

3 YEARS OF CHURIHATTA BLAZE

Back in trade stained with blood

SHAHEEN MOLLAH and ZYMA ISLAM

On this day three years ago, 71 people lost their lives in a devastating explosion originating from chemicals illegally stored in Wahed Mansion in Old Dhaka.

But the tragedy doesn't seem to have weighed enough on the consciences of the owners of the building in Chawkbazar's Churihatta; they have recently rented out the basement parking lot as a plastic toy warehouse -- also a fire hazard.

One of these correspondents visited the building area on three consecutive days last week and found labourers hauling cartons of recycled plastic toys into the parking lot, which was filled to the brim with boxes.

The building staff and locals told the correspondent on condition of anonymity that the space was rented out this month to a toy-making factory from Kamrangirchar.

When the staff were asked if they knew there was a massive fire three years ago, they said they did, and pointed to four fire extinguishers hooked to the wall for "fire safety".

The basement is essentially meant to be used as a parking lot of a residential building, not a warehouse, and thus contains no fire exit. But in a place like Chawkbazar where free real estate is scanty, this practice is quite common.

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

This latest discovery -- that the owners of the very building where a deadly fire spread from a warehouse have now rented space to another warehouse -- comes at a time when police have pressed charges against the two owners of Wahed Mansion for negligence, causing the deaths of 71 people and injuries to many others.

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...the owners of the very building where a deadly fire spread from a warehouse have now rented space to another warehouse...



Farmer Jaynal Mia has no bullocks to pull the plough. He has to pull it himself while his daughters Jonabi, 12, and Jannati, 10, try to put some weight on it. The farmer of Kalmati area in Lalmonirhat said he used to own large pieces of arable land but lost everything to erosion by the Teesta.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

A slogan ever in sync with a nation

Joy Bangla set to be nat'l slogan

PARTHA PRATIM BHATTACHARJEE

"Joy Bangla", the strongest slogan during the Liberation War and also during the struggle for the country's independence, is set to become the national slogan of Bangladesh.

The slogan, which translates as "Victory to Bengal", was not merely a political one, but a sign of commitment to the motherland and a symbol of national spirit and patriotism.

It became a rallying cry of the people of all classes and ages irrespective of political identities during

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Search panel may not disclose final 10

20 shortlisted for EC posts

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA and ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The search committee is not likely to disclose whom it will recommend to the president for the posts of the chief election commissioner and other commissioners.

"So far, our decision is that we won't reveal the names. We will recommend the names to the president, and it will be up to him to decide whether the names will be disclosed or not," a member of the panel told The Daily Star yesterday, wishing not to be named.

Revealing the names before sending them to the president will be "discourteous", and some quarters may also create a controversy over it, added the member.

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Did nothing to undermine ACC image

Ex-ACC official Sharif tells Star

GOLAM MORTOZA

Sharif Uddin, who was sacked by the Anti-Corruption Commission last week, said he had always tried to unmask the corrupt and confiscate illegal wealth during his time at the commission.

"If this means I undermined the image of ACC, then I have nothing to say," he told The Daily Star. "I don't think I have done anything that undermines the image of the

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Praised until he stepped on toes

Sharif had outstanding evaluations

MOSTAFA YOUSUF

A skilled and judicious officer, who is well experienced in investigation. He is worthy of promotion.

This is how Sharif Uddin, the recently sacked deputy assistant director

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Aseptic technology at a glance

A growing demand for natural products has become a key driver behind the rise of high-tech systems in juice producing and packaging in Bangladesh. Akij Food and Beverage Ltd, a concern of Akij Group, is using an aseptic juice packaging and filling system to meet this growing demand for preservative- and germ-free juice. The company is the first in Bangladesh and the second in Asia to bring this technology from Germany. In aseptic processing, a germ-free product is packaged in sterile containers in a way that maintains high quality. The objective of Aseptic Technology is to maintain the sterility of food

ingredients, bottles, environment and product through each step from fruit pulp processing to the bottling process. This process used in Akij Food & Beverage Factory requires the close coordination and complex interaction between personnel, sterilized product, the equipment system, filling components, and support facilities. In this process, the production environment, product and bottles are safe from harmful microbes, bacteria and virus of outer environment. As a result, there is neither risk of germ-contamination, nor any need of adding preservatives. In most

properly cleaned, they are sent to Aseptic pulp processing factory where pulps are processed using aseptic technology, so that there is no need to add preservatives. The company gives high priority to how it collects mango and pulp. Pulping is done at the Chapainawabganj factory where mangoes are collected from the best mango gardens of the Rajshahi region. Mango pulps brought into aseptic pulp processing factory are processed using the most advanced aseptic technology to make aseptically processed pulp. Since aseptic process is followed, there is no need to add preservatives. After conducting mandatory microbiological tests in an ultramodern lab, selected pulps matched with the Frutika standard are mixed with other ingredients at a certain ratio to make the primary mixing of the fruit drink. Fruit drink mixing is then pasteurized to make it germ-free. Then the pulps are cooled off in 20°-25° Celsius temperature and are sent to sterile tank. Next destination from there is the Aseptic Filling Chamber. During the time the fruit drink reaches the sterile tank, Frutika bottles are made in aseptic sterile blow-molder in a controlled environment. While the bottles are sterilized in several steps, bottle caps are also disinfected separately. Made bottles reach the Aseptic Filling Chamber for fruit drink filling. Fruit drink filling in Frutika's bottle is done by aseptically cold filling process. Afterwards, sterilized caps are put on the filled bottles' openings one by one. The bottles are then labeled and transferred to the conveyer belt for main packaging. When the wrapping at first step is done, they are sent to Frutika's central warehouse through automated conveyer. After palletizing, your most favorite Frutika is all set to reach different regions of the country. And for all these efforts to keep the taste and quality of fruits intact, Frutika has successfully earned the trust of numerous consumers across the country.

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cases, the processed fruit pulps are put inside the bottle by "warm-filling" technology. This technology leaves a potentiality of bacterial and other germ contamination in different production steps while a risk of decreasing nutrition quality remains. To avoid this type of

adulteration, precise quality control methods are followed in every step of 'Frutika's production in the most modern aseptic technology. So that you get fruit drink that is free from any harmful elements. The process starts at Akij Agro Processing Factory in Chapainawabganj. Mangoes are handpicked from orchards that have been grown with care. After that they are naturally ripen and

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Only fruit drink of Bangladesh made by aseptic technology and is absolutely preservative free

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All secondary schools to have 2-day weekends

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All the secondary educational institutions in the country would get a two-day weekend – Friday and Saturday – each week from the next year.

Education Minister Dipu Moni made the comment yesterday while talking to journalists after attending a programme at The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB).

She went to NCTB to distribute textbooks among the students of 62 secondary schools in which piloting a new curriculum will take place.

The upcoming curriculum also proposed a two-day weekend instead of just Friday.

Many of the schools in the capital already have weekends on Friday and Saturday.

Earlier, Dipu Moni said that they have prepared a new curriculum so that students can learn things on their own and implement their knowledge.

She said that the new curriculum was framed in a way that students would have the ability to identify problems and ways of solving those.

The students will also have capacities of critical thinking and have others skills.

UK links threat to Taiwan with Ukraine response

REUTERS, London

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson yesterday said that if Western nations failed to fulfil their promises to support Ukraine's independence, it would have damaging consequences worldwide, including for Taiwan.

"We do not fully know what President Putin intends, but the omens are grim," Johnson told a security conference in Munich.



A long tailback yesterday afternoon on the Mayor Mohammed Hanif Flyover, which was built for easy and hassle-free entry to and exit from the capital. The photo was taken in Hatkhola area of Old Dhaka.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

CHURIHATTA FIRE TRAGEDY

An outcome of greed and negligence

'Pearl' owner arrested while fleeing the country

MUNTAKIM SAAD and EMRUL HASAN BAPPI

Despite being aware of the threats to life and property, Hazi Wahed Mansion owners still rented out the residential property to set up five warehouses for flammable materials in order to make extra profit.

The charge sheet pressed against eight people, including the two owners of Wahed Mansion and owners and staffers of Pearl Trade International said the 2019 Churihatta fire tragedy, which claimed 71 lives, occurred due to of the greed and negligence of both the building owners and warehouse tenants.

Abdul Qayyum, officer-in-charge of Chawkbazar Police Station and the investigation officer of the case, brought charges of culpable homicide causing death by negligence and mischief by fire or explosive substance with intent to destroy property under the sections 304, 436, 427 and 34 of the penal code.

If found guilty, they may face five to 10 years or life term with fine or both. However, Khurshid Alam Khan, a noted criminal law expert, told The Daily Star yesterday, "The murder charges should be included in the probe report in such cases, but the investigator did not do so here... If the court thinks the murder charges should be included in the case, it can do so while framing charges."

Among the eight charge-sheeted

accused, four were arrested while four others surrendered before the court at different times.

All the accused are now on bail. They are building owners – Hasan Sultan, 55, and his brother Hossain Sultan Sohel, 47; Pearl International owners – Imtiaz Ahmed, 39, Mohammad Jawad Atir, 35, Mohammad Mozammel Iqbal, 36; their staffer Mozaffar Uddin, 34; and their business partners – Md Nabil, 45, and Mohammad Kashif, 50.

After the fire incident on this day on 2019, Pearl International's owners and staffers went into hiding for nearly two and a half years.

On September 22 last year, police arrested one owner Imtiaz from Benapole port while he was trying to flee the country, the IO said.

The two brothers of Wahed Mansion, Hasan and Hossain, surrendered before the court nearly two months after the incident and gave statements under section 164.

1 BUILDING, 5 WAREHOUSES AND AN EXPLOSION

Hasan, in his statement, said five units of the building, including the basement were rented out to warehouses.

On the first, second and third floors, there were four warehouses and four residential units. Three of the warehouses were rented out to Imtiaz.

Hasan said the deed copy was burnt in

the fire so he could not specify the tenants' addresses, adding that he saw the company owners for the last time when he rented out the floors to them five years ago.

Their managers Taber and Mozaffar used to pay the rent and he saw brothers Kashif and Nabil visiting the warehouses.

The other part of the first floor was rented to one Modasser, who owns scotch tape and energy lightbulb businesses.

Hossain, in his statement, said he rented out the basement to one Hasan Sohel Shamim, who stored colour and powder there.

The Fire Service and Civil Defence's probe body found the warehouses on the first, second and third floors contained huge quantities of body spray, air freshener, aerosol, gas lighter, fuel, etc.

The fire started on the first floor.

The Criminal Investigation Department of police found ethyl alcohol, butane, isobutene, propene, butoxyethanol, glycol ether, diethyl phthalate, propylene and polyethylene – all flammable – among the seized products found on the spot.

The department of explosives said an electric spark was first created during the polybag sealing in a machine and then it came in contact with the flammable substance, igniting the explosion.

WRONG ADDRESSES, CHASING FUGITIVES

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A slogan ever

FROM PAGE 1

of the nine-month war in 1971.

The Cabinet Division has drawn up a proposal for making "Joy Bangla" the national slogan. The proposal will be placed before the cabinet by March 7 for approval, said sources.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has already consented to placing the proposal before the cabinet, they added.

Once approved, the slogan would be used at all state functions and assemblies of academic institutions. Those holding constitutional posts and all government officials will have to utter "Joy Bangla" at the end of their speeches at government programmes and on national days.

According to the summary of the proposal, the High Court on March 10, 2020 directed the government to take necessary steps to make "Joy Bangla" the national slogan.

The HC bench of Justice FRM Nazmul Ahasan and Justice KM Kamrul Kader, while delivering the verdict on a writ petition filed in 2017, ordered the authorities concerned to submit a report on the progress of complying with its directives through the Supreme Court registrar general's office within three months.

It said "Joy Bangla" is the slogan of independence and national unity.

Historians said during the mass upsurge in January 1969, students

under the banner of Sarbadaliya Chhatra Sangram Parishad (All Student Parties Resistance Council) started chanting "Joy Bangla" instead of "Pakistan Zindabad".

Students also chanted "Amar Desh-Tomer Desh, Bangladesh Bangladesh".

"Students started to use Joy Bangla slogan in 1969. But it became a universal slogan of the country during the Liberation War. It was also used as a greeting at that time," historian Muntassir Mamoon said yesterday.

The slogan helped Bangladeshis get united and fight against Pakistani regime.

According to The Indian Express, Joy Bangla slogan was first used during anti-British movement. Anti-British hero Purnachandra Das, a school teacher from Madaripur, was imprisoned and tortured by British rulers for his anti-British regime movement.

National Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam composed the poem "Purna Abhinandan" in 1922 upon a request from Kalipada Roychowdhury on the occasion of the release of Purnachandra Das.

The poet used the words "Joy Bangla" in the fifth stanza of the poem:

Joy Bangla'r purnochondro, joy joy adi ontorin,

Joy jube jube asa senapoti, joy pran ontihin.

The main theme of the poem was rebellion against colonialism, oppression and exploitation.

Back in trade stained with blood

FROM PAGE 1

The Daily Star tried to reach the owners, Md Hasan Sultan and Md Hossain Sultan alias Sohel, who live in Wahed Mansion, right above the basement warehouse, but to no avail. The building's security guard keeps the gate shut tight.

The guards are also allegedly keeping the gate shut to the family of the previous security guard, who died in the inferno, and have been trying to extract compensation from the owners of the warehouse.

Fifty-five-year-old Sujal Haque was the security guard and caretaker of Wahed Mansion, and he died on the spot in the explosion.

"My father worked for them for four years. He was their employee, they should give some sort of compensation," said his daughter Bibi Hazera who came to the location as recently as Friday. "When we try to meet the owners, we are turned away."

Did nothing to undermine

FROM PAGE 1

commission. "I investigated a land acquisition scam in Cox's Bazar. The owner of the land was harassed and local gangs of every tier used to extort him. I tried to stop this," said the former deputy assistant director of the ACC.

"I also took measures to confiscate ill-gotten properties and wealth worth between Tk 40 and 50 crore for the government exchequer. I had also investigated a syndicate involved in giving illegal gas connections and corruption

Hazera's husband Md Ibrahim had also perished in the inferno, leaving her alone with two young daughters. The 32-year-old used to run a paan-cigarette shop in front of Wahed Mansion. Along with Ibrahim died his cousin Md Anwar Hossain, who had come to the city 10 days ago.

LITTLE OR NO COMPENSATION

In April, 2019, forty private banks deposited cheques worth Tk 30 crore in the government's national relief fund for the victims, according to a report The Daily Star ran on April 4 that year.

None of the families have seen any of that money, claimed the families. Meanwhile, out of the 72 people who died, the families of only 21 received some compensation from the government.

Sixteen families took jobs as city corporation cleaners, earning Tk 500 on the days of work cleaning streets of the capital.

Three families got shops.

Two families got Tk 2 lakh as monetary compensation.

In addition to this, the families of six more people among those critically injured in the fire received either cleaning gigs with the city corporation or Tk 2 lakh.

"We have heard that a huge fund [deposited in the national relief fund] was collected for us. I wish they would distribute that to us, or loan that to us," said Nasiruddin, who leads a collective of victims' families.

Nur Nabi Parvez, the son of the security guard killed in the explosion, had chosen to work as a cleaner, but says that he can hardly make ends meet.

"I can earn at best Tk 10,000 a month. Friday is an off day so I get no money. It is the same with government holidays. I have wife and a son, three unmarried sisters and mother to take care of. The house rent itself costs Tk 7,000."

Prior to his father's death, Nur Nabi worked as

support, including vehicle, manpower and source money when he visited Cox's Bazar from Chattogram. "I brought suspects to Chattogram from Cox's Bazar. Did they [deputy director and director at the Chattogram office of ACC] ever complain in writing that Shari's activities are beyond his jurisdiction?"

"Rather, they have encouraged me. All the files related to Rohingyas, housing, public workers, and health care were endorsed by the commission. I don't know why they [deputy

director and director] are saying that I undermined the image of the commission."

News reports based on his activities were published in the media on a regular basis, he added.

He said those who have brought allegations against him are individuals he had arrested, and those whose properties he has seized.

"The commission removed me from my job before any of the allegations have been proved true."

He said allegations that he tortured suspects placed on remand are false.

SI killed in hit-and-run

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cumilla

A sub-inspector of highway police was killed in a hit-and-run near Daudkandi Toll Plaza in Cumilla yesterday.

Jahangir Hossain, 45, was maintaining traffic movement on Meghna Gumti bridge on Dhaka-Chattogram highway when he was hit by a vehicle, said Jahirul Haque, officer-in-charge of Daudkandi Highway Police Station.

Police have yet to identify the driver or the vehicle.

18-year-old dies after being hit by train

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

An 18-year-old girl was killed yesterday after being hit by a train in Kulaura, Moulvibazar.

Pushpi Deb, daughter of Shasanko Deb of Rautgaon area, died on the spot as the Parabat Express hit her near Longla train station.

Police said it was not clear whether it was an accident or death by suicide.

Covid deaths lowest in 29 days

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The health directorate reported 13 deaths from Covid-19 yesterday, the lowest since January 21.

Officials also reported 2,150 new cases, raising the total confirmed cases to 19,31,304.

The new cases were detected after testing 24,696 individuals.

Of those reported dead, seven were males and six females.

Bangladeshi shot dead in Johannesburg

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

A Bangladeshi man was shot dead yesterday at his shop in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Golam Mostafa, 36, who was from Kabilpur area of Noakhali's Senbag, went to South Africa in 2014, said his elder brother Kiran.

Mostafa owned a shop in Johannesburg with another Bangladeshi. Local miscreants shot him and looted valuables from the shop after failing to extort him, Kiran added.

The family urged the government to bring back his body.

UK PM responds to 'partygate' probe

AFP, London

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has submitted his response to a police questionnaire relating to Downing Street parties that may have breached coronavirus regulations, his office said Friday.

Police are investigating claims Johnson attended gatherings that may have violated Britain's strict distancing and virus prevention rules.

Public outcry over the so-called "partygate" scandal has left Johnson fighting for political survival. Several MPs from his Conservative party have publicly called for his resignation, although he denies any wrongdoing.

Search panel

FROM PAGE 1

Earlier in the day, the six-member committee shortlisted 20 people for its final list of 10 for the five EC posts. The 20 names were not disclosed.

"At today's meeting, a preliminary list of 20 people has been made from the proposed names after scrutinising the candidates' qualifications as per the [relevant] law. The final list will be ready at the next couple of meetings," Md Shamsul Arefin, Cabinet Division secretary (coordination and reforms), told journalists after the panel's fifth meeting at the Judges' Lounge of the Bangladesh Supreme Court Building.

He said the committee would hold its next meeting at 4:30pm today at the same venue.

Sources said the panel had a detailed discussion on whether or not it would disclose its picks. All members agreed that there were no legal obligations to publish the names.

The newly passed Election Commission law also does not mention anything about disclosing the names, a committee member said, requesting anonymity.

The member also said they were shortening their list based on the candidates' honesty, courage and track record in service.

After the formation of the search committee on February 5, it asked political parties, professional bodies and individuals to submit names for the upcoming EC. The tenure of the one led by KN Nurul Huda expired on

February 14.

The panel then held meetings with eminent citizens, election experts and media personalities in four phases to get their suggestions and opinions on the EC appointments.

Many of the invitees recommended that the panel disclose all the names proposed. They also said the committee should publish the names of its picks before sending the nominations to the president.

They argued disclosing the names would ensure transparency in the process, saying people would be able to give opinions on the candidates.

Later, all the 322 proposed names were published on the Cabinet Division's website. It was found ex-bureaucrats, followed by educationists and jurists, dominated the list.

Later, the list was cut down to 50.

The BNP and some other opposition parties did not propose any names, citing no confidence in the search committee. They also observed the president cannot appoint the CEC and other commissioners without consultation with the prime minister, who is the head of the ruling Awami League.

As per the EC law, the committee will propose 10 names – two names against each post – to the president, who will then appoint the CEC and other ECs.

The Cabinet Division is giving secretariat support to the search panel, which has to forward its nominations to the president by February 24 as per the law.

Strict security for Feb 21

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) has taken a six-layer security measure to ensure peaceful observance of International Mother Language Day in the capital tomorrow.

As part of the measure, DMP will conduct a search operation at messes and residential hotels near Shaheed Minar from yesterday night to avoid any untoward situation.

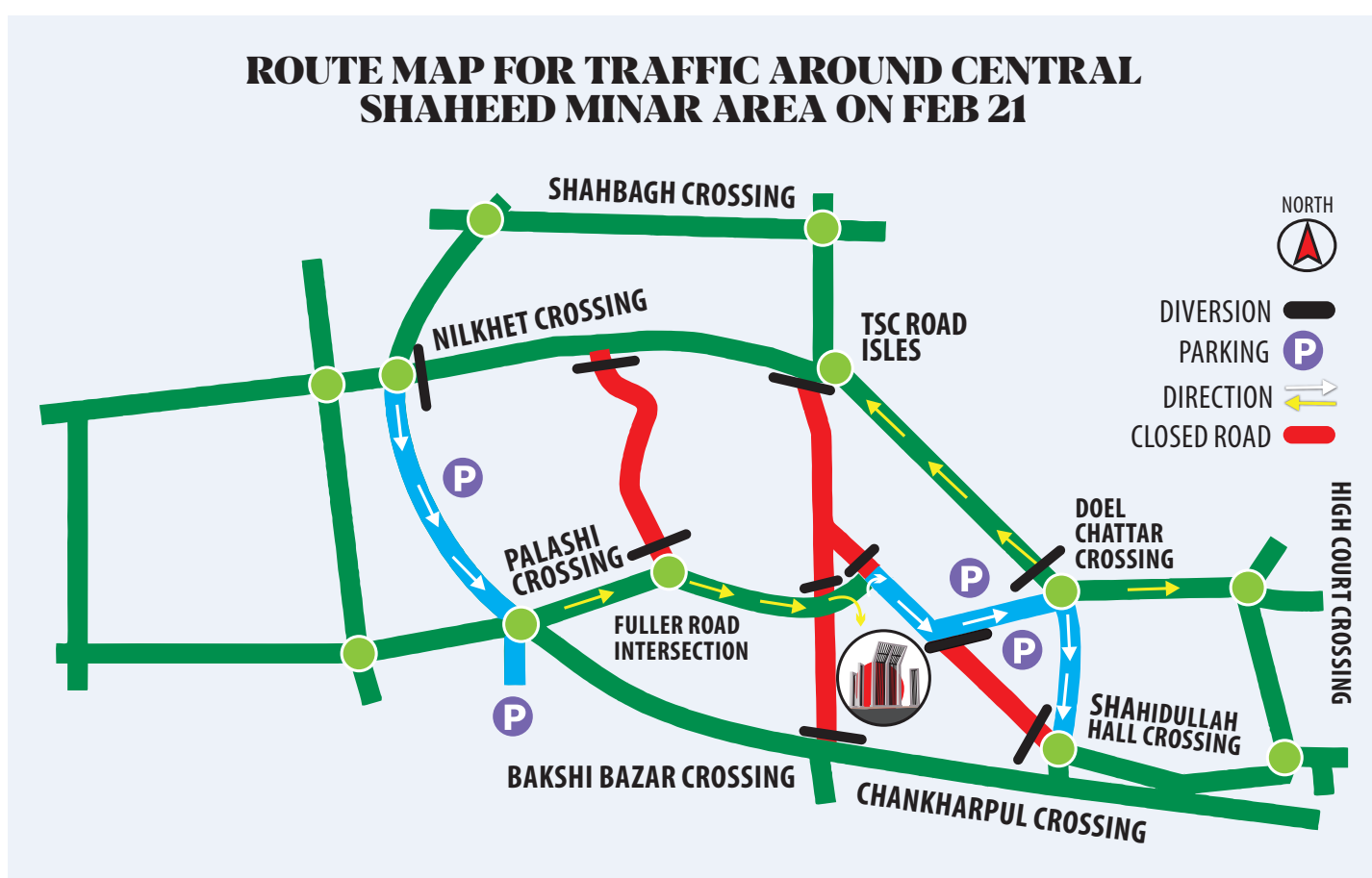
City dwellers have been advised not to carry any bag while paying tribute on the premises and remain careful while using mobile phones, due to phone theft.

DMP Commissioner Md Shafiqul Islam gave the information yesterday while talking with journalists, after visiting Shaheed Minar and inspecting security preparation.

He said it was "not yet certain" whether the president and prime minister would pay tribute directly or place flowers through their representatives. "However, we have taken appropriate security measures by assuming that they will come."

The DMP boss said there will be check-posts on four sides of Shaheed Minar, and CCTV cameras will be installed beside them. He said foreign ambassadors and diplomats would visit the premises separately.

Due to the pandemic, public gatherings have been restricted again. Some restrictions were put on wreath-laying. For organisations and institutions, a maximum of five people, and for general individuals, a maximum of two people can lay wreaths at the altar of Shaheed Minar together. Everyone has to wear a face-mask.



This one's for 'ammu'

Eldest among 40 living in shelter for sex workers' children passes HSC

NILIMA JAHAN

Eighteen-year-old Falguni (not her real name) is the eldest of 40 siblings. After passing her HSC exams with a GPA of 4.08, she has made her "ammu" immensely proud.

While not biological siblings, the 40 children who live under the supervision of Hazera Begum are tied to each other by the shelter that brings them together. Founded in 2010 by Hazera, the organisation is called "Shishuder Jonno Aamra", which shelters children of sex workers.

All children there once struggled with their identities, given the social stigma associated with their biological mothers' profession.

"I started this centre to give these children a future. I don't know how successful I am, but I feel proud every time I see any of them achieving anything in life,"



Hazera with her children at Shishuder Jonno Aamra.

FILE PHOTO

Hazera said of Falguni's HSC success. Hazera started the organisation with 25 children, some of them really young. "Falguni has been under my supervision since she was three. We are now planning to prepare her for university admission tests," Hazera said.

This is important not only for Hazera and Falguni, but everyone of Shishuder Jonno Amra's children. "My result brought about a jubilant and hopeful mood in the shelter. My self-esteem has also increased," Falguni told this correspondent.

"I have come a long way, and I hope I can go further. I also hope that my siblings will take inspiration from this and carve their own way through life."

Falguni said she never had a qualm with her biological mother's profession, but that it was society who discriminated against her for it. Her mother now lives abroad, away from the oppressive work she had to face in Bangladesh, and is in touch with her daughter.

Meanwhile, Hazera has stepped up to take care of Falguni's needs. From nurturing her to being her mother even in official papers, Hazera has been an "ammu" since she was three.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Cut corporate tax for newspapers

Noab urges govt to keep it between 10-15pc; says employees should get tax exemption

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Newspaper Owners' Association of Bangladesh yesterday said corporate tax for the country's declining newspaper industry should not be more than 10 to 15 percent.

Besides, Noab members think that newspaper employees should be exempted from income tax payment.

At present, the government has fixed corporate tax for the newspaper industry at 30 percent.

The issues were discussed at the maiden meeting of the new executive committee of Noab yesterday at the Times Media Ltd premises in the capital's Tejgaon industrial area, said a press release.



PHOTO: COLLECTED

In its maiden meeting of the new executive committee yesterday, Noab congratulated its member and editor of Chattogram-based daily Dainik Azadi MA Malek (fourth from right) for being named for this year's Ekushey Padak.

In the meeting, Noab congratulated its member and editor of Chattogram-based daily Dainik Azadi MA Malek for being named for this year's Ekushey Padak, the second highest civilian award of the country.

Malek has been named for his outstanding contributions to the field of journalism.

Besides, a condolence motion was adopted for the death of Noab member and senior journalist Reazuddin Ahmed, who breathed his last on December 25 last year at the age of 76.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

PRAYER
TIMING
FEB 20



	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	5-20	12-45	4-30	6-03	7-30
Jamaat	5-55	1-15	4-45	6-07	8-00

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

সব ধরনের কাপড়ের যত্ন নেয় জেট

হাতের ক্ষতি না করে সহজেই পরিষ্কার করে এবং দিনের পর দিন কাপড়কে উজ্জ্বল রাখে

কাপড়ের আসনজন পরিবারের আসনজন

কন্সল গ্রুপ অব কোম্পানীজ এর একটি পণ্য

প্রাণ ফুটো

ধন্যবাদ আপনাকে

ফুটোকে আগলে রাখার জন্য

দেশব্যাপী ১৫ হাজারের অধিক আম চাষির নিরলস পরিশ্রমের ফলে ফুটো তাজা আমের স্বাদের আবেশ ছড়িয়ে যাচ্ছে বছরজুড়ে। বিগত ১৬টি বছর ধরে চাষি ভাইয়েরা ফুটোকে আগলে রেখেছেন বলেই ফুটো পরপর ৬ বার অর্জন করেছে 'বেস্ট ব্র্যান্ড অ্যাওয়ার্ড'।

ধন্যবাদ সেই মানুষদের

Ukraine invasion 'within days'

FROM PAGE 16 seeking closer ties with Nato and the European Union. Russia has announced a series of withdrawals of its forces from near Ukraine in recent days.

missiles. Russia's defence ministry said the exercise involved nearly all branches of the armed forces, including its strategic rocket forces, as well the Northern and Black Sea fleets, which have nuclear-armed submarines.

foreign minister yesterday warned against trying to guess or assume Russia's decisions on Ukraine. "In crisis situations, the most inappropriate thing to do is to somehow guess or assume," said Baerbock, in response to a question on whether she shared Biden's assessment.

Dr Yousuf Ali Ukraine passes away

CITY DESK

Dr Yousuf Ali, former director of Sher-e-Bangla Medical College Hospital in Barishal, passed away in a Dhaka hospital yesterday.



He was 75. He breathed his last around 11:30am at Shaheed Monsur Ali Medical College Hospital. Dr Yousuf left behind his wife and son Dr Nabil Zunayed Sidny, assistant professor of Shaheed Monsur Ali Medical College. His first namaz-e-janaza was held at medical college mosque in Uttara.

FROM PAGE 16 The observations were made yesterday at a panel discussion on tackling the climate crisis at the three-day Munich Security Conference beginning Friday.

Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen, US President's Special Envoy on Climate John Kerry, State Secretary at the German Federal Minister for Economic Affairs and Climate Action Franziska Brantner and the UAE's Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, among others, attended the panel.

At an earlier session, Momen also asked his US and German counterparts if they considered whether escalation of tension around Ukraine could adversely impact the climate agenda.

He urged the global leadership to help forge international partnerships to ensure financing and technologies for climate-vulnerable countries like Bangladesh.

Climate change was identified as the top security risk among people polled for the Munich Security Index 2022.

Most countries on the frontline of climate change had an insignificant share in carbon emission, yet suffered due to the global pollution caused by most G-20 countries.

The international community must work hard this year to realise the Paris Climate Conference commitment of \$100 billion annually, Momen said.

In a later session on the possible way out of the pandemic, Momen reiterated the call for considering vaccines to be 'global public goods' and ensuring vaccine equity around the world.

In the presence of Bill Gates and his counterparts from Canada and Sweden, he stressed the need for transferring technological know-how to developing countries like Bangladesh for vaccine production.

The Aga Khan Academy Dhaka is currently inviting applicants for the following positions

Advertisement for Aga Khan Academy Dhaka. Includes logo and details for Manager, Finance and Manager, IT positions. Experience requirements: 9-10 years for Finance, 9-10 years for IT. Education: Bachelor's degree in accounting for Finance, Bachelor's degree for IT.

Obituary notice for Capt. Syed Ali Asghar Rizvi. Text: "Today is the 5th Death Anniversary of The Founding Chairman of Alliance Properties Limited CAPT. SYED ALI ASGHAR RIZVI (22 April 1944 - 20 February 2017)". Includes photo and Alliance Properties logo.

This one's in the truest sense of the word.

She was once a sex worker herself, till the age of 23, when she started working with Durjoy Shishu Nibash, an organisation for sex workers' children run by CARE Bangladesh.

But the centre had to shut down in 2008 due to fund crisis, which is when Hazera decided to start her own shelter with her life's savings and help from better-off sections of society, along with trusts and charities. She first set up Shishuder Jonno Aamra at Savar, which later relocated to Adabor in 2011.

This has been a good year for the shelter so far. On top of Falguni's success, two children passed their SSC exams. Hazera said she wants to provide her children with sufficient support so they can pursue higher education or vocational training.

Advertisement for Bangladesh Government. Title: "গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার খাদ্য মন্ত্রণালয় অভ্যন্তরীণ প্রশাসন-১ বাংলাদেশ সচিবালয়, ঢাকা". Includes details for recruitment and contact information.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Directorate of Posts, Dak Bhaban Sher-e-bangla Nagar, Agargaon, Dhaka-1207. Notice regarding the 51st International Letter-Writing Competition for Young People-2022.

Cut corporate

FROM PAGE 3 The new executive committee of Noab was formed during its annual general meeting on December 4 last year, with Samakal publisher AK Azad being elected its president for the second time in a row.

At yesterday's meeting, Noab members reviewed the present situation of the country's newspaper industry.

On February 6, Noab president AK Azad held a meeting with National Board of Revenue (NBR), where he placed various demands, including tax exemption for the survival of the newspaper industry.

At yesterday's meeting, the Noab president informed his colleagues about the meeting with NBR.

Besides, a decision has been taken that Noab will continue to hold discussions with different government bodies including NBR.

Among others, ASM Shahidullah Khan Badal, chairman of New Age editorial board; MA Malek, editor of Danik Azadi; Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star; Matiur Rahman, editor and publisher of Prothom Alo; Altamash Kabir, editor and publisher of Sangbad; Tarik Sujat, managing director at Mediascene Ltd, which publishes daily Bhorer Kagoj; and Dewan Hanif Mahmud, editor and publisher of Bonik Barta, attended the meeting.

Advertisement for Bangladesh Government. Title: "গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ অধিনায়কের কার্যালয়". Includes details for recruitment and a table of positions.

Continuation of the 51st International Letter-Writing Competition notice. Includes required attachments, prizes table, and contact information.

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1st Prize Winner in SAARC
Anniversary Award for
Corporate Governance

Recognition from esteemed organizations made our journey worth
for a better tomorrow



“

The upcoming election will be challenging, and we have to overcome this challenge... Nobody can defeat Awami League, if we stay united.

OBaidul Quader
Awami League
general secretary



“

Now vice-chancellors are engaged in corruption in universities, those who are working in the health ministry are engaged in corruption... there is not a single place without corruption.

MIRZA FAKHURUL
ISLAM ALAMGIR
BNP secretary general



Not even the students of DU, who call Kala Bhaban their home, know of Nilkhet Barrack and its connection with the Language Movement.

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 eight, we take you to Nilkhet Barrack, a residential area for government staffers who stepped up for the movement.

From Nilkhet Barrack to 'Kala Bhaban'

DIPAN NANDY and SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

Over the years, Aparajeyo Bangla and Kala Bhaban have become enduring symbols of Dhaka University. Before the '60s, the same spot housed a residential area for government staffers, known as Nilkhet Barrack.

During the Language Movement, it was a bastion for those who demanded Bangla as the state language. After the police brutality of February 21, the Nilkhet Barrack was abuzz with protest. But with the passing of time, this historical fact has become dead and buried, with not even students of the Kala Bhaban aware of their premises' significance for the movement.

The barrack was built near the tail end of 1947, to resolve the housing crisis of DU staffers. Though a residential area, its bamboo-made houses resembled an army camp, which is why it came to be known



as Nilkhet Barrack. Even before February 21 of 1952, its residents extended their support to the movement when it was still a grassroots movement in 1947-48.

In his "Ekushey'r Dinlipi", Language Movement veteran Ahmad Rafiq said, "To this day, memories of the Nilkhet Barracks come rushing to me every time I come across that big tree opposite the VC's office. I saw everything, from meetings to protest rallies, and it all feels surreal coming from a staffers' quarter."

The barrack has now given way to the arts building. While that may be a necessity of time, the fact that the premises don't even have a sign or plaque to immortalise its historical significance robs the

thousands who visit it every day of the chance to feel proud of their institute.

"I didn't even know it used to be called the Nilkhet Barrack, let alone its significance for the Language Movement," said Sheikh Mumtarin Athoi, a student of theatre studies.

"The authorities should do something about this, even if for our sake."

Lamenting Nilkhet Barrack's lack of spotlight, Ahmad Rafiq told The Daily Star, "It was a big sacrifice by the government staffers, who chose to take a strong stance for the movement though it might have hampered their careers. If nothing else, the area should at least have a memorial plaque to signify its importance."

Contacted, DU pro-VC (administrative) Prof Muhammad Samad said, "It's not a bad idea to have such a memorial plaque here. It might help future generations know more about the history of this place."

Where readers and writers meet

DIPAN NANDY

Besides being a place to buy and sell books, the Boi Mela is also where readers get to meet and greet their favourite writers.

While the more popular authors attract bigger crowds to their publishers' stalls and pavilions with an appearance, for more obscure authors, this is the chance for them to get acquainted with their readers.

The Boi Mela opened its doors at 11:00am yesterday, as it was a holiday. From the beginning, book enthusiasts started pouring in.

Yesterday also saw the ninth and tenth volumes of the popular "Mujib" graphic novel's unveiling. Published by the Centre for Research and Information (CRI), educationist Muhammad Zafar Iqbal and author Anisul Haque unveiled the volumes yesterday.

During the ceremony, Muhammad Zafar Iqbal recalled the time when attempts were underway to remove Bangabandhu's name from history.

He said this graphic novel can represent the visionary leader to future generations.

Muhammad Zafar Iqbal ended up staying at the fair grounds through the afternoon, being swarmed by fans and autograph hunters the entire time.



The fair was also graced by popular novelist Imdadul Haque Milon. "There's been a constant flow of visitors to the fair this year. If they even come to touch the books without buying them, that's still a great thing for all of us," he said.

This correspondent came across garment trader Mosharraf Hossain, who came all the way from Banasree.

He was holding the book "Think Like CEOs" published by Daily Star Books. "I bet something good will come out of it if I can learn from this book and use it for my business," he told this correspondent.

Meanwhile, on the first day of its operation, a mobile court was vigilant in identifying and fining publishers and visitors for not following hygiene rules at the fair.

According to Bangla Academy, 143 new books were published at the fair yesterday.



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World sees 22pc drop in Covid cases in a week Deaths drop by 7pc

AFP, Paris

The Covid-19 pandemic continued its retreat this week, with fewer deaths and the number of new cases decreasing in most regions of the world.

After a surge which lasted for three and a half months, the average number of global daily cases dropped for a third week in a row, falling back by 22 percent to 1.97 million, according to an AFP tally to Thursday.

The situation improved in most regions of the world over the past seven days. The number of daily cases dropped by 43 percent in the United States/Canada zone, by 35 percent in the Middle East, by 23 percent in Europe and the Latin America/Caribbean area and by 22 percent in Africa.

The situation remained almost stable in Asia, with a one percent fall in cases. They increased by the same amount in Oceania.

South East Asia and Oceania saw the biggest spike in the number of new cases this week.

The number of Covid-linked deaths declined by seven percent globally, with an average of 10,355 per day, after an increase for five weeks in a row.

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

The US again mourned the most deaths this week with an average of 2,300 per day.



Rescuers worker at the scene of a giant landslide in Petropolis, Brazil. A desperate search was underway Friday for people buried by a deluge of mud that swept through the Brazilian city of Petropolis, leaving what President Jair Bolsonaro described as "scenes of war." A total of 136 bodies have been retrieved to date, according to civil defense officials.

PHOTO: AFP

'Moment of truth' for Iran nuke talks: Scholz

AFP, Munich

The chances of reviving the Iran nuclear accord are dwindling and the "moment of truth" has arrived for Tehran's leadership, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said yesterday.

"We now have the chance to reach an agreement that will allow sanctions to be lifted. But if we do not succeed very quickly, the negotiations risk failing," Scholz told the Munich Security Conference.

"The Iranian leadership has a choice. Now is the moment of truth."

The 2015 Iran nuclear agreement had offered Tehran sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on its nuclear programme, but the US unilaterally withdrew in 2018 under then-president Donald Trump and reimposed heavy economic sanctions.

This in turn prompted Iran to start ramping up its nuclear activities.

The outline of a new deal appears to be on the table in talks which have been held in Vienna since late November between signatories Britain,

China, France, Germany, Russia -- and the United States indirectly.

A US State Department spokesperson told AFP on Thursday that "substantial progress has been made in the last week".

"If Iran shows seriousness, we can and should reach an understanding on mutual return to full implementation of the JCPOA within days," the spokesperson said, using an acronym for the 2015 deal.

But "anything much beyond that would put the possibility of return to the deal at grave risk," he added.

Experts believe Iran is only a few weeks away from having enough fissile material to build a nuclear weapon -- even if it would take several more complicated steps to create an actual bomb.

President Joe Biden has said he is willing to return to the deal and ease some of the US sanctions, provided Tehran resumes its commitments under the agreement.

The Iranian foreign minister was due to address the Munich Security Conference later yesterday.



Storm Eunice kills 13 in Europe

AFP, London

Emergency crews yesterday battled to restore power to hundreds of thousands of homes in Britain after Storm Eunice carved a deadly trail across Western Europe and left transport networks in disarray.

At least 13 people were killed by falling trees, flying debris and high winds in Britain, Ireland, the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Poland, according to emergency services.

Train operators in Britain urged people not to travel, with timetables in chaos after most of the network was shut down when Eunice on Friday brought the largest wind gust ever recorded in England -- 122 miles (196 kilometres) per hour.

The train network in the Netherlands was also paralysed, with no Eurostar and Thalys international services running from Britain and France after damage to overhead power lines.

France was also grappling with rail disruption, and about 75,000 households were without power.

The UK was worst hit by power cuts with nearly 400,000 homes cut off nationwide.

The Met Office, Britain's meteorological service, issued a less severe "yellow" wind warning for much of the south coast of England and South Wales on Saturday, which it said "could hamper recovery efforts from Storm Eunice".

Hundreds of flights were cancelled or delayed at London's Heathrow and Gatwick airports and Schiphol in Amsterdam.

Praised until

FROM PAGE 1
of the Anti-Corruption Commission, was described in his Annual Confidential Report for four straight years until 2019.

Negative comments appeared in the ACR for 2020. It is the year Sharif completed investigating land acquisition scams in Cox's Bazar and recommended the ACC file corruption cases against a power syndicate in the district.

The ACR is a performance evaluation report of a public servant by their immediate superior.

Sharif was terminated on Wednesday following complaints filed by three individuals in September last year. Interestingly, he had found all three involved in that syndicate.

The termination triggered an uproar among his colleagues, who called him an honest and sincere officer. Sharif worked at the ACC office in Chattogram for three years before being transferred to Patuakhali in June last year. Mahbubul Alam, the then deputy director of ACC's Chattogram Integrated Office-02, was his supervisor from 2017 to mid-2021.

Sharif claimed Mahbubul violated the public administration ministry's "Confidential Report Instruction-2020" as he did not issue any show-cause notice on him before giving poor scores and writing negative comments on the ACR.

The ACR for 2020 says Sharif "shows reluctance in executing lawful orders of seniors, behaves harshly with those associated with enquiry and investigation, and has tendency towards [committing] unlawful misconduct."

"Mahbubul never said anything to me verbally or in writing about my misconduct," Sharif said.

According to the instruction, negative comments can be

written on an ACR when any official commits misconduct, including not following superiors' orders, neglecting duties, taking drugs and facing allegations of taking bribes.

"The Reported Upon Officer must be issued a written show-cause notice to inform him of his misconduct the moment his supervisors will come across it [misconduct] to correct it before making any adverse evaluations in ACR. A copy of the show-cause notice must be kept in the employee's personal file."

The ACC wrote to Mahbubul on December 21, asking to know whether Sharif was issued any show-cause notice. The letter was signed by Mohammad Moniruzzaman Bokaul, ACC director (administration and human resources).

The Daily Star tried to reach Mahbubul several times over phone yesterday for comments on the matter. He was also sent text messages. But he did not respond.

Bokaul also could not be contacted, despite repeated attempts.

As his attention was drawn to the matter, Iftekharuzzaman, executive director of Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB), said, "The abrupt U-turn in the performance assessment, including reported anomalies, raises the question whether it is a part of a design to victimise Sharif Uddin because he was leading the process to hold the powerful corruption syndicate to account."

"A question also arises whether there are vested quarters at the higher management of the ACC who are amongst protectors of the politically and administratively linked sections of the corruption syndicate whose impunity Sharif proceeded to challenge with professionalism, courage, and commitment."

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As of this moment, I'm convinced he's (Putin) made the decision. We have reason to believe that. ... We believe they will target Ukraine's capital Kyiv, a city of 2.8 million innocent people.

US President
Joe Biden



(China, Russia are trying to) replace the existing international rules -- they prefer the rule of the strongest to the rule of law, intimidation instead of self-determination.

EU chief
Ursula von der Leyen



If the Kremlin's aim is to have less Nato on its borders, it will get more Nato.

Nto chief
Jens Stoltenberg



A man says goodbye to his daughter through a bus window during the evacuation of local residents to Russia, in the rebel-controlled city of Donetsk, Ukraine, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Trump can be prosecuted for US Capitol riot: judge

AFP, Washington

Donald Trump can be prosecuted for his role in the attack on the US Capitol by his supporters, a judge decided Friday, ruling that the Republican does not enjoy presidential immunity in this case.

The former president is the target of several lawsuits by elected officials and police who accuse him of being directly responsible for the violence perpetrated by his supporters when they stormed the Capitol on January 6, 2021.

A judge in Washington, DC, ruled that these complaints were admissible on the grounds that Trump's actions that day were "unofficial acts" that "entirely concern his efforts to remain in office for a second term," which the judge said does not fall within the scope of presidential immunity.

"To deny a President immunity from civil damages is no small step," judge Amit Mehta wrote in findings that ran to 112 pages. "The court well understands the gravity of its decision."

The judge also said Trump's speech to thousands of supporters gathered in Washington before the assault could "reasonably" be perceived as a "call for collective action."

Trump is facing three lawsuits over the riot.

West voices fears of Russia-China axis

Experts say Beijing's support may blunt West's sanctions effects on Moscow

AGENCIES

Western leaders yesterday said Russia and China were seeking to "replace the existing international rules" with their own order, as Beijing backed Moscow over its showdown with Nato.

Russia has all but encircled Ukraine with its huge troop buildup and US President Joe Biden has warned that Vladimir Putin plans an invasion within days. Moscow is using the threat to invade Ukraine to demand a halt to Nato expansion and what it calls "Cold War" ideologies.

At a closely choreographed appearance in Beijing for the Winter Olympics, Putin and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping had put up a united front against Nato expansion.

"For the first time we now see Beijing joining Moscow in calling on Nato to stop admitting new members," noted the alliance's chief Jens

Stoltenberg, speaking at the Munich Security Conference.

"It is an attempt to control the fate of free nations, to rewrite the international rulebook and impose their own authoritarian models of governance," he warned.

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen had stronger words, accusing Moscow of a "blatant attempt" to rewrite the global order.

Cooperation between China and Russia has increased in recent years. The escalating tensions with the West have further bolstered ties between the world's most populous nation and the world's largest.

Experts say China would back Russia diplomatically and perhaps economically if it invades Ukraine, worsening Beijing's already strained relations with the West, but would stop short of providing military support.

A Russian invasion into Ukraine would test China's resolve, especially given that China's oft-

stated foreign policy principle of non-interference.

Although China and Russia have moved beyond "marriage of convenience" to a quasi-alliance, relations between the giant neighbours are far from a formal alliance requiring one to send troops should the other face threats, said Shi Yinhong, an international relations professor at Renmin

University. But experts believe China could expand economic cooperation with Russia that would blunt the impact of sanctions promised by the West if there is an invasion.

However, China would prefer that Russia not invade Ukraine.

"With the international world so polarised, it's possible the United States and the West



would be unified in isolating or sanctioning China together with Russia," said Shi.

Earlier this month, US State Department spokesman Ned Price said Chinese companies would face consequences if they sought to evade

any export controls imposed on Moscow in the event of a Russian invasion of Ukraine.

A person familiar with U.S. thinking told reporters the technology-related sanctions and export controls that Washington is planning with allies is beyond China's ability to backfill.

"We are prepared to take actions against any foreign country or entity that would circumvent those," said the person.

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Mutations in SARS-CoV-2 may result in escape variants resistant to therapeutics and vaccines

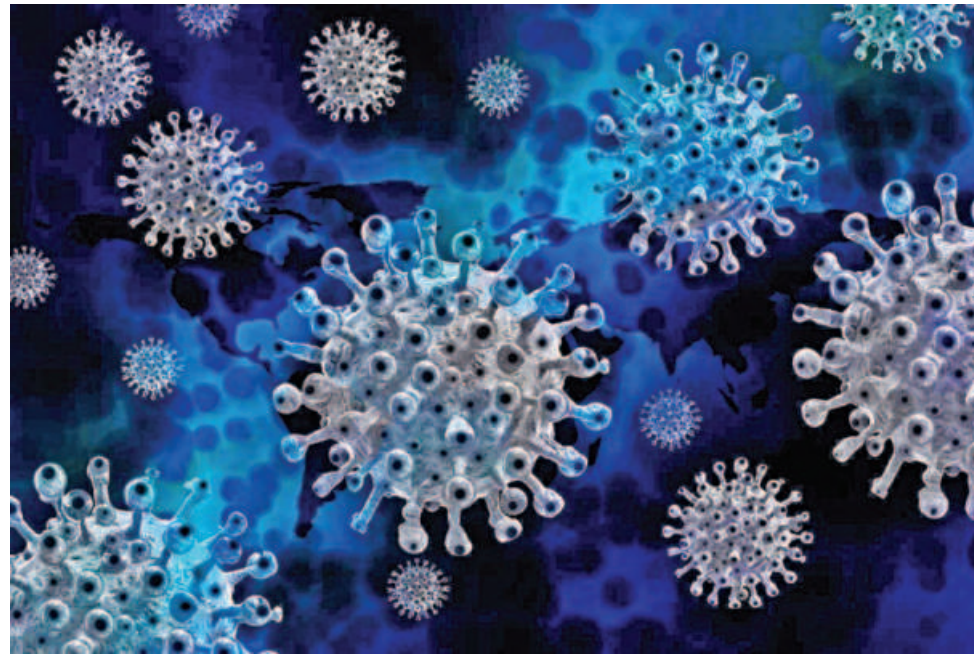
All viruses mutate as they evolve, and most mutations have either negative or neutral effects on viral fitness. However, some mutations give viruses a selective advantage, making them more infectious, transmittable, and resistant to antibody responses and therapeutics.

STAR HEALTH DESK

The SARS-CoV-2 virus is continuously evolving, and structural changes to the virus may impact the efficacy of antibody therapies and vaccines. A study published in PLOS Pathogens by Anshumali Mittal at the University of Pittsburgh, USA, and colleagues describe the structural and functional landscape of neutralising antibodies against SARS-CoV-2 spike protein and discusses its effects of mutations on the virus spike protein that may allow it to evade antibody responses.

All viruses mutate as they evolve, and most mutations have either negative or neutral effects on viral fitness. However, some mutations give viruses a selective advantage, making them more infectious, transmittable, and resistant to antibody responses and therapeutics. To better understand the relationship between immune responses to the SARS-CoV-2 virus and how mutations may allow the virus to escape neutralisation, researchers conducted a review of the literature, comprising approximately 139 studies. They synthesised research on emerging SARS-CoV-2 variants, described the structural basis of how antibodies may neutralise SARS-CoV-2, and mapped out the spike protein mutations or "escape variants" that resist antibody binding and neutralisation.

According to the authors, "The potency of therapeutic antibodies and vaccines partly depends on how readily the virus can escape neutralisation. The SARS-CoV-2 virus will continue to evolve resulting in the emergence of escape variants; therefore, worldwide genomic surveillance, better



mutations for several antibodies that resist vaccine-elicited and therapeutically relevant binding antibodies. However, future studies are needed to better understand how these mutations may affect illness severity and mortality.

According to the authors, "The potency of therapeutic antibodies and vaccines partly depends on how readily the virus can escape neutralisation. The SARS-CoV-2 virus will continue to evolve resulting in the emergence of escape variants; therefore, worldwide genomic surveillance, better

vaccination drive, development of broadly neutralising antibodies, and new drugs are vital to combat COVID-19."

Mittal adds, "Structure-based escape maps combined with computational modelling are valuable tools to understand how mutations at each residue affect the binding of an antibody, and can be utilised to facilitate the rational design of escape-resistant antibody therapeutics, vaccines and other countermeasures."

Source: PLOS Pathogens

Global progress across sanitation service levels assessed against MDG

A new study in PLOS Water uses a novel metric to compare sanitation improvements across countries between 1990 and 2015, revealing insights that could help progress.

The United Nations (UN) pledged in 2004 to reduce the number of people without basic sanitation by half by 2015. While progress was made, it fell short of the Millennium Development Goal (MDG). Although the simple pass-fail metric used to track progress may miss meaningful gains like a household switching from open defecation to a shared latrine. Or it could curtail progress by rewarding minor changes. It was instead developed but not used for the MDG period.

The new Sanitation Ladder Score has now been applied to 190 countries, covering 99.8% of the global population. For most countries, the ladder score improved on the previous pass-fail metric. Forty-one countries improved their ladder score, while five countries deteriorated (Libya, Seychelles, Granada, Aruba, and French Polynesia).

The researchers studied data from Ghana, Ethiopia, Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal, and Poland. They believe the 1990-2015 ladder score could help countries achieve the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Determining how to address sanitation deficits in urban and rural areas requires looking backwards at MDG progress.



Worldwide disparities in treatment rates for major depressive disorder

A meta-analysis of 149 previous studies found that treatment rates for major depressive disorder are low globally, especially in low- and lower-middle-income countries. Between 2000 and 2021, 149 studies on major depressive disorder therapy were reviewed in 84 countries. The meta-analysis shows that treatment rates are low globally and that treatment varies between countries with varying resources.

Severe depressive disorders are expected to be treated at a rate of 33% in high-income countries, but only 8% in low- and middle-income countries. Treatment rates for severe depressive disorder are lower, estimated at 23% in high-income countries and 3% in poor and lower-middle-income countries. Major depressive disorder is undertreated globally, with many people not receiving treatment that meets practice guideline standards.

The Lancet-World Psychiatric Association Commission stresses reducing negative childhood (including neglect and trauma) and life experiences (including depression) to prevent depression. An individual intervention focusing on risk factors like intimate partner violence and life events like bereavement or financial crisis is also required (e.g., smoking, alcohol consumption, inactivity). They support psychological therapies and antidepressants and more intensive and specialised treatments like electroconvulsive therapy (ECT) for severe, refractory forms of the illness.

We must reconsider the availability of appropriate care and treatment facilitators.

Daily vit D supplementation prevents some new autoimmune diseases

Vitamin D limits inflammation in vitro and in animal models of autoimmune diseases, but it has not shown benefit in humans' observational studies or clinical trials.

Omega-3 (ω -3) fatty acid supplementation limits symptoms in some autoimmune diseases in humans. But neither of these supplements has been studied for preventing autoimmune disease in randomised trials. In the placebo-controlled VITAL study, 25,000 adults were randomised to take vitamin D (cholecalciferol; 2000 IU daily), ω -3 fatty acids (1 g daily), both, or neither for 5 years.

Investigators assessed the effects of these interventions on new-onset autoimmune disease. The difference between groups was barely statistically significant. The newly diagnosed autoimmune disease was less common in patients taking omega-3 fatty acids than in the placebo but not statistically significant. Those who took both supplements had a lower incidence of autoimmune disease.

What is causing your loss of SMELL AND TASTE?

STAR HEALTH DESK

We take our sense of smell for granted. But have you ever imagined losing your sense of smell? Food tastes different without your sense of smell, you cannot smell a flower, and you could be in a dangerous situation without realising it! Find out the following causes of smell loss:

The smell-taste connection: Taste usually follows the smell. Because your nose's olfactory area controls both. Your nose determines whether that sweet taste is from a grape or an apple. Food does not taste the same when you cannot smell it.

Age: As you age, you lose some of the olfactory nerve fibres in your nose. This often affects your ability to notice salty or sweet tastes first.

Illness or infection: Anything that irritates and inflames the inner lining of your nose, such as cold, allergies, COVID-19, and makes it feel stuffy, runny, itchy, or drippy can affect your senses of smell and taste.

Obstructions: If you cannot get enough air through your nose, your

sense of smell suffers, and smell affects taste.

Head injury: Your olfactory nerve carries scent information from your nose to your brain. Trauma to the head, neck, or brain can damage that nerve, as well as the lining of your

As you age, you lose some of the olfactory nerve fibres in your nose. This often affects your ability to notice salty or sweet tastes first.



nose, nasal passages, or the parts of your brain that process smell.

Certain medical conditions: Doctors do not understand why, but the loss of smell can be an early warning sign of dementia, Alzheimer's, and Parkinson's disease.

Cancer and treatment: Certain kinds of cancer and treatment can change the messages between your nose, mouth, and brain, such as tumours in head or neck and radiation to those areas.

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- ✓ Lymphatic condition
- ✓ Congenital Vascular Malformations
- ✓ Diabetic Foot and Gangrene

'My family was overjoyed'

Siam on winning the National Award



PHOTO: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

Siam Ahmed recently won the National Film Award for Best Actor in a Lead Role (Male) for his performance in Chayanika Chowdhury's 'Bishwoshundori'. The actor's web film, 'Taan' also brought him immense praise. We caught up with Siam to know about his excitement after winning the National Film Award.

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI
SAMADDAR

How are you feeling after winning the National Film Award?

To be honest, I feel quite speechless. My family was overjoyed when the awards were announced. My wife was really proud. I have been getting calls from my friends from the industry. As this is my first National Award, it has inspired me to pay attention to even the minor details when selecting a role.

Share some of your experiences from the sets of 'Bishwoshundori'.

The name "Bishwoshundori", at first glance, suggests that the film is all about glamour and fame. However, it highlights the beautiful relationship between a mother and son. For any child, their mother is the prettiest person in the world, and that is the



PHOTO: COLLECTED

idea we worked on.

Champa Apa, who played my mother, was like a parental figure to me on the sets. Both of us were very emotional after we shot the climax, as we truly felt like our characters. She inspired me to keep working hard.

My wife Abonty was expecting a surgery while I was shooting in Nilgiri for the film. I did not want the team to suffer and kept working. However, I had to be on calls between shots with my family, seeking updates on Abonty's condition.

My family was by my side and my wife was determined to not let me compromise on my work for her. The National Award is for

them.

The release of your film, 'Shaan', was halted due to the outbreak of Omicron. When can we expect the film in theatres?

We are planning to release the film during Eid. We want to reach the maximum number of audiences, and Eid is a good time for that kind of response.

You web film, 'Taan' earned wide appreciation. Are you looking forward to more such projects in the future?

I was waiting for the audiences' feedback and now that they have accepted and appreciated my work on an OTT platform, I will surely consider offers.

I am already in talks for a few productions, and each new role brings about a thrill in me. I still approach each project with the excitement of a newcomer, and hope that adds more accountability to my work.

What are you currently busy with?

I am taking a short break. However, we will resume shooting for "Antarjal". I will also be filming a song for "Operation Sundarban", which we hope to release on Eid-ul-Adha.

Deepika working on father Prakash Padukone's biopic

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK



Deepika Padukone recently confirmed that she is working on her father, ace badminton player Prakash Padukone's biopic.

The actress further shared that her father represented India globally even before the country's victory in the 1983 Cricket World Cup. She shared that if her father had better facilities available, he would have been much superior in the badminton world.

Prakash Padukone was one of the first Indian athletes to put India on the global map.

After "Gehraiyaan", Deepika hopes to start shooting for "The Intern" remake with Amitabh Bachchan by this year, or early 2023.

TOFFEE STAR SEARCH winners announced

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Talent hunt show "Toffee Star Search" announced winners of their first season at a grand finale. Taimur Rahman, Acting CEO, Banglalink, along with other top officials of Banglalink, were present.

Mohima Dev Thrayee, a participant from the music category, was announced as the champion of the first season. She was awarded a crest and BDT 25 lakh as prize money.

Eshan Dey and Sadman Khan, two other participants from the music category, were announced as the first and second runners-up, respectively. They received crests and BDT 15 lakh and BDT 10 lakh.

Tariq Anam Khan, Purnima, and Chanchal Chowdhury announced the names of the winners.

The jury included Zinat Sanu Swagata, Khayam Sanu

Sandhi, Nirab, Shafayet Mansoor and Abu Hayat Mahmud. Prominent bands AvoidRafa and Joler Gaan performed with the participants.



PHOTO: COURTESY

COUNTRYWIDE

Forest robbers destroy 5,000 trees

Forest Department files GD; No action yet

SOHRAB HOSSAIN, Patuakhali

A gang has been mindlessly lifting earth from a reserve forest in Gangamati area adjacent to Kuakata sea beach in Kalapara upazila of Patuakhali.

In the process, the plunderers are destroying the trees including the newly-planted ones. So far, they have ravaged around 5,000 trees creating a deep pond-shaped ditch on an acre of the forest land.

The forest department has filed a general diary (GD) with Mahipur Police Station mentioning the names of three forest robbers.

Abul Kalam Azad, Mahipur range officer in Kalapara upazila of Patuakhali Coastal Forest Department, lodged the GD on February 3.

In the GD, the forest official mentioned that Shafizul Islam, 55, of Char Chapli area adjacent to Kuakata, Jamal Hossain, 48, of Sirajpur area and Md Rabbi, 45, of Alipur area were extracting and

selling soil from the reserved forest of Char Chapli area.

At the same time, they have destroyed around 5,000 trees from one acre of mangrove forest which was created on 50 hectares of land in 2020-21. They were also destroying 50 to 60-year-old trees with excavator machines.

The gang has caused extensive damage to the forest. In the complaint, it has also been mentioned that if the officials and employees of the forest department try to prevent the gang, they will be intimidated and threatened with death.

Mahipur Police Station Sub-Inspector (SI) Mahub Alam Khan sent a prayer to the Kalapara Senior Judicial Magistrate's Court on February 4 seeking permission to investigate and take action regarding the GD. Mahipur Police Station Officer-In-Charge (OC) Khandaker Mohammad Abul Khair said necessary steps will be taken subject to investigation upon receiving the court order.

Contacted, Assistant Forest Conservator of Patuakali Forest Department Md Tariqul Islam said this gang has been involved in the looting of reserve forest trees and soil for a long time. Of the gang, two separate cases have already been filed against Shafizul for looting trees which are under trial in the court.

Lincoln Bayen, Barishal Divisional Coordinator of the Environmental Lawyers Association (BELA), said deforestation and selling soil of the forest land was in no way legal under the Forest and Environment Act. It is against the law to dig a pond inside the forest by destroying the trees.

He also demanded that legal action be taken against those involved in the crime.

Although attempts were taken to contact the main accused Shafizul over the phone, he did not receive the call. The other two alleged robbers - Jamal Hossain and Rabbi - declined to comment over the matter.



A gang of robbers has been illegally extracting soil from a reserve forest in Kalapara's Kuakata area of Patuakhali. In this photo, a crater dug inside the forest by the robbers is seen.

PHOTO: STAR

An outcome of greed and negligence

FROM PAGE 2

As police could not arrest the fugitives for long, the IO applied to the National Identity Registration Wing, Department of Immigration and Passport, Special Branch of Police, and Bangladesh Bank on different dates to track

down the owners of Pearl Trade International.

In November 2020, the IO found that the company had been operating the import business under "Pearl Venture" with a private bank account mentioning an address at 27 Imamganj's Hazi

Mohammad Ali Centre, of which Imtiaz, Jawad, Mozammel, Kashif and Nabil are business partners.

During probe, however, police did not find any such company or shop there.

Investigators also found that the company owners' addresses given by two

banks were not real.

Last year, they arrested manager Mozaffar in July. On his information, they then arrested Mozammel and Nabil in August. Imtiaz was arrested in September, while Kashif and Jawad surrendered on October and December.

Images

FROM PAGE 16

I draw a rifle with bayonet and barrel of Bren gun to indicate a soldier and an open book lying on the ground and a pair of bare feet to indicate the students. This linocut was first exhibited in the exhibition of paintings and photographs held at Burdwan House in 1954 on the occasion of the Second Literary Conference.

Murtaza Bashir actively participated in the Language Movement. His "Roktako Ekushe" is considered the first painting on the Language Movement.

Source: *Amar jibon o omano* by Murtaza Bashir (2014, Bengal Publications)

Translated by Shamsuddoza Sajen

'Vision-2030'

FROM PAGE 16

of migration in Bangladesh, said, "Bangladeshi workers are known to be hardworking in the Gulf country."

He, however, said due to illegal visa trading, many workers in the past found themselves jobless in Saudi Arabia, even though they migrated through the regular channel.

Saiful urged the Bangladesh and Saudi governments to address the issue effectively.

The Bangladesh government needs to increase its manpower at the Bangladesh mission in Saudi Arabia to ensure the wellbeing of migrant workers, especially the female, there, he added.

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The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

ACC must not lose public confidence

Its recent conduct to a sacked official raises a lot of questions

WE are surprised at the way the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) has acted in the case of its deputy assistant director Sharif Uddin. Instead of following up on the allegations of graft and recommendations made by him over the last three years, the ACC has opted to sack him on the basis of some complaints reportedly made by the same people against whom he had filed reports—in this case, land acquisition syndicates. Sharif Uddin investigated graft allegations against various individuals in Chattogram and Cox's Bazar in the past three years—including the rich and powerful involving a ruling party mayor and the son of a former minister—and recommended that the commission file 22 graft cases against the parties he had investigated.

However, instead of filing any cases, the commission ordered reinvestigations into those allegations. What prompted the graft watchdog body to re-launch these reinvestigations is not clear to anyone familiar with these reports, and certainly not to the public and the media. The ACC needs to explain its conduct here.

In 2019, Sharif Uddin submitted three separate charge sheets to the ACC against 155 people in Cox's Bazar over land acquisition scams. The graft watchdog, however, did not approve the charge sheets. The question is, why? Did his reports have factual or legal lacunae? Or did the powerful quarters, against whom the allegations of corruption were brought, have any role to play here? Here again, the ACC owes the public an explanation.

Regarding the official who has been sacked by the commission, we think due procedure for termination was not followed. He was neither given any show cause notice nor asked to give any explanation about the allegations made against him. It is not often that government employees take to the street in support of a sacked colleague. In our view, it is a testimony to his reputation, integrity and honesty.

We think the ACC now faces a huge credibility gap in people's minds and it needs to come clean about the issues we have raised above. It must provide proper explanations for the actions it has taken regarding the graft issues as well as the sacking of its official. The ACC must do this to prove its integrity and strengthen its position as an anti-corruption body that the public can trust.

Why are e-gates at Dhaka airport not operational yet?

A typical example of lack of coordination among public agencies

HERE is another classic example of the blame game so often seen among different agencies in the public sector. This time, its place of occurrence is Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) in Dhaka, where the Department of Immigration and Passports (DIP) and the Special Branch (SB) of police are blaming each other for their inability to make the e-gates there operational although seven months have elapsed since their inauguration. The e-gates were installed to make the immigration process easier and enhance the international ratings of Bangladeshi passports.

It is quite disconcerting to learn that while this expensive digital machinery sits idle at the main international airport of the country, the DIP is blaming the SB for the stalemate whereas the latter alleges that it did not get the required server link from the former to make the e-gates functional. And as the tussle between the two offices drags on, the immigration work of the inbound and outbound passengers is being carried out manually.

The features of e-gates look attractive on paper. It has been said that once the e-gates are in operation, the camera attached to the gate will identify the passenger automatically after scanning and analysing information from the e-passport chips. The e-passports add a layer of security to traditional non-electronic passports by embedding an electronic chip in the passport booklet, which stores the biographical information visible on page 2 of the passport, as well as a digital security feature.

As novel as all this sounds, the reality is that the machinery could not be made functional merely for the lack of a link between the e-passport server and the e-gates. This speaks volumes about the lack of coordination so typical among the collaborating agencies of the government, and the lack of preparation on the part of the offices involved before the inauguration of this important machinery.

The entire story smacks of departmental lack of coordination and wastage of public funds. The two departments in question belong to the same ministry and the same minister had inaugurated the project. Therefore, any delay caused by lack of coordination is totally unacceptable. The pertinent question is: why do we inaugurate projects that are not ready to operate? This no doubt reduces public confidence in the way things are run in these institutions. We hope the home minister will resolve this impasse immediately.

Surviving re-entry to Malaysian labour market is key

Will factors that caused the market to shut in 2018 resurface?



C R Abrar is an academic. He heads the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU).

C R ABRAR

IT has been two months since a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Bangladesh and Malaysia on the employment of Bangladeshi workers was signed, marking the end of a suspension on their entry to the Malaysian labour market which had been in force since 2018. The agreement came as a welcome relief as it created an opportunity for the employment of hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshi workers for the next five years. However, with little sign of progress in the movement of labour, the initial upbeat cadence has been replaced by anxiety and scepticism. It appears that despite the government's declared commitment to fair recruitment practices, the forces that were responsible for undermining earlier efforts in gaining access to this important labour market are again flexing their muscles to further their vested interest. This, in turn, has led to uncertainty, threatening the entire arrangement.

At a time when stakeholders were looking forward to the re-opening of the Malaysian labour market, apprehension about the revival of a cartel of recruiting agencies began to gain ground. Various groups of recruiting agencies—all members of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies (BAIRA)—expressed their concern about the incipient cartel that is reportedly being masterminded by a Malaysian entrepreneur of Bangladeshi origin, actively aided by a few recruiting agencies of Bangladesh. In response, senior functionaries of the concerned ministry of Bangladesh declared on a number of occasions that the government is committed to providing equal opportunity for all registered agencies to facilitate the migration of workers to Malaysia. Needless to say, the debacle of the G2G-plus arrangement which led to the cessation of workers' movement to Malaysia, after the fall of the Najib Razak government, was perhaps fresh in their mind.

The G2G-plus system was introduced at the behest of 10 recruiting agencies of Bangladesh. The restricted arrangement that was worked out at the time contributed to a spike in migration cost. Despite the government stipulated maximum threshold of Tk 37,500, workers had to pay an amount between Tk 300,000 and Tk 400,000. In the process, Tk 5,500 crore was allegedly pocketed by the syndicate (*Daily Observer*, 13.02.22). After the fall of the Najib regime in Kuala Lumpur, the new government imposed a suspension on further labour migration from Bangladesh on grounds of gross irregularities in the recruitment process. It also charged senior government officials for engaging in corrupt practices in this regard. Bangladeshi recruiting agencies have alleged that the same vested quarter, being unable to make any headway at the Bangladesh end, has now managed to establish their hold at the Malaysian end and is exerting pressure on Bangladesh.

The anxiety of the general recruitment agencies is not unfounded. Over the last several months, media outlets in Kuala Lumpur carried a number of reports about the group's activities to unfairly control labour migration from Bangladesh (*Malaysiakini*, 10.01.22). Reports in some online news portals and social media have underscored the group's access to the corridors of power in Putrajaya. The matter attracted further attention when the Malaysian human resources minister, in a letter on January 14, urged Bangladesh's minister for expatriates' welfare and overseas employment to initiate the process of sending workers to Malaysia by involving "25 main Bangladesh Recruiting

Agencies (BRAs) with 10 associate BRAs respectively under each main BRA..." In his reply on January 18, the Bangladeshi minister informed his Malaysian counterpart that as per ILO charters and Bangladesh's own Competition Act, 2012 endorsing "transparent, fair and safe migration", his government was obliged "to keep the opportunities open

including Bangladesh" (*The Business Standard*, 10.01.22).

The recruitment agencies' stand against the syndication move has garnered the support of not only their Malaysian counterparts but also of others outside the sector. For example, the Standing Committee on Manpower and Skill Development of the Federation of



A fair recruitment process will not only lead to reduced migration costs, but also to a reduction in the number of migrants with irregular status—a phenomenon intrinsically associated with high migration costs.

ILLUSTRATION: BIPOB CHAKROBORTY

to all valid, licensed BRAs."

The latest move for "syndication" of workers' recruitment for the Malaysian market has generated deep concern among the stakeholders, particularly the recruiting agencies. The BRAs have organised a series of meetings, rallies, human chains, and press conferences, and submitted memorandums including one to the prime minister. At a meeting held on January 24 under the banner of General Recruiting Agencies, jointly organised by at least seven groups of recruiting agencies, they termed the Malaysian minister's call for restricted opportunity for BRAs as not only unfair and biased, but also an "interference in Bangladesh's own affairs". The BRAs raised the question that if no restriction is imposed on the Malaysian companies to participate in the recruitment process, why is the country insisting this for Bangladeshi agencies?

They noted that making a distinction between "main BRA" and "associate BRA" is "immoral and degrading", and that all BRAs have equal qualifications and acquired their license by meeting the same criteria set by the government, including payment of deposit. The BRAs also reminded the authorities of the 2018 High Court order for not allowing any syndicate to operate in the recruitment of workers (*Prothom Alo*, 24.01.22).

News reports also say the BRAs are concerned that instead of remaining firmly committed to staving off any move towards syndication, the ministry responsible for overseas employment is considering allowing Malaysia to choose the said 25 agencies (*Prothom Alo*, 24.01.22). The Recruitment Agency Oikkyo Parishad has expressed its opposition to allowing Malaysia any say about who should be granted the authority to recruit workers from Bangladesh. It argued that such concessions would only facilitate the syndication process.

The rejection of the syndication effort by the BRAs has struck a sympathetic chord in the host country's recruitment sector as well. The secretary of the National Association of Private Employment Agencies of Malaysia has stated, "We do not want any syndication or monopoly of special privileges in the recruitment of foreign workers," adding that "we want [a] similar system to hire workers from all fourteen countries

Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry expressed its concern in this regard, posing the question that if all the recruiting agencies of countries such as Nepal, India and Pakistan can send workers to Malaysia, why should the system be any different for Bangladeshi agencies? In a joint press statement, the Bangladeshi and Malaysian chapters of Transparency International also expressed their concern about the "evil designs of the powerful syndicates". The organisations demanded transparency and accountability at every stage of the migration process, and concrete action to curtail corruption and ensure access to public information.

The developments centring the re-opening of the Malaysian market for Bangladeshi workers have brought into the open the depth of malpractices that are associated with the short-term temporary labour recruitment process. These also revealed the long arm of the unscrupulous and powerful recruiting agencies, as well as the nature of cross-national collaboration of the crooked. The episode has exposed the impudence of some agencies that not only dared to challenge the policy and authority of the state, but also to collude extraterritorially to subvert those. The time has come for the government to act decisively and take punitive action against these elements. The actions of such agencies should be deemed as nothing less than an economic sabotage against the state.

The experience has prompted the BRAs to act collectively against their errant peers. This has also created an opportunity for the BAIRA to harness the support of—and establish accountability of—its members. Putting in place a system of self-regulation will go a long way in enhancing the image of the association in the public eye.

It is, however, unfortunate that the Putrajaya authorities are insisting on having a system that they themselves had identified in the past as the prime reason plaguing labour recruitment from Bangladesh. One hopes that they will review their current stance and soon set up a level playing field for all actors engaged in the recruitment process in both countries. Needless to say, along with bringing benefits to the migrant workers in the form of reduced migration costs, this will also lead to a reduction in the number of migrants with irregular status in the destination country—a phenomenon intrinsically associated with the high migration cost.

The developments centring the re-opening of the Malaysian market for Bangladeshi workers have brought into the open the depth of malpractices that are associated with the short-term temporary labour recruitment process.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send us your letters to letters@thedailystar.net

Implement law banning polythene

Widespread and irresponsible usage of polythene is poisoning our rivers, canals and oceans. Surprisingly, Bangladesh was the first country in the world to ban the production, marketing and use of polythene by enacting a law on March 1, 2002.

It has been 20 years since but the usage of polythene has not decreased at all. As a result, the environment and the health of humans and animals are all being affected.

I think this dangerous and heavy usage of polythene should be dealt with immediately. Effective measures have to be taken by implementing the law banning polythene products. The use of eco-friendly jute products should be increased and people should be encouraged to use this healthy alternative.

Jakariya Al Hosain, Nilphamari Government College



Are we ready for Agriculture 4.0?



AN OPEN DIALOGUE

ABDULLAH SHIBLI

Dr Abdullah Shibli is an economist and serves as senior research fellow at the US-based International Sustainable Development Institute (ISDI).

THE fourth agricultural revolution (4AR), or Agriculture 4.0, refers to the anticipated changes from new technologies, particularly the use of artificial intelligence (AI) to make smarter planning decisions and for better integration of robotics. Intelligent machines could be used for growing and harvesting crops, weeding, milking livestock and distributing agrochemicals via drones. Other farming-specific technologies include new types of gene-editing tools to develop higher yielding, disease-resistant crops, vertical farming, and synthetic lab-grown meat.

A quick tour through Bangladesh's rural areas in December 2021 convinced me that productivity gains and income growth can happen faster if digital technologies are harnessed to improve crop yields, minimise losses, and enhance post-production operations. All major branches of the agricultural sector—including agronomy, horticulture, forestry, livestock, fisheries, and commercial farming—will be impacted.

Bangladesh is gearing up for the fourth industrial revolution (4IR) and there is an atmosphere of urgency, which is understandable. The country has set an ambitious goal to graduate from LDC status in 2026, become an upper-middle-income country by 2031, and achieve high-income country status by 2041.

In this context, Bangladesh is likely to see the impact of 4IR on agriculture as much as any other sector of the economy. Our traditional agriculture, particularly crop production where smallholders are in the majority, is ripe for a technological change.

Close to 50 percent of Bangladesh's population is primarily employed in agriculture, with more than 70 percent of its land dedicated to growing crops. Therefore, the potential for using technological tools in agriculture is enormous. One could even say that 4AR

has already made some inroads in all major crops cultivated including rice, jute, wheat, tea, pulses, oil seeds, vegetables and fruits. Nonetheless, our agriculture "has remained largely subsistence based, with uncertain crop yields and inefficient infrastructure limiting the ability of farmers to fully commercialise their production," according to a recent FAO report. It is expected that 4AR will free cultivators from the back-breaking labour they endure to grow and harvest crops and, in addition, raise the productivity of land and labour.

In Bangladesh, AI and big data are already being applied in aquaculture and dairy farming. "For the small farmer-dominated Bangladesh agriculture, advances in computing power, connectivity, artificial intelligence, biotechnology and GIS (geographic information system), and other more capable technologies hold a tremendous promise," according to Dr M. K. Mujeri, an economist and former DG of Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS).

Let us take the case of rice production. There are several decisions that a cultivator, whether a small subsistence farmer or a plantation owner, has to take. These can be broken down into eight steps: selection of crop(s), land preparation, seed sowing and transplantation, irrigation and fertilisation, crop maintenance (including use of pesticides, crop pruning, etc.), harvesting, post-harvesting activities (drying, husking, milling, etc.) and marketing. Even in subsistence agriculture, these are complex processes and the scope for improvement is ever-present. For the Boro crop, for example, AI has been successfully used for irrigation and weed control with the help of sensors and other means embedded in robots and drones. "These technologies save the excess use of water, pesticides, herbicides, maintain the fertility of the soil, [and] also help in the efficient use of manpower," according to a scientific study carried out by Tanha Talaviya and others.

In a recent column in *The Wall Street Journal*, former World Bank president Robert Zoellick highlighted some benefits of digital technologies. "Modern farmers analyse field, crop, livestock, and aquaculture data. Agricultural marketing depends on current information on prices, export and import sales, insurance



▲ **Our traditional agriculture, particularly crop production where smallholders are in the majority, is ripe for a technological change.**

FILE PHOTO: STAR

Bangladesh's challenge is to transform our education programmes and skills development infrastructure to deliver the talents needed for the forthcoming 4AR.

and transport data. Digital agronomy can boost environmental sustainability as well, because farmers use 70 percent of the world's freshwater supplies and a third of production is lost or wasted."

One could say with certainty that new technologies will emerge more rapidly now that we have learned so much from adapting to a major catastrophic event such as the Covid-19 pandemic. Bangladesh's challenge is to transform our education programmes and skills development infrastructure to deliver the talents needed for an innovative, digitised, and post-agricultural economy in the forthcoming 4AR.

The growers must be primed, and a support system—including government extension services—must be in place, to adopt technology and innovations that will make the industry, agriculture, and service sectors more productive and in sync with the global supply chain. The investment and infrastructure that supports the total transformation that will accompany this revolution need to be there both as a precondition and as a catalyst for 4AR.

Research policies in the public and private sectors need to guide our trajectory, and Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics can step in by providing internal and external coordination with statistics producers and users. Additionally, in order to tackle climate change and the rise of water levels and salinity of the soil

in many regions across Bangladesh, new farming techniques need to be adopted by farmers, who need proper knowledge and guidance. With the help of government research and funding, these new methods can enable higher crop yields using up much less space.

There are, however, a few potential negative consequences of an unplanned implementation of 4AR in rural areas, such as increased unemployment, accelerated landlessness, and growing indebtedness. Policymakers need to be conscious that the transformation in the rural economy must work for everyone, be it farmers, landowners, farm workers, and the rural non-farm sectors.

A possible side effect and stimulant for 4AR is the creation of non-farm employment in rural areas. We can see the benefit of such a strategy from the recent experience of India. After the pandemic took hold in India, there was massive reverse migration from urban areas in its wake, and many found employment in the rural sectors. The key would be structural transformation towards inclusive agriculture and rural development, along with supportive high-productivity micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), according to Dr Mujeri. Other sub-sectors where 4AR can make an impact are commercial farms, tea gardens, greenhouse-based agriculture, recirculation aquaculture systems (RAS), and hydroponics.




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Rohit [Sharma] is the number one player in the country. We spoke to him and he's absolutely OK (to lead the team in all formats). Under a player as experienced as Rohit, we can also groom future leaders of the team.



Chief selector Chetan Sharma praises India's new Test captain.

Focus shifts to ODIs

SPORTS REPORTER

After being involved in almost a month-long T20 action in the recently-concluded Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League, the focus of national cricketers will now turn to the fifty-over format of the game as Bangladesh are set to host Afghanistan for a bilateral three-match ODI series followed by a two-match T20 series.

As Bangladesh shift their focus to the format that is arguably their most preferred one, however, this time the Tigers will have some additional challenges to overcome when they step onto the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram for the first ODI on February 23.

Bangladesh will be returning to the format after over a seven-month gap, and that too with wholesale changes incorporated in their ranks. As many as seven players from the 16-member ODI series against Zimbabwe in July last year – the last ODI series for the Tigers – lost their places while four uncapped players have been included in the side this time around.

Given that the ODI series is a part of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Super League, it will present additional incentives for the Tigers led by skipper Tamim Iqbal, who will be returning to international cricket after a long time as well.

The national team coaching set-up has also gone through a massive overhaul. Head coach Russell Domingo has already arrived in Dhaka yesterday following his vacation but the South African will now have to work and gel with a totally different crew as batting coach Ashwell Prince and fast bowling coach Otis Gibson have left their roles recently.

However, the BCB has already appointed a new batting coach in Jamie Siddons and the whole coaching staff will head to Chattogram with the squad on Sunday, provided they return negative on their Covid-19 tests.

Four prospects to BANK ON

SPORTS REPORTER

The eighth edition of the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League emerged to be a great platform for the young uncapped local cricketers, who punched above their weights. It came as a breath of fresh air to witness some bright prospects in action, who must have caught the eyes of the selectors with their performances and potential to represent the national team in the future.

The Daily Star attempted to assess four uncapped players who dazzled the most in the 2022 BPL.

Mrittunjoy Chowdhury (Chattogram Challengers): The young left-arm seamer is right up there as one of the biggest finds in the BPL's eighth edition.

Having battled with a series of injuries, Mrittunjoy drew attention while playing his first game of the tournament against Sylhet Sunrisers, in which he registered the first and only hat-trick of the eighth edition. The 20-year-old kept on impressing onwards, be it with the new ball or even coming into the death overs. He eventually ended up among the top five wicket-takers list, scalping 15 wickets in eight games, with figures of 4 for 12 against Fortune Barishal remained the best of the lot.

Tanvir Islam (Comilla Victorians): Left-arm spinner Tanvir Islam has played a vital role behind Comilla becoming champions this season. The 25-year-old, who has been a prolific performer in the domestic circuit in recent times, picked up 16 wickets in 12 games to become the fourth-highest wicket-taker in the BPL, while boasting a 7.65 economy rate. More importantly, in pressure situations, Tanvir had displayed great maturity, a feature of his game seen in the BPL this season, while his ability to keep the batters quiet in the powerplay is surely one of his major strengths.

Mehedi Hasan Rana (Fortune Barishal): Another left-arm seamer Mehedi Hasan Rana



caught the eyes with his bowling performance for Barishal this season. The 25-year-old was among the break-through bowlers for Shakib Al Hasan whenever Barishal desperately looked for a wicket or two. Figures of 4 for 17 against Khulna Tigers remained his best performance, as Rana went on to bag 11 wickets in eight games. The cricketer from Chandpur was the player of the match in the first Qualifier against Comilla, where he bowled brilliantly in the death overs and picked up two crucial wickets, conceding only 15 runs from his three overs.

Munim Shahriar (Fortune Barishal): The young right-handed opener is undoubtedly the most vital discovery for Bangladesh cricket in the recently-concluded BPL. With his fearless attitude and hard-hitting ability, Munim showed great glimpses of his talent which the selectors have been searching for some time now. The 23-year-old managed to give Barishal some flying starts, during which someone like Chris Gayle had to play the second fiddle as his opening partner from the other end. With one fifty in six games, Munim scored 178 runs at a staggering strike-rate of 152.13. Even Shakib praised the youngster and termed Munim as a future prospect.

Left-arm pacer Mrittunjoy Chowdhury, who claimed 15 wickets at 14.93 average, became the most exciting bowling talent in the just concluded Bangladesh Premier League (BPL).

PHOTO: STAR FILE



New Zealand end long drought

REUTERS, WELLINGTON

New Zealand captain Tom Latham hailed a "perfect performance" after his team completed a one-sided demolition of a pitiful South Africa, winning the first Test by an innings and 276 runs before lunch on day three on Saturday.

Tim Southee took five wickets as New Zealand bowled out South Africa for 111 in their second innings, a paltry total that was nonetheless more than their first innings haul.

The result ended a 16-match winless streak by the Blackcaps in Tests between the two nations, stretching back to 2004.

The reigning world Test champions have never won a series against South Africa but will break their duck barring a major turnaround in the second test of the two-match series.

Pace bowler Matt Henry was named Player of the Match after picking up nine wickets overall, including 7-23 in the first innings at Hagley Oval in Christchurch.

He also made a swashbuckling 58 not out batting at No. 11.

"You've got to give credit to the bowling group," Henry said, deflecting praise. "We created pressure at both ends for a long period and I was the one that got the rewards at the other end."

Latham, captain in the absence of injured Kane Williamson, acknowledged that the toss had been crucial, but heaped praise on the way his bowlers had clinically exploited the helpful conditions.

"To back up the performance with the bat on a wicket that was a little tricky, you look back and it was probably the perfect performance really."

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What to WATCH

T SPORTS

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Quetta Gladiators vs Karachi Kings
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Multan Sultans vs Islamabad United
Live from 08:00 pm

La Liga

Athletic Bilbao vs Real Sociedad
Live from 02:00 am (Monday)

SONY SIX

Australia vs Sri Lanka

5th T20I

Live from 12:10 pm
STAR SPORTS HD 1
Leeds vs Manchester United
Live from 08:00 pm
Wolves vs Leicester

City

Live from 10:30 pm
SONY TEN 2
Bundesliga
Bayern Munich vs Greuther Furth
Live from 08:30 pm

Borussia Dortmund

vs M'gladbach
Live from 10:30 pm
Hertha BSC vs RB Leipzig
Live from 12:30 am (Monday)

Juventus' title hopes stunted

REUTERS, Turin

Juventus' faint Serie A title hopes were further dented by local rivals Torino, who fought their way back to earn a deserved 1-1 draw in Friday night's derby.

An Andrea Belotti volley in the second half cancelled out Matthijs de Ligt's early header, leaving Juve fourth in the table on 47 points after 26 games, eight behind leaders AC Milan, who visit bottom side Salernitana on Saturday.

Fifth-placed Atalanta, on 44 points after 24 games, have the chance to leapfrog Juve when they visit Fiorentina on Sunday.

To make matters worse for Massimiliano Allegri's side, defender Daniele Rugani was injured in the warm-up and then his replacement Luca Pellegrini was taken off at halftime.



Forward Paulo Dybala then had to be substituted early in the second half.

Dutch defender De Ligt headed Juve in front in the 13th minute, arriving at the far post to connect with a Juan Cuadrado free kick.

Torino coped well with falling behind and matched their more illustrious neighbours for intensity and intelligence and went on to outplay them in the second half.

After coming close to scoring on a few occasions they found an equaliser when Josip Brekalo raced to the byline and launched a cross back into the box which star striker Belotti converted on the volley.



Canada's Kirsten Moore-Towers and Michael Marinaro compete in the pair free figure skating event in the Beijing Winter Olympics at the Capital Indoor Stadium in Beijing on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

Five young stars who lit up Beijing 2022

AFP, Beijing

Several young stars made a name for themselves at the Beijing Olympics. Here are five talents who look set to reign over future Winter Games.

Eileen Gu

The 18-year-old, who was born in California and switched allegiance from the United States to China in 2019, was already well known in the host nation but her two golds and one silver in freestyle skiing propelled her to an international audience.

She was the unofficial face of the Games. But with the success came scrutiny and awkward questions about whether Gu had given up her US passport for a Chinese one, something she refused to answer.

The teenager, who has a Chinese mother and American father, still lives and studies in the United States.

Su Yiming

The host nation soon had another teenage home hero to celebrate in the form of snowboarder Su Yiming.

Su, who turned 18 on Friday, had to settle for a controversial silver in slopestyle -- many experts said he deserved to win gold and judges later admitted they made a mistake.

The former child actor did not have to wait long though for gold, taking the Big Air title.

Su's success threatened to break China's internet, a hashtag relating to it getting more than one billion views on the Twitter-like Weibo.

Nathan Chen

Much of the spotlight in men's figure skating fell on two-time reigning champion Yuzuru Hanyu.

But that did not bother the 22-year-old American Chen who was all grace and composure as he produced a dominant performance to win his first Olympic title.

An Olympic gold had been the only

major prize eluding the three-time world champion.

Zoi Sadowski Synnott

The 20-year-old snowboarder made history for New Zealand after winning their first ever Winter Olympics gold medal.

Clad in all black, she came from behind to snatch the women's slopestyle with an incredible final run, before being mobbed in the snow by her rivals at the finish.

Juraj Slafkovsky

There might have been no NHL stars at the Olympics but Slovakia has one in the making in 17-year-old Juraj Slafkovsky.

Considered a top prospect for the NHL's July draft, the big forward -- he's 1.92-metre (6ft 3ins) tall -- sent his stock soaring with his nose for goal.

He scored five times in six games as Slovakia reached the semi-finals.

Slafkovsky is the youngest player to ever represent Slovakia in Olympic hockey and was going up against some veterans twice his age in Beijing.

Chittagong Abahani bounce back

SPORTS REPORTER

Following back-to-back draws, Chittagong Abahani returned to winning ways with a 2-1 win against newcomers Swadhinata KS in their Bangladesh Premier League fixture at the Freedom Fighters' Memorial Stadium in Rajshahi yesterday.

The port city side took the lead in the 24th minute when their Nigerian striker Ebimobowe Thankgod converted from the spot before Afghan midfielder Omid Popalzay doubled the lead 26 minutes into the second half.

Swadhinata KS reduced the arrears eight minutes later through Jahedul Alam, however, they failed to find a second goal despite Chittagong Abahani being reduced to 10 men with five minutes remaining. The victory lifted Chittagong Abahani to fifth position with eight points from four matches while Swadhinata remained in ninth position with four points.

In the other match at the Sheikh Fazlul Haque Moni Stadium in Gopalganj, Uttar Baridhara inflicted an identical margin defeat on Muktiyoddha Sangsad. Arif Hossain and Suzan Biswas scored for Baridhara while Soma Otani scored a consolation goal for Muktiyoddha.

The defeat means Muktiyoddha are yet to open their account while Baridhara moved to four points from four matches.

Elite Academy kick off BCL today

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Championship League, the second-tier club competition of professional football in the country, will kick off today at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur.

Former Premier League outfit NoFeL Sporting Club will take on newcomers BFF Elite Academy in the opening match at 4:00pm while Fortis Football Club will square off against Gopalganj Sporting Club at 6:15pm. A total of 12 teams will take part in the BCL this season, with two teams earning promotion and two going down at the end of the league. However, BFF Elite Academy, one of the three newcomers will not be subject to promotion or relegation regardless of their final standing in the points table.

Abdus Salam Murshedy, league committee chairman, explained the reasoning behind this format yesterday.

"We have invested money and have given facilities to this academy to prepare players for the future. If they don't get to play professional football, then the pipeline to our national team will be damaged. So we have taken this decision to give these players a chance," Murshedy said.



Djokovic faces Musetti in Dubai comeback

AFP, DUBAI

Novak Djokovic faces Italian teenager Lorenzo Musetti in Dubai next week in a tough first round comeback following the drama surrounding his Australian Open deportation.

The world number one makes his return to the court on Monday after the coronavirus vaccine row that kept him from defending his Australian Open title.

Djokovic and wild card Musetti have history, with the 19-year-old taking the first two sets off the Serb when they met in last year's French Open.

Musetti eventually retired due to injury with Djokovic leading the last 16 clash 6-7 (7/9), 6-7 (2/7), 6-1, 6-0, 4-0.

Djokovic went on to seal the title at Roland Garros for his 19th Grand Slam, with his 20th secured at Wimbledon the following month.

The 34-year-old has kept a low profile since his deportation from Australia last month over his refusal to get jabbed.

"I am excited to go back and play on Monday," he told media in Dubai on Thursday.

"I miss tennis after all that has happened."

Djokovic, who last hit a ball in anger in the Davis Cup in Madrid in December, is a five-time winner in Dubai.

The event also features Britain's Andy Murray, who has three major titles to his name and who will start against a qualifier.

Djokovic is able to play in the tournament as a coronavirus vaccine is not a requirement to enter the United Arab Emirates, which announced 895 new cases on Thursday.

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