they should see a doctor for their "paranoia" over fears that the 100,000 or so Russian troops massed on Ukraine's borders might invade.

"I think they need to have a good doctor, I recommend them to do it. Specialist on such paranoia cases," said Dmitry Polyanskiy, denying that Russia intended to attack its neighbor, a former Soviet state.

"Our troops are on our territory, (they) represent (a) threat to no one," he told reporters.

## West disputes Russian claims

Nato demands proof of troops pullback; US says invasion fear persists



Residents carry Ukrainian national flag as they gather in the Olympic Stadium to mark the Unity Day, the day Western intelligence agencies allegedly said they'd be invaded by Russia, in Kyiv, Ukraine, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

### AGENCIES

Russia said more of its forces surrounding Ukraine were withdrawing yesterday but Nato urged Moscow to prove it was pulling back, saying there were signs that more troops were on the way.

In Ukraine, where people raised flags and played the national anthem to show unity against fears of an invasion, the defence ministry said a cyber attack was into its second day. Russia said it had nothing to do with that.

The Russian defence ministry said its forces were pulling back after completing exercises in the southern and western military districts near Ukraine.

It published video that it said showed tanks, infantry fighting vehicles and self-propelled artillery units leaving the Crimean peninsula, which Moscow seized from Ukraine in 2014.

Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said a pullout would be welcome but that moving troops about did not confirm it.

"It remains to be seen whether there is a Russian withdrawal ... What we see is that they have increased the number of troops, and more troops are on the way," he told reporters at the start of a two-day meeting of Nato defence ministers at the alliance's headquarters in Brussels.

His comment was echoed by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and

Canadian Defence Minister Anita Anand.

The Kremlin said Nato's assessment was wrong. Moscow's ambassador to Ireland said forces in western Russia would be back to their normal positions within three to four weeks.

Belarusian Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei yesterday said no Russian soldiers or military equipment will remain in the country after the pair's joint military drills come to an end.

- ▶ Russia announces end of Crimea military drills
- ▶ China accuses West of 'playing up the threat of warfare'
- ▶ US sees chance for diplomacy, keeps pressure on Moscow

The deployment in the Crimean peninsula was part of a huge build-up of Russian forces to the north, east and south of Ukraine since November that had prompted London and Washington to warn in recent days that a Russian invasion looked imminent.

China, which has cultivated closer ties with Russia as both countries have come under increasing criticism from the West,

accused the United States of "playing up the threat of warfare and creating tension".

"Such persistent hyping up and disinformation by some Western countries will create turbulence and uncertainty to the world full of challenges, and intensify distress and division," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin told reporters at a regular briefing in Beijing.

Military analysts say a key indicator of a significant pullback will be whether field hospitals and fuel stores are dismantled and units from Russia's far east, which are taking part in huge exercises in Belarus this week, return to their bases thousands of miles away.

US President Joe Biden said on Tuesday that more than 150,000 Russian troops were still amassed near Ukraine's borders and an invasion remained "distinctly possible". He said Washington had not yet verified any pullout.

Biden has warned repeatedly of steep costs for Russia if it attacks Ukraine, including sanctions against Russian businesses and the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline from Russia to Germany.

Russia has always denied planning to invade Ukraine but has been pressing for a set of security guarantees from the West including a promise that its neighbour Ukraine will never join Nato. The United States and its allies have rejected that.

## Anger in UK over Prince Andrew's '£12m' settlement

AFP, London

Disgraced British royal Prince Andrew was urged yesterday to "live out his retirement in ignominy" after reportedly settling a sexual assault lawsuit for a whopping £12 million (\$16.3 million, 14.3 million euros). The lawyer for US accuser Virginia Giuffre said on Tuesday that both parties had settled out of court, sparing Andrew the public humiliation of a trial. The details were not revealed. Giuffre, 38, has said she had sex with Andrew when she was 17 and a minor under US law, after meeting him through US financier Jeffrey Epstein. He took his own life in prison while awaiting trial for sex crimes. The prince, 61, has not been criminally charged and has denied the allegations. The Daily Telegraph newspaper reported that Andrew was to pay £10 million to Giuffre and £2 million to a charity for victims of sex trafficking.

## North Korea celebrates ex-leader's birthday

AFP, Seoul

North Korea marked the 80th birthday of leader Kim Jong Un's late father with a mass outdoor meeting in sub-zero temperatures, state media reported Wednesday, but no missiles or military parade. Kim was joined by top officials in celebrating the "Day of the Shining Star" in snowy Samjiyon, a city near Mt Paektu, where official narratives say Kim Jong Il was born in a secret guerilla camp on February 16.

The North Korean calendar is peppered with anniversaries related to the nation's official history, in particular to Kim's father and his grandfather Kim Il Sung, the country's founding leader. This year's anniversary has been closely watched as it comes amid fresh tensions on the peninsula. Some observers had anticipated a military parade by the North to showcase its new weapons. Pyongyang carried out an unprecedented seven weapons tests in January, including of its most powerful missile since 2017. It has also warned it could abandon its self-imposed moratorium and resume testing intercontinental ballistic missiles or nuclear weapons.



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OPINION

# BOIMELA BEGINS

## Are publishers prepared?

We are hostage to our own poor planning and short-sightedness



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

**The Amar Ekushey Boi Mela of 2022 has begun again after much apprehension, delays, and uncertainties. We are once again faced with questions about how we want to see the Ekushey Boi Mela performing this year, particularly since the fair was a disaster for most publishers in 2021.**

MAHRUKH MOHIUDDIN

First, the government authorities are always behind in planning and leave things for the last minute to reach concrete decisions, and often, these decisions don't take into consideration pragmatic solutions that are sustainable and maintainable in the long term. The pandemic and the uncertainties associated with it have definitely contributed adversely in this tendency of waiting for the last minute to decide on the course of action for any public gathering. However, for a book fair that involves heavy investments, both from the state and private entrepreneurs, it is not well understood why a planning framework cannot be developed ahead of time, so that all stakeholders can formulate their game plan accordingly. It is only fair to everyone involved that they know what to expect—whether there will be a fair or not; if yes, then in what modality.

From the beginning of the pandemic, we knew that there will be a "new normal" which will inevitably be hybrid in nature. However, we paid no heed to this obvious possibility, and made no effort in engaging into a sustainable and forward-looking plan that will not only apply for the pandemic period, but will also be relevant for a post-pandemic "new normal" phase.

Many discussions, consultations, and proposals took place in the direction of the new modality of the book fair last year, taking into consideration the business interest of the publishing sector, safety precautions for people attending the fair, and also the newly developed online purchase behaviour of buyers. None were executed, however, and we ended up being subject to an ill-planned fair, part of which was further affected by another lock-down towards the middle of March 2021. The publishing industry was held hostage to poor and reactive planning on the part of the implementation institution

(Bangla Academy), and an ill-informed and short-sighted advocacy from the publishers' associations.

We could have used this year as an opportunity to prepare with a more equipped arrangement for a post-pandemic period; but Bangla Academy and the publishers' associations made little effort in truly utilising our talents and expertise that were fully capable of delivering such a plan. We expect more decisive leadership from Bangla Academy as an autonomous body. Their inability to formulate a pragmatic plan for the book fair independently, based on the health ministry's directives, have affected the most important book event in the year, and in all likelihood, the outcome will be less than expected this year as well.

In an interview earlier in the year, I was asked why publishers in our country are

**From the beginning of the pandemic, we knew that there will be a "new normal" which will inevitably be hybrid in nature.**

claiming that they have incurred "huge losses" whereas some surveys show that people read more during the pandemic. Global data also shows that the publishing industry has not suffered the pandemic nearly to the extent that was initially feared. According to the World Economic Forum, book sales have gone up in the UK and US markets, and appreciation for print books have revived.

My response (based on instinct in the absence of hard and reliable data) is four-pronged: (a) this sector in Bangladesh is plagued with unplanned and reactive initiatives rather than long-term, informed

market analysis and sustainable solutions for players of all sizes and nature; (b) the distribution and production eco-system we require for a functioning publishing sector, with robust backward and forward integration, is largely absent in our country; (c) our production costs are unnecessarily high (we bear the burden of an insane amount of tax imposed on paper), therefore making our product uncompetitive in the regional market; (d) we have been extremely tardy in jumping on the online sales and eBook bandwagon.

These have been age-old problems of the sector, but they have come back to bite us harder when times are bad. A handful of private enterprises who were prepared with their platforms and ammunition, namely Rokomari.com, Batighar, Prothoma, predictively fared well through online sales.

Why have we not made any active effort in reducing the cost of production or focused on a functional distribution network in Bangladesh? Again, my short answer would be that most publishers who provide leadership in the sector don't care much about the actual readers in the country. Their priorities are catering to various projects, government purchases, and to non-authors who are prepared to finance their book production. These are unavoidable realities in a market where true commitment to developing and promoting readership is largely absent, and the knowledge ecosystem hardly supports the survival of a true publisher.

The pandemic gave us a much-needed push to move to the next level of publishing and for connecting with a changing world that we were choosing to ignore. How smartly we respond to this push will determine our sustenance and relevance as an industry.

Mahrugh Mohiuddin is Managing Director, University Press Limited (UPL).

THE SHELF

## Novels to look out for at Ekushey Boi Mela this year

MAISHA ISLAM MONAMEE

**Palowan Bhai**

Anisul Hoque (Batighar)

This novel explores the adventures of one Rustam, better known as Palowan Bhai. In Dhaka, even the wild animals fear Palowan Bhai for his quick-to-rise temper. But what happens when he visits the calm community of a village?

**Priyotom Oshukh Shey**

Sadat Hossain (Anyaprakash)

Sadat Hossain's protagonist, Obonti, receives anonymous letters with poems and wonders



who the sender might be. One night, a deadly bullet hits her window and sets forth a series of adventures. Hossain's new novel talks about the unpredictable events of life, exploring death as the ultimate truth.

**Obhirup**

Sadia Khan Subasini (Tamralipi)

Subasini's new novel explores the life of Troyee through her relationship with Obhirup. Five years of relationship, followed by separation, leaves behind an incomplete void in Troyee's life. As a young



girl with a broken heart, she sets on a new journey with the crime squad, only to return to where things were supposed to begin.

**Ottopor Kobi Monche Uthlen**

Monowarul Islam (Nalanda)

This story explores the life of Kabir, revolving around murder, blood and poetry. These things help him survive but he no longer finds the thrill in killing people and wants to bring one of his victims back to life. Following three murders, an investigation reveals that the poet is suffering from a rare hereditary disease. The mystery continues as Islam explores the several dimensions of crime.



PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

THE BOOK REPORT

## What does it take to prepare for Ekushey Boi Mela?

NAHALY NAFISA KHAN

Every February, the book fair celebrates our love for language and literature, with festivities that last for a month. But what does it take to prepare for a fair this big? In this story, we talk to binders, publishers, and other individuals involved with the process to get insights on the preparations of the fair.

Read this article on *The Daily Star* website and on Daily Star Books' Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

BOOK REVIEW: GRAPHIC NONFICTION

## A family grows into its skeletons

RUSHMILA SHEHREEN KHAN

*Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (Houghton Mifflin, 2006) unfurls with heated family dysfunction, subtle and soaring ugliness, shame, and queer confusion. This is a story of a closeted gay father and his queer daughter, and how their bearings align.

On first impression, Bruce Bechdel is an authoritarian father with a desperate need for superficial perfection. While he succumbs to society's censure, his suppressed self manifests in the aspects of his life he can control. He fixates on the restoration of their home, obsessed with keeping it pristine, controlling every bit of their lives from clothing to decor. Despite Alison's tendency to dress masculine from an early age, Bruce insists on changing this. "Not only were we inverts, we were inversions of each other. While I was trying to compensate for something unmanly in him, he was attempting to express something feminine through me", Alison reflects at one point in the book. "It was a war of cross-purposes, and so doomed to perpetual escalation."

A lot of Alison's writing and philosophy are strongly influenced by Joyce and Proust. She compares Bruce to Dedalus, for the precision of his craft and the way his death conveniently aligns with the time he was reading Camus. These frequent allusions to other literary works, queer literature especially, is an attempt to seek shared experiences while living in a homophobic society. Bechdel writes, "I employ these allusions to



COLLAGE: RUSHMILA SHEHREEN KHAN

James and Fitzgerald not only as descriptive devices, but because my parents are most real to me in fictional terms. And perhaps my cool aesthetic distance itself does more to convey the Arctic climate of our family than any particular literary comparison." Understanding queer interpretations of both Homer's *Odyssey* and Joyce's *Ulysses* is the key to truly grasping the parallels Bechdel draws.

A lot of the family's dynamics parallels Noah Baumbach's film, *The Meyerowitz Stories* (2017), in that the disorder evokes the same feelings of detachment, and explores the difficulty of communicating with disengaged family members. *Fun*

*Home* is peppered with the same tones of comedic pizzazz and despondency that make up Baumbach's signature of tragicomedies.

Eventually, the focus of the story shifts from the family to the narrator's personal life as a queer college freshman, and how living with a closeted parent with a secret has out-turned and influenced her own experiences.

While she retells these experiences, Alison presents herself as a meticulous artist and an eloquent and articulate writer. Both her use of words and imagery are dense. Every panel in the graphic memoir is vital to the storytelling—the detailed illustrations of maps, notebooks, and book covers are clues that take us a step further to understanding the characters. At times, you can join the dots of what

**Bechdel writes, "I employ these allusions to James and Fitzgerald not only as descriptive devices, but because my parents are most real to me in fictional terms."**

Alison is reading to what is happening in her life. The duotone sketches keep the reader undistracted. Alison's work is one of a kind, standing undisputed as a poignant work of queer literature and a vulnerable insight into the psyche of an unusual household.

Rushmila Shehreen Khan is a published poet and seasonal artist. Find her at [rushmilakhans@gmail.com](mailto:rushmilakhans@gmail.com)

## A road only bikes and horses can use

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, back from Sunamganj

The beauty is spellbinding around the 20-kilometre road that connects Madhyanagar Sadar to bordering Mohish Khola bazar in Sunamganj.

But the commuters can hardly appreciate the beauty as the hellish road causes immense sufferings to them

Decades ago, the brick-paved road was constructed for the people of four disconnected unions under Dharmapasha upazila. On July 26 last year, these unions were combined together and the new upazila—Madhyanagar was formed.

However, the road remains the same; even more battered.

While visiting to Madhyanagar last

month, this correspondent witnessed the miseries of around two lakh people of the remote haor territory beside famous Tanguar Haor.

Layer of bricks has been washed away in most parts, the road has turned into narrow passage in some strips and culverts are missing.

The condition of the road is so battered that motorcycle is the only means of communication during dry season. Horse-carriages and pushcarts are used for transporting commodities.

The upazila is also disconnected from the national road network as there are no bridges to connect the road.

However, the people rely on boats during the rainy season.

Mohammad Mojibur, a resident

of Chamardani village in the upazila, said, "For decades, the road remains the same. Sometimes repair work takes place which doesn't change the scenario at all."

The elderly and sick persons suffer the most, he said.

Another villager Mohammad Sumon Miah, 40, said "I have been seeing this road the same since my childhood. Many parliamentarians promised us a good road but we are still waiting and don't know how long we have to wait."

The wait is about to end finally as there are four bridges under construction that will connect this marooned upazila with the mainland. And the project of the road's construction was approved by the Executive Committee of the

National Economic Council (ECNEC) on November 23 last year.

Under the 'Construction of Important Bridge in Rural Roads' project, Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) has been constructing the bridges since 2019 which are scheduled to be completed by May this year.

Mouazzam Hossain Ratan, lawmaker from Sunamganj-1, said the approval of the road with the elevated way over the haor is a dream come true and the construction work will start soon.

"Though the construction of the bridges got delayed during the nationwide shutdown due to pandemic, I am hopeful that the newly-formed upazila will thrive in a couple of years," he said.



PHOTO: STAR

This worn out iron bridge at Karatia in Tangail Sadar upazila has turned awfully risky.

## Decades-old bridge poses risk

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

A decades-old iron structured bridge on a canal at Karatia in Sadar upazila has turned awfully dilapidated, posing risk of accidents any time.

Hundreds of vehicles, including passenger buses, still ply the risky 80-year-old bridge on old Dhaka-Tangail road every day.

Elderly locals said the bridge was constructed on Sundari Canal during the British era.

"Freedom fighters blew up the bridge partially during the Liberation War in 1971 to resist movement of the Pakistani forces through the road," valiant freedom fighter Bir Protik Habibur Rahman Khan Khoka said.

After the independence, the bridge was repaired and road communication was restored once again.

After that the bridge was renovated on only a few occasions, several senior locals said.

During a recent visit to the area this correspondent saw the worn out bridge starts shaking whenever a heavy vehicle crosses it. The foundation deck and many other parts of the old bridge also got rusty.

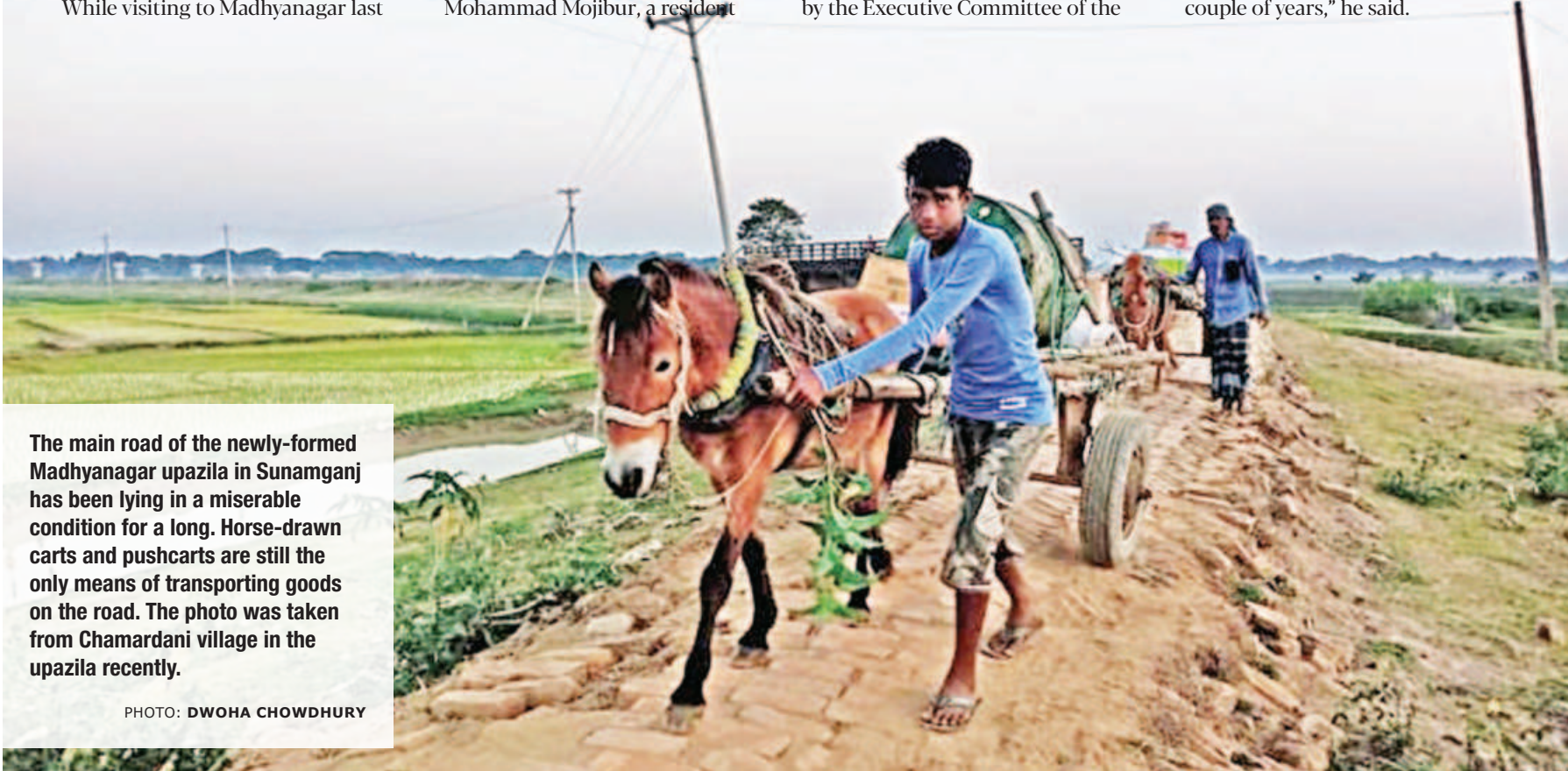
"I get scare every time I cross the shaky old bridge with passengers," bus driver Saiful Islam said.

Besides, hundreds of students of nearby Government Saadat College and two other schools and people, who come to the century-old Karatia Bazar, also use the bridge.

Contacted, Tangail Sadar Upazila Parishad Chairman Shahjahan Ansary, also a local resident, said as far he remember the bridge was built in 1940.

The authorities concerned should construct a new bridge in place of the older one immediately to avoid any fatal accident, he said adding that he already raised the matter on several occasions.

Despite repeated attempts, this correspondent could not reach any of the Roads and Highways Department officials for their comment.



The main road of the newly-formed Madhyanagar upazila in Sunamganj has been lying in a miserable condition for a long. Horse-drawn carts and pushcarts are still the only means of transporting goods on the road. The photo was taken from Chamardani village in the upazila recently.

PHOTO: DWOHA CHOWDHURY

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The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

## Raising water price again will be devastating

Dhaka Wasa's push amid high inflation makes no sense

THIS is how a pensioner from Old Dhaka reacted to the news of a proposal to raise water tariff by Dhaka Wasa. "Is this a joke that I will have to pay more for the smelly, yellow water that flows out of my tap?" If we scan through the performance record of this organisation, it will be easy to comprehend the frustration of the elderly client reacting to the possibility of a water tariff hike by up to 40 percent. Other Wasa clients that this daily has spoken to made similar complaints about the quality of water that did not even come regularly, questioning the rationale behind the move. This would be Wasa's third price hike in three years, and 16th in 13 years. While it kept raising the price, it remained unresponsive to the pledge of providing safe drinking water to the vast majority of the capital's 20 million residents.

Its latest bid to increase the tariff—by 38.8 percent to Tk 21 per unit (1,000 litres) for residential use, and by 31 percent to Tk 55 per unit for commercial purposes—would rather bolster its impression of an organisation trying to widen its profit margin at the expense of people's sufferings. For instance, in the 2020-21 fiscal year, Wasa logged a profit of Tk 49.6 crore, up by seven percent year-on-year, according to its audited financial report. At the end of 2020-21, its retained earnings stood at a staggering Tk 892 crore. (Retained earnings are the portion of a company's cumulative profit that is held or retained and saved for future use, particularly for investment purposes.) Experts say since Wasa is already making profits every fiscal year, there can be no justification for raising the price again, especially as it will cause further distress to the people of fixed income amid the economic pain caused by the pandemic and high inflations.

But, as usual, the Wasa managing director, when contacted by our correspondent, remained in denial regarding making any profit. He claimed that its production cost was higher than the tariff, with the government making up the difference with subsidy, and that the subsidy was being counted as profit. He asserted that if the interest, depreciation and other costs were added, profits would not be seen in the financial statement.

Experts, however, are not ready to accept the explanation given by the Wasa boss. Instead of putting the burden on ordinary clients, they have suggested reducing the costs of production and addressing the system loss, among other measures. Whatever the Dhaka Wasa authorities decide to do to reduce the burden of subsidies—or maybe even to make some profit in the end—it cannot be by bleeding the clients further, that too for a product that they cannot ensure the quality of.

## The saga of river killing continues

When will we realise that we cannot survive without our rivers?

HARDLY a day passes by without the media carrying news of a river slowly dying because of people's greed and the authorities' lax oversight. In the last two days, this daily featured reports on the fate of two rivers. One was the lifeline of the district town of Tangail, and the other used to run through the Dumuria upazila of Khulna district. These rivers, Burai and Hori, like hundreds of other dead or moribund rivers in Bangladesh, suffer not because of natural causes, but man-made.

Take the case of the Burai, which flows through the eastern part of the Tangail town. Not many decades ago, people could bathe and fish there. But indiscriminate dumping of waste has blocked the entire river, depriving the town of its major source of water. The Hori, on the other hand, has been encroached upon by land grabbers and brick kiln owners, and the once wide river is now a skeleton of its old self. This has been going on for decades, but the local administration and agencies responsible for protecting rivers never felt the need to address the matter.

As it is, many of our major rivers, tributaries and distributaries are dying because of inadequate water flow from upstream sources outside the country. Reportedly, as per a survey of the BIWTA, there are 310 rivers in Bangladesh. Out of these, 57 are border rivers, the condition of 175 is miserable, and 65 are almost dead. Eighty percent of the rivers lack proper depth. Many are either dead or have lost navigability. The same goes for many canals. Much of the woes of our rivers have to do with industrialisation, since the majority of key industries were built along riverbanks. That may be the case with many other countries, but the way we are destroying and polluting our rivers is incomparable.

Thus, the two aforementioned rivers are but a microcosm of almost all our rivers and canals. And the fates of Tangail town and Dumuria upazila are fairly representative of many major towns and upazilas.

Conurbations have been built around rivers and have perished because of rivers. Our policies and regulations regarding rivers and other waterbodies are plentiful, but their enforcement is absent. Even newly cropped up industrial sites have failed to maintain the environmental requirements; the Savar tannery is a case in point. There is a gross mismatch between what the administration avows, and its practical application. We urge the administration to live up to its commitment to save our rivers.

# The walls are closing in on the lower-income people



### A CLOSER LOOK

Tasneem Tayeb is a columnist for The Daily Star. Her Twitter handle is @tasneem\_tayeb

TASNEEM TAYEB

INFLATION in Bangladesh, like the nation itself, is on the rise. The per capita income saw an 11 percent rise to USD 2,591, from an estimated USD 2,554 for 2020-21 fiscal year. But at the same time, inflation spiked from 5.29 percent in December 2020 to 6.05 percent in December 2021, according to the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS). Non-food inflation reached a six-year high in December 2021, at seven percent, followed by a hike of diesel and kerosene prices in November. The skyrocketing prices of essentials have put the common people—middle-income, lower-middle-income and low-income groups, as well as the new poor—in a tight spot, significantly curtailing their ability to cover their monthly essential expenses.

In the midst of an ongoing nightmare for the majority of the population, there are talks of utility prices going up a few notches again, especially in view of rising prices in the international market. Petrobangla has sent a proposal to Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) to increase gas retail prices by nearly 100 percent, while Bangladesh Petroleum Exploration and Production Company Ltd (Bapex) has suggested a 48 percent hike. If the Petrobangla proposal is approved, consumers will have to pay about Tk 20 per cubic metre of gas, as opposed to the current price at Tk 9.80.

Meanwhile, the Dhaka Wasa recently proposed a 20 percent hike in water tariff to meet the gap between production costs and the price of water. If approved, the hike will be effective from July 1, 2022.

The hike of essential prices is a cause for concern, but what is even more worrying is the rise of utility prices, as the impact of these price hikes cascades down to every sphere of life—from basic utility bills one has to pay, to the production cost of locally manufactured goods, to import costs, to prices of food items in the kitchen markets, to transportation costs. They will create a ripple effect across the economy, exacerbating public suffering.

The government is also apparently in a dilemma over increasing fertiliser prices, which will have a direct impact on food inflation and the livelihoods of farmers.

But how can we wade through this crisis?

"In view of the current reality of this commodity price shock hitting us in the midst of a pandemic, there are four aspects to consider," said former World Bank lead economist Dr Zahid Hussain, while discussing solutions with this writer. "First of all, the government needs to assess whether it will pass on the additional expense to the people or finance it itself. Secondly, if the

government decides to adjust commodity prices, then we would need to look at how the adjustment would be done: what the formula is and if the adjustment would be in line with the international rates. There should be complete transparency in this. Third, with regards to petroleum prices especially, in the past when fuel price was lower in the international market, the

irregularities that this particular sector is so well-known for. In addition, the government should also look into the power overcapacity problem, which is draining money. According to media reports, in 2020-21, about 60 percent of the installed capacity remained unutilised, leading to an avoidable expense of Tk 13,200 crore, which had



ILLUSTRATION: BIPOB CHAKROBORTY

**The skyrocketing prices of essentials have put the common people in a tight spot, significantly curtailing their ability to cover their monthly essential expenses.**

prices were not realigned in Bangladesh, with the justification that the BPC could utilise the opportunity to recover the losses it had shouldered in the past. If that is the case, the BPC should now be in a position to cushion this current shock.

"Finally, the government needs to focus on subsidy prioritisation. It needs to look at the areas where subsidy is benefiting the masses, and where subsidy is benefiting certain groups. For instance, at the onset of the pandemic, the government allocated a stimulus package of Tk 40,000 crore for large industries and the service sector, to be disbursed by the commercial banks as working capital loans at nine percent interest rate, of which 4.5 percent was shouldered by the beneficiaries, and the remaining 4.5 percent by the government as subsidy. In the context of the current rebound of the economy, the government can now reassess the impact and necessity of this 4.5 percent subsidy on stimulus packages for the large industries, and if deemed appropriate, channel some of the funds to cover the price increase of commodities," he said.

Moreover, before considering commodity price adjustment, the government needs to address the system losses in the utility sector and root out

to be paid to the rental power plants as capacity charge. If anything, this is an example of reckless mismanagement of public money and resources.

Given the current scenario—where the lines are only getting longer in front of the TCB trucks selling essentials at discounted prices—the policymakers, the bureaucrats and the relevant stakeholders, including the economists, need to come together and consider all options possible to make the situation bearable for the common people. We do not want our people to resort to desperate measures to make ends meet.

The pandemic has not only claimed lives directly, but has also pushed some to take their own lives in desperation, as they failed to provide for their loved ones. One would remember the case of 26-year-old Khokon Hossain from Rajshahi, who committed suicide in July last year after losing his job during the lockdown. There are many like Khokon Hossain who are finding it increasingly difficult to survive in these trying times. Amid all these, the government cannot and should not make the people more vulnerable by exposing them to higher inflation.

This is an issue that the government and policymakers need to take seriously. The people cannot be hung out to dry.

## Party loyalty in the shifting sand of Indian politics



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

PALLAB BHATTACHARYA

WHEN RPN Singh quit the Congress and joined the BJP on January 25, 2022, he joined a growing list of politicians switching sides ahead of the coming assembly elections in five Indian states: Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Uttarakhand, Punjab, and Manipur. The polls have set off a riveting—many say sordid—drama of defection. Several politicians, particularly elected representatives, have changed sides—in some cases, after giving up long associations with one party, while in some other instances, after five years. The common thread in all the defections is the urge to look for what these party-hoppers think are greener pastures that will help them be on the right side of political power.

Each of the five states has witnessed change of party loyalty, but none more so than India's smallest state: Goa. For more than a decade, politics in Goa has earned the dubious distinction of being the most slippery place as far as party loyalty is concerned. A number of public representatives in Goa have gone back and forth—first joining one party, and then returning to the one they left a few weeks later. The politics of poaching cost the Congress its chance to grab power in Goa in 2017. This time around, Rahul Gandhi ensured that all Congress candidates sign

a "loyalty pledge" post polls. Only time will tell if the "loyalty pledges" are legally binding or if they will stop defection.

What has made the Goa politics more competitive and fragmented this time is the entry of two regional parties, Trinamool Congress (TMC) and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). Both the TMC and the AAP have poached into the ranks of Congress and small regional parties in Goa to grow in the state. The spurt in party-hopping has extended to Uttar Pradesh and Manipur, where defections are equally as routine as in Goa, and to a lesser degree in Punjab and Uttarakhand.

The two most important reasons for defections are: 1) The defecting lawmakers have either been told by the parties they left that they would not be renominated; or 2) They assess their electoral prospects to be better in the new outfit. But do defectors get rewarded or punished by the people? In India, it is a mixed bag. In some states, turncoats manage to win fresh elections. On the other hand, last year's assembly polls in West Bengal showed that switching party allegiance does not pay off.

**A common thread in all the defections is the urge to look for what these party-hoppers think are greener pastures that will help them be on the right side of political power.**

A debate over political defections invariably raises legal and moral issues. India's anti-defection law of 1985 stipulates that if two-thirds of legislators switch sides in a group, it is not a defection. In Goa, the Congress emerged as the single largest party in the previous assembly elections in 2017, but the BJP outwitted the former politically by luring the legislators and cobbling a majority, and then cementing that position by poaching 10 Congress legislators. The Goa assembly speaker dismissed Congress' plea seeking disqualification of its 10 legislators, and the party challenged it in the Goa bench of the Bombay High Court.

As the High Court is yet to deliver its verdict on the speaker's ruling, the whole issue is set to become infructuous with the fresh Goa assembly polls round the corner.

It is argued that defectors go unpunished mainly due to loopholes in the anti-defection law, and the feet-dragging by a partisan speaker (who belongs to the ruling party) of the legislative forum in giving his or her decision on pleas seeking disqualification of the defecting lawmakers. The speakers often prolong the disqualification proceedings to a point where the tenure of the existing House ends, making the whole exercise meaningless.

Legal experts have suggested some changes and abolition of certain provisions in the anti-defection law in order to discourage defection. One proposal that legal luminary Kapil Sibal, in a newspaper article, makes is that a legislator who defects should go through a "cooling off" period before he or she can join any political party. The senior Congress leader also suggests that a disqualified lawmaker be barred from contesting elections or holding public office for five years from the date of his or her disqualification, and that a timeline of three months be set for the speaker to decide on a disqualification petition. The question is: Will the parties want to push for the changes, as almost all of them have benefited or suffered due to the lacunae in the anti-defection law?

The ills of the free market economy seem to be infecting the body polity. Are we set for a scenario where an elected public representative is turned into a product and, like a commercial item, traded in a free political marketplace?

123RD BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF JIBANANANDA DAS

JIBANANANDA DAS  
Tropes, Tensions, Tendencies



AZFAR HUSSAIN

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

TODAY—February 17—marks the 123rd birth anniversary of Jibanananda Das (1899-1954), recognised today as one of the greatest Bengali poets of all time. But he was quite neglected during his lifetime. Rabindranath Tagore (1861-1941) did not take Jibanananda seriously at all. His first reaction to Jibanananda's poems was downright harsh and even gruffly dismissive, while his subsequent reaction was brief, curt, but favourable—inadequately, though—as he only spoke of the pleasure of looking at Jibanananda's poems, thereby pointing to the profusion and plenitude of visual images in his poetry. Kazi Nazrul Islam (1899-1976) went to the extent of making fun of Jibanananda, saying something to this effect: For him, metaphor is more important than mother.

But then, it is true that both metaphors and images constitute and characterise the very power of Jibanananda's poetry, although he is much more than his tropological and metaphorical interventions and inventions as such.

But, among his notable contemporaries, it was only Buddhadeva Bose (1908-1974) who cared to read Jibanananda and evaluate his work to the extent that he could. Yet, I argue that his fondness for Jibanananda notwithstanding, Buddhadeva—remaining high on Western poetics and aesthetics, while characterising Jibanananda as the loneliest of poets—ultimately failed to do justice to his wide-ranging oeuvre that cannot be simply reduced to the themes of mere individual loneliness, alienation, and even existential crisis, although those themes are by no means absent in his work.

Jibanananda's first collection of poems, called *Jhara Palak* (Fallen Feathers), appeared in 1927. Then his second volume, *Dhushar Pandulipi* (Grey Manuscripts), came out in 1936, while the year 1942 saw the publication of one of his major works, *Banalata Sen*, a veritable *tour de force*. His other great collections such as *Mahaprithibee* (The Great World) and *Satti Tarar Timir* (The Darkness of Seven Stars) came out in 1944 and 1948, respectively. It was in 1954—the year of his death—that his *Sreshtha Kabita* (Best Poems) was published, and his posthumous collections such as *Rupashi Bangla* (Beautiful Bengal) and *Bela Obela Kalbela* (Time, Odd Time, Inauspicious Time) appeared in 1957 and 1961, respectively.

Indeed, Jibanananda Das's writing career spanned 35 years, from 1919 to 1954, during which he published a total of 269 poems in different magazines and journals. Of them, only 162 poems were collected in his seven volumes that I already mentioned. But, over a period of more than six decades following his death, Jibanananda's numerous poems, 28 novels, and more than a hundred stories—including his essays, letters, diaries, songs, even drawings and pencil sketches, as well as his massive "literary notes" of as many as 4,272 pages—were discovered. Thus, it's clear today that Jibanananda the poet was also an extraordinarily powerful short story writer and novelist as well as a thinker, among other things.

His novels—yet to be engaged adequately—were written between 1931 and 1948, and some of them include *Purnima*, *Bibha*, *Karubasana*, *Jeebonpranalee*, *PretinirRupkatha*, *Mallyaban*, *Jalpahiati*, *Basmatir Upakkhyan* and *Sutirtha*, experimentally structured and textured works of fiction that explore the

complexities of the modes of *becoming* and *being*—as well as the limits of our language—differentially enmeshed as they all are in the tensions and transactions among the autobiographical, the psychological, the social, and even the political-economic, to say the least.

But, of course, Jibanananda Das—known as one of the major modernists in Bangla literature—was a poet in the first place. Today, critics and readers—invoking Western figures or approaches—find in Jibanananda such things as Keatsian sensuousness, Edgar Allan Poe's sense of the mysterious and even the macabre, Mallarméan symbolism, WB Yeats' sense of melancholy and death, the imagism of William Carlos Williams, and so on. The aesthetic of synaesthesia—or what I wish to call the "intersensory" experience that the great French poet Charles Baudelaire memorably embodies in his superb sonnet called *Correspondences*—is also at work in Jibanananda, as the critic Alakranjan Dasgupta pointed out once. And, then, a whole host of critics have found in Jibanananda certain elements of impressionism, abstract expressionism, Dadaism, surrealism, and even "postmodernism."

This list—by no means exhaustive—at least gives us an idea of the textual plasticity and hermeneutic hospitality of Jibanananda's extraordinarily rich poetic oeuvre, which, however, remains exemplarily rooted in his own land, Bangladesh—both urban and rural.

For instance, in his collection of incomparably beautiful sonnets called *Rupashi Bangla* alone, Jibanananda's massive constellations of images—soundless lights and silent surges of moist smells in the peasant's field, dewdrops drenching the *chalta* flowers, the brown-winged *shalik* growing gold in the shadows of the dusk, the *Kadam* forest under *Ashwin*'s autumnal sky, spotted owls smelling like paddy fields, kingfishers iridescent in the sun, ripening mangoes, the stellar totality of the carambola, lemon tree branches drooping in the dark, the *sharputi* and *chital* fish leaping, and then the rivers Karnaphuli, Dhaleshwari, Padma, Jalangi as well as the proverbial Dhaniriri River itself, among others—distinctly and abundantly bespeak the poet's sensuous rootedness in rural Bengal.

In fact, this very Bengal comes to constitute a "concrete universal" in much of Jibanananda's work. It's not for nothing that the poet ardently announces in one of his sonnets, "Go wherever you desire—I'll remain by Bengal's banks."

But then, cities and their daily dirty dialects—engendered by capitalism and colonialism—also figure profusely in much of Jibanananda's poetry. Even in his book *Banalata Sen*—as in his other works—city streets, trams, buses, gaslights, bricks, signs, windows, doors, roofs—among others—serve as pervasive, even governing tropes, while the bustle of slums and the busyness of bazaars, cries of street vendors and lepers on footpaths, day labourers and *rickshawallahs*, beggars and even the *lumpenproletariat*, etc. come to characterise much of the class-riven cityscape in Jibanananda, whose brand of modernism singularly represents the tensions and transactions between cities and villages, for instance. Indeed, Jibanananda was one of the most acutely class-conscious poets among the modernists in colonial Bengal.

And—as I have argued elsewhere—he even deftly mobilised the tropes of political economy within the spaces of his poems themselves, advancing his "micro-critique" of the commodity culture of capitalism and thus unsettling the otherwise misleading characterisation of this poet as a "purist," or as an "aesthete," indifferent to the dull prose of daily living. Indeed, the Jibanananda of political economy has remained unheeded in



ILLUSTRATION: STAR

**He himself told us that his work should not be reduced to pigeon-holing labels, many of which are already in circulation; rather, he looked for a critical consideration of his oeuvre in its totality. And the very question of totality continues to remain a challenge for the readers and critics of Jibanananda Das.**

contemporary Bangla literary criticism.

Now, as for Jibanananda's broad thematic preoccupations in his poetry, one can go on and on naming them in a great variety of ways: for example, the contradictions between the temporal and the timeless within the determinate horizon of the historical, the metaphysics and the physicality of language and love, pre-history and even geological time, geographical-cartographical imagination, war and peace, social conflicts, deep nostalgia, the corruption and hypocrisies of middle-class politicians and businessmen, moral decadence in contemporary society, deadly pessimism yet tremendous optimism, and even the question of Revolution (it is not only interesting but also suggestive that he uses directly in his poetry the word "biplob" or "revolution" quite a number of times from, say, at least *Mahaprithibee* to *Satti Tarar Timir* to *Bela Obela Kalbela*, not to mention numerous poems discovered after his death).

In any event, one can easily see that the political and the philosophical profoundly intersect in Jibanananda's poetic spaces forged with boundless *energeia* and *élan*. I should also point out that the rhythms and pressures of his historical conjuncture—characterised by events such as World War II, communal riots and violence, famine, and the Partition of India, among others—have significantly informed his poetic sensibility and poetry.

Now, let me make a few more general observations about Jibanananda

Das. True, he has most effectively and influentially shaped the idiom of modern Bangla poetry, while his persistent concerns with the entire range of places and peoples and seasons of his own land fiercely bespeak his anticolonial rootedness, underlining his brand of poetics that challenges Eurocentrism at every turn.

In fact, Jibanananda ultimately emerges as an anti-capitalist, anti-colonial, and anti-communal poet. And, thus, he is markedly different from some of his contemporaries known as the modernist poets of the 1930s—Sudhin Dutta (1901-1960), Amiya Chakravarty (1901-1986), and Buddhadeva Bose (1908-1974), for instance. Also, Jibanananda's relentless explorations of the historical and the unconscious—accompanied by his explorations of the various rhythms of time and of different spatial contours and constellations—have given his poetry the kind of textures as well as stylistic range and flexibility that were totally unknown before him. It is because of all this that Jibanananda is always with us.

Let me now conclude by commenting on his own statement about his poetry made in the preface to *Shreshtha Kabita* (Best Poems). He himself told us that his work should not be reduced to pigeon-holing labels, many of which are already in circulation; rather, he looked for a critical consideration of his oeuvre in its totality. And the very question of totality continues to remain a challenge for the readers and critics of Jibanananda Das.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS
1 José's house
5 Travel stop
10 "Skyfall" singer
12 Plain silly
13 Electricity producers
15 Period of history
16 Negating word
17 Obtain
18 Came back, as a lizard's tail
20 Ripped
21 Oscar winner
Wither-spoon
22 Cold War side
23 Razor sharpener
25 Price tag info
28 Pesky swarm
31 Fine study

- 32 Bring to mind
34 Diner dessert
35 Sheep sound
36 One with political influence
40 Kagan of the Supreme Court
41 Photo finish
42 "I Am Woman" singer Helen
43 Fling

- DOWN
1 Crime outing
2 Fond fellow
3 Smelly flow
4 Sallow supply
5 Sword part
6 "Not—dare!"
7 Lively dances
8 Comes in

- 9 Holt of NBC News
11 Writer Hemingway
14 Coup
19 Takes a breather
20 "Dear Mama" rapper
24 Slot machine feature
25 Big finale
26 Baltimore player
27 Blotto
29 Address
30 Winter showers
33 Oral traditions
35 Donkey sound
38 Finish
39 Granola bit



TUESDAY'S ANSWERS



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Advertisement for BEPZA (Bangladesh Export Processing Zone Authority) regarding Expression of Interest (EOI) for investment in the garment sector. Includes details on application process, fees, and contact information.

# Star

DHAKA THURSDAY FEBRUARY 17, 2022, FALGUN 4, 1428 BS

# SPORT

**First half was Mr Hyde; second half Dr Jekyll – and for a change, [the result] was different.**

Manchester United manager Ralf Rangnick on win over Brighton



## Mentor surprised at Shakib snub

SPORTS REPORTER

Shakib Al Hasan's childhood mentor and Fortune Barishal's batting consultant Nazmul Abeeden Fahim said that if the IPL franchises had been aware of Shakib's current form, especially with the bat, the cricketer would not have gone unsold during the mega auction.

"his availability could be a big reason for not being picked in the IPL but it's disappointing because had the franchises realised the type of form he is in then they would surely pick Shakib. Not just with the ball but he has developed himself as a match-winner with the bat as well," Nazmul told the media yesterday.

"I think he could be more effective on better pitches in IPL and could have scored runs quickly. Any team would have benefited from picking him," Nazmul added.



**Comilla Victorians opener Sunil Narine smashed a 16-ball 57, reaching fifty off just 13 balls to be the fastest player to the landmark score in the BPL, and powered his side to the final with a seven-wicket victory over Chattogram Challengers in the Qualifier 2 in Mirpur yesterday. Before Narine's carnage, Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Akbar Ali stitched together a 61-run sixth-wicket stand, helping Chattogram reach a respectable total.**

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## An unusual inspiration

REUTERS

Australia all-rounder Ashton Agar has vowed to overcome self-doubt and focus on the joy of cricket after finding his inspiration in an unusual place - a concert by south London rapper Loyle Carner.

Agar is aiming to return to test cricket for the first time since September 2017 after the 28-year-old was named in Australia's squad for the three-test tour of Pakistan next month.

Agar, who played a key role in Tuesday's Twenty20 win over Sri Lanka, said rapper Carner's fearlessness on stage at a Perth concert motivated the Australian to do the same on the cricket field.

"He was owning the stage and it was beautiful. I thought, 'This is so cool, he just has such great presence,' and we're all there to watch him," Agar told reporters on Wednesday.

"I was thinking to myself 'Oh God, I'd love to do that'. But at that moment I kind of realised I actually have the chance to do this all the time - every time I get to play cricket."

# Overseas players drive Comilla into final

SPORTS REPORTER

Comilla Victorians' overseas stars Sunil Narine, Moeen Ali and Faf du Plessis came up with decisive contributions to guide their side to the final of the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL) against Fortune Barishal with a thumping seven-wicket win over Chattogram Challengers at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Mirpur yesterday.

Narine showed the meaning of haste during a 16-ball 57 and by the time he departed to Mritunjay Chowdhury, the game had already tilted heavily in his side's favour. In chase of Chattogram's 148 all out, the man from Trinidad was on full flow from the off, hitting Shoriful Islam over cow corner for six to open his innings. Sent in to open the innings with Liton Das, who fell in that very first over to Shoriful, Narine picked off Mehedi Miraz for two back-to-back sixes, followed by a four, which was then followed by a magnificent six over cover as 23 runs came in just the second over of the chase.

A six off Mritunjay in the final over of the Powerplay saw Narine pick up the fastest-ever fifty in the BPL, off just 13 deliveries to seize the record from Pakistan's Ahmed Shehzad, who previously held the record with a 16-ball 50 against Duroto Rajshahi while playing

for Barisal Burners in the inaugural edition of the tournament in 2012. Narine was shy off hitting the fastest-ever fifty by any batter in T20s by just one delivery with the record still belonging to Yuvraj Singh, who had achieved the feat in 12 deliveries

But the power-hitting capabilities were on full show and Faf (30 off 23) and Moeen (30 off 13) did not let up as Comilla



won in style. Narine was happy, knowing there was an opportunity even before the game started to get in his power-hitting mojo. "When I was told I'd open, I was delighted, especially with just 2 fielders outside the ring. It was a good wicket to bat on, not much spin, especially with the new ball,

came on nicely. It was one of the best performances as a team, looking forward to the final," Narine said.

Chattogram batting has largely been carried by their English stars Will Jacks and Benny Howell throughout the ongoing BPL while other overseas star Chadwick Walton came up with vital runs just when they needed in the first Eliminator game against Khulna Tigers on Monday.

When all three failed to fire, they could only reach a middling score and that too was achieved due to Mehedi Hasan Miraz and Akbar Ali.

Jacks and Walton departed very early in the Chattogram innings and Howell's unfortunate run-out added to their woes.

Responsibility fell to local stars such as captain Afif Hossain and Shamim Hossain but Comilla's Moeen, who finished on 3 for 20, accounted for both in a tremendous spell as Chattogram slumped to 50 for five in eight overs.

Akbar's 20-ball 33 and Miraz's 38-ball 44, the duo contributing in a 61-run sixth-wicket stand, saw Chattogram reach a challenging score. The performances of the overseas stars held sway, however, Comilla's trio performed better. Comilla skipper Imrul Kayes' relief was apparent.

"It's a great feeling for us as a team, we were down after the last match, everyone was sad and shocked, we didn't expect to lose that game," he said at the post-match ceremony.

## Bashundhara Kings Arena set for historic debut

ATIQUE ANAM

The Bashundhara Kings Arena is set to become the first privately-owned football ground to host a match of the Bangladesh Premier League, the top-tier professional football of the country.

Situated in Block N of the Bashundhara Residential Area in the capital and owned by Bashundhara Group, the venue has so far been used to hold practice sessions and friendly matches of Bashundhara Kings, but today this modern facility will go into history books when it hosts the defending league champions against Bangladesh Police.

Although the venue is still a work in progress, at least six months away from becoming what it aspires to be -- a first-of-its-kind private football club with state-of-the-art facilities and certification to stage international matches -- the Kings Arena is already a thing to admire and be proud of.

And certainly proud was Bashundhara Kings president Imrul Hassan, who provided the invited journalists a glimpse of the Kings Arena -- a part of an establishment that promises to be a gigantic sports complex -- on the eve of its BPL debut yesterday.

"We don't have much to be proud of on the international stage. The sports complex would be something we can be really proud of," Hasan said in his speech.

"We will host international matches from next season. This venue will be of a standard to host even World Cup matches. We hope other clubs will be inspired by this and will follow our example," the Kings president added.

According to Hasan and the project officials, the stadium, once completed, will host 14,000 spectators with seating facilities and will have floodlights installed for staging night matches. For the moment, though, only limited spectators will be allowed through invitations for the BPL matches.

And Bashundhara Kings, the two-time defending champions, might as well need all of that support when they host Bangladesh Police today as they are currently fourth in the points table with six points, one behind Abahani and Sheikh Jamal and level with Saif Sporting Club, following three match-days.

Having missed out on the first two domestic titles of the season -- the Independence Cup and the Federation Cup -- the defending champions started with a defeat against newcomers Swadhinata KS before bouncing back with single goal victories against Uttar Baridhara and Muktiyoddha Sangsad KS.

Grappling with injuries to key players, the Leviathans of Bangladesh football can definitely allow themselves some breathing space, even if momentarily, with a victory today ahead of Sheikh Jamal's match against Rahmatganj later in the day at the Sylhet District Stadium.



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### 'Silva is the perfect player'

REUTERS, Lisbon

Manchester City coach Pep Guardiola said Bernardo Silva was the "perfect player" after the Portuguese midfielder's double helped his side to secure a 5-0 win over Sporting Lisbon in their Champions League last-16 first leg on Tuesday.

Silva scored his first-ever Champions League brace and his first goals in the competition in almost a year in a vintage display, a performance all the sweeter given that he came through the academy at Sporting's rivals Benfica.

"I always tell him 'you are the perfect player'," Guardiola said. "With the ball he is more than exceptional, but I always say to him you have to go and win games, you have to have the ability to do it. He has the technique, everything.

"This was his home town, and he loves coming back here. Of course he is a former Benfica player, so this was special for him tonight."

Despite steering his side to their biggest ever win in an away game in any round of the competition, the Spaniard was not totally satisfied with what he saw.

"We defended well and got an incredible result," he added. "We have a duty to look at the performance too, even if the result is a dream."



Kylian Mbappe slots one past Thibaut Courtois to give Paris Saint-Germain a crucial 1-0 victory at home against Real Madrid in their Champions League last-16 fixture on Tuesday. PHOTO: TWITTER

## Mbappe undecided on future

REUTERS

France international Kylian Mbappe said he is happy at Paris St Germain, but the forward still remains undecided over his future at the Ligue 1 club as rumours continue to swirl over a possible move to Spanish giants Real Madrid.

On Tuesday Mbappe scored a late winner as PSG defeated Real 1-0 in the first leg of the pair's last-16 match-up in the Champions League.

The 23-year-old's PSG contract is due to expire at the end of this season.

"I've not decided my future. I play for Paris Saint Germain, one of the best clubs

in the world," Mbappe told broadcaster Movistar after Tuesday's match.

His goal triggered wild celebrations from PSG fans, and Mbappe was asked whether Tuesday's acclaim might play a part in shaping his decision.

"No, I've not decided," he replied. "I give my best and then we will see what happens next season."

Now Mbappe, who has 22 goals and 16 assists in all competitions for PSG this season, is expected by many to move to Real on a free transfer at the end of this campaign, having so far resisted offer to sign a new deal with the Parisian club.

"How to ignore the (transfer) context?"

It's easy, you have to play football," Mbappe told broadcaster Canal Plus.

"We ask too many questions, we say too many things. We talk about PSG and Real, two big clubs. I'm a PSG player, I'm always very happy."

Meanwhile, Real Madrid coach Carlo Ancelotti recognised his side had no answer to Mbappe, acknowledging the match-winner was "unstoppable".

"Mbappe is unstoppable," Ancelotti was quoted as saying by Marca.

"We have tried to control him. [Eder] Militao has done very well but [Mbappe] can always invent something out of nothing, and he created at the last minute."

## Troubled Barca face Napoli

AFP, Madrid

Joan Laporta claimed Barcelona are "back as big players" but Thursday will mark another checkpoint in the club's decline as they face Napoli in the knock-out stage of the Europa League.

After failing to make it out of their Champions League group, Barca will play in Europe's second-tier tournament for the first time since losing to Celtic at the last-16 stage in March 2004.

Laporta was in the opening season of his first spell as president that year and while Barcelona's fortunes would soon improve exponentially as Pep Guardiola and Lionel Messi got to work, nobody can be optimistic a similar transformation is close now.

Barcelona's players were likely watching on television as Messi played -- and missed a penalty -- for Paris Saint-Germain against Real Madrid in Paris, the kind of heavyweight European tie to which the Catalans would be normally more accustomed.

There are some positive signs that head coach Xavi Hernandez is steering the team in the right

direction, even if erratic results and performances are a reminder of the work still to be done.

Barca defeated Atletico Madrid 4-2 earlier this month in one of the

most encouraging displays under Xavi, but a 2-2 draw away at city rivals Espanyol last weekend saw doubts resurface ahead of the visit of Napoli to the Camp Nou.

The youthful Barca side's attempt to rebuild their reputation in the Europa League will come under a severe examination against opponents who sit third in Serie A and have conceded only 17 goals in 25 matches.



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# ACC files 13 cases against PK Halder

**Probe finds he and 28 others embezzled Tk 523cr of FAS Finance**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission has filed 13 cases against 29 people, including fugitive PK Halder, for embezzling about Tk 523 crore of FAS Finance and Investment.



Meanwhile, a Dhaka court approved a three-day remand prayer for former managing director of FAS Finance Russell Shahriar in connection with the 13 cases filed.

Gulshan Anwar Prodhan, the commission's deputy director and investigation officer of the cases, arrested Russell from Mohammadpur in the capital on Tuesday afternoon.

The commission has been investigating the misappropriation of about Tk 1,300 crore from FAS

**The ACC has been investigating the misappropriation of about Tk 1,300 crore from FAS Finance and so far found evidence of embezzlement of Tk 523 crore.**

Finance and so far found evidence of embezzlement of Tk 523 crore.

"The money was embezzled in the form of loans," said ACC sources.

The loans were given to 13 organisations -- A&B Trading (Tk 44 crore), Nature Enterprize (Tk 45 crore), Nutrical (Tk 30 crore), SA Enterprize (Tk 42 crore), Sukhadha (Tk 40 crore), MTB Marine (Tk 40 crore), HAL International (Tk 45 crore), Sandeep Corporation (Tk 40 crore), Diya Shipping (Tk 44 crore), Moon Enterprize (Tk 35 crore), Borno (Tk 38 crore), RB (Tk 40 crore) and Marine Trust (Tk 40 crore).

The cases were filed against owners and directors of these organisations, as well as officials of FAS Finance and Investment.

The Daily Star obtained a copy of the FIR of a case filed against 13 people for the misappropriation of Tk 44 crore from FAS.

Russell Shahriar, PK Halder, A&B proprietor Shuvra Rani Ghosh, FAS Finance Chairman Siddiqur Rahman, Vice-Chairman Jahangir Alam, directors MA Hafiz, Abul Shahjahan, Dr Uddab Mallik, Arun Kumar Kundu, Anjan Kumar Roy, Mostain Billah, Uzzal Kumar Nandi and Satya Gopal Poddar are accused in the case.

According to the case statement, Shuvra applied for a Tk 44 crore loan to increase the capital of her firm on March 1, 2015.

The IO also found that A&B is a fictitious firm and Shuvra misappropriated the money without even investing it in business.

Without scrutiny, the then managing director and CEO of FAS Finance and Investment Russel approved the application and forwarded it for final approval at the 165th board meeting of the non-banking finance institution.

On March 4, the loan was approved. Of the money, about Tk 32.36 crore was transferred to Reliance Finance, of which Prashanta Kumar (PK) Halder was managing director, and the rest to different accounts of different private banks of A&B trading.

Initially, A&B took the loan against a 5-katha land in Uttara Sector-13 in the capital. Later, it applied for the renewal of the loan and proposed another 157 decimal as collateral.

The ACC found that PK Halder was the owner of the 157 decimal land and he proposed it as the collateral on behalf of A&B Trading.



A worker risking his life while working on a multistorey under-construction building in the capital's Jigatola area. The authorities concerned remain oblivious to the dire consequences of the lack of safety measures. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

# DDT stored for 37yrs finally being cleared

Substance weighs 500 tonnes; removal cost Tk 70.1cr

MOHAMMAD SUMAN, Ctg

An expert team yesterday started the process of shipping 500 tonnes of Dichloro-Diphenyl-Trichloroethane, a banned toxic pesticide, to France for destruction.

The pesticide had been stored at the Chattogram Government Medical Subdepot warehouse for 37 years.

The DDT, a persistent organic pollutant, which is extremely harmful to the environment and human health, was imported from Pakistan in 1985 for Tk 3.59 crore to control malaria in the country.

When a lab report said the pesticide was substandard, the Bangladesh government asked the Pakistani supplier -- Exchange International Limited -- to take back the pesticide, but it did not happen, according to the commerce ministry documents.

The issue was moved before a Pakistan court but nothing fruitful happened, say the documents. Bangladesh banned the use of DDT in 1989.

Food and Agriculture Organisation coordinate the disposal activity which needs around Tk 70.09 crore.

Global Environment Facility is bearing the cost. While visiting the subdepot in Agrabad yesterday, a 15-member team of Polyeco SA, a Greek company assigned to destroy the pesticide, was seen assessing the condition of the powder.

They said it would need four to five weeks to complete packing of the pesticide.

It will be destroyed at a plant in France following the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. Bangladesh has been a signatory to the Stockholm Convention on removal of POPs since 2001, sources said.

Farid Ahmed, national project director of Pesticide Risk Reduction in Bangladesh, told The Daily Star, "Exposure to DDT can cause serious health problems, including certain cancers, birth defects, dysfunctional immune and reproductive systems and greater susceptibility to disease."

"The ship will use ports of 12 countries before reaching France from Chattogram port and approvals from the countries are mandatory for carrying the harmful material. Approvals from Morocco and Malaysia have not been received yet."

"We are trying through the foreign affairs

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



An artisan applying starch on threads to weave cloth in Rohitpur Ramer Kanda village of Keraniganj yesterday. Earlier, the village would be home to around 200-300 weavers. Now, he is the only one that remains to keep the handicraft alive there.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

## College girl 'abducted for 4 days, gang-raped'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A teenager was abducted, held hostage for four days and gang-raped by two youths in the capital's Lalbagh, police said.

The 15-year-old college student was admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital yesterday. She was stated to be in critical condition, said Inspector Bacchu Miah, in-charge of the police outpost at Dhaka Medical College Hospital.

She told police that locals Shuvo and Alamin ambushed her in Lalbagh on Saturday morning when she was on her way to a private teacher. She lost consciousness after they

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7



## Sainik's role

MOHAMMAD ABDUL GAFUR

In 1952, I was the editor of Sainik. I used to live at 19, Azimpur with Mr [Principal Abul] Kashem. I was present at the meeting of the All-party State Language Action Committee in Nawabpur [February 20, 1952]. The meeting decided not to violate section 144.

But in the face of students' demands it was concluded that violation of section 144 would depend on the role of students in the students' meeting at Amtala next day. If the decision of the working council is not accepted there, the council will be abolished naturally.

I was probably in Sainik's office at the time of the shooting. We published a special issue commemorating the language martyrs. Thousands of copies of the issue were sold in Dhaka within a very short time.

Around 3:00am, [February 23] police surrounded our magazine office. We were aware of such a move. Mr Kashem's wife, without opening the door, kept the police distracted by arguing with them about their activities and gave us enough time to escape safely.

We rushed through the graveyard and forest of Sheikh Saheb Bazar and tried to take shelter in some houses. But no one opened the door out of fear. As a result, Mr Kashem and I spent the night

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



## COVID INOCULATION No more first dose after Feb 26 DGHS says no docs needed for jabs until then

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Citizens eligible to receive Covid-19 vaccines would be able to get their first jabs without any registration or documents in any centre across the country from now on.

The health officials came up with the announcement a day after Prof Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, director general of the health directorate, on Tuesday announced that the yearlong first dose vaccination campaign will be ended through a special campaign on February 26.

"We have already directed all permanent vaccination centres to administer the first dose to everyone who will come without a birth registration certificate or national identity card," Dr Shamsul Haque, member secretary of the National Covid-19 Vaccine Management Taskforce at the DGHS, said in an online briefing yesterday.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1