



"I was sacked before the investigation was complete."

Fired ACC official Sharif Uddin

The Daily Star

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SECOND EDITION

"We cannot forever offer an olive branch while Russia conducts missile tests and continues to amass troops."
European Council President Charles Michel on Ukraine-Russia standoff



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EC POSTS

Ex-bureaucrats dominate the final list too

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA and ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The search committee is likely to propose names of former bureaucrats for the helm of the next Election Commission, sources said.

Although the committee has said it would not disclose the final nominations before submitting them to the president, committee sources said ex-bureaucrats, ex-army officials, former judges, university teachers and social workers make up the final nominations.

They also said a former Secretary, joint or deputy secretary may be recommended as the chief election commissioner

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



A woman and her two sons watch fresh graffiti on a wall adjacent to the Central Shaheed Minar on Dhaka University campus. Artists of the Faculty of Fine Art adorned the walls in the area ahead of the International Mother Language Day today.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

LOST WORDS

Soura language dying in absence of practice and protection

MINTU DESHWARA

Samra Soura, 85, the oldest resident of Soura village is forgetting his mother tongue. People of the Soura community mostly speak Bangla, Oriya and Sadri languages.

Oriya and Sadri communities are bigger than Soura in the tea estates.

"I can't speak my mother tongue even in my family. I am forgetting many words of the Soura language. Soura people can only speak a few words of their language," Samra told this correspondent recently.

International Mother

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

IMMEDIATE PAST EC A tenure defined by voter apathy

AVERAGE TURNOUT

UPAZILAS	MUNICIPALITIES	UNION PARISHADS
40.31% in 2019	65% in 2020-2021	71.92% in 2021-2022
61.23% in 2014	74% in 2015	76.25% in 2016

MOHIUDDIN ALAMGIR

Voter turnout went down significantly in almost all local government elections under the immediate past Election Commission, compared to the polls held by the previous EC.

On the other hand, the number of candidates elected unopposed increased sharply.

Experts see this as an ominous sign for democracy and say it reflects the people's dwindling trust in the country's electoral system.

"The turnout dropped and a record number of candidates got elected uncontested because people lost their interest in participating in the polls. They no longer have confidence in the Election Commission and the electoral system," said Badiul Alam Majumdar, secretary of Shushashoner Jonno Nagorik (Shujan), a platform working to ensure good governance.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

21st February
International Mother Language Day

WALTON

A Humble Tribute to the Language Martyrs of 1952

KDS

চৈতন্য ধরেছি একুশ, হৃদয়ে আহংকার
ভাষা হয়েছে স্বাধীন, গর্বটা বাংলার

From the house of KDS

AKS
100% REFINED STEEL

“বাংলা আমার মায়ের ভাষা, বাংলা আমার রাষ্ট্র ভাষা”

এ অধিকার অর্জনের জন্য সকল ভাষা শহীদ এবং ভাষা সৈনিকের প্রতি অসীম কৃতজ্ঞতা ও ভালোবাসা নিরন্তর

EVIDENCE ACT AMENDMENT Draft leaves one questionable section alone

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The government has drafted an amendment to the Evidence Act, seeking to repeal only one of the two sections that allow questioning the character of a rape victim in court.

The draft proposes to do away with Section 155(4) while keeping Section 146(3).

According to Section 155(4), "When a man is prosecuted for rape or an attempt to ravish, it may be shown that the prosecutrix was of generally immoral character.

"Explanation: A witness declaring another witness to be unworthy of credit may not, upon his examination in chief, give reasons for his belief, but he may be asked his reasons in cross-examination, and the answers which he gives cannot be contradicted, though, if they are false, he may afterwards be charged with giving false evidence."

Section 146(3) allows the imposition of questions that may injure the character of the witness in order to verify their credibility.

According to it, "When a witness is cross-examined, he may, in addition to the questions hereinbefore referred to, be asked any questions which tend to shake his credit, by injuring his character, although the answer to such questions might tend directly or indirectly to criminate him or might expose or tend directly or indirectly to expose him to a penalty or forfeiture."

The continuation of Section 146(3) of the act has disappointed and aggrieved the rights organisations, who have long been fighting a legal battle to protect rape victims from being undermined in court.

Even if Section 155(4) is repealed, Section 146(3) could still be an avenue through which the character evidence could be used to undermine rape complainants, Sharmin Akter Sheuli, a lawyer for the writ petitioners fighting for scrapping of both the sections, told The Daily Star yesterday.

She said if it is not amended, a rapist will have the scope to question the character of the victim during the cross examination in court as the victim themselves might be the main witness in the case and therefore this section needs to be amended.

Meanwhile, Deputy Attorney General Samarendranath Biswas, who placed the draft of the proposed amendment before the High Court on February 17, told this correspondent that if "Section 146(3) of the Evidence Act is repealed the scope for cross examination will shrink and ensuring justice will be hampered."

Yesterday, the HC bench of Justice Farah Mahbub and Justice SM Maniruzzaman fixed tomorrow for hearing the writ petition by Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust, Ain O Salish Kendra and Nari Pakkho seeking the cancellation of both sections.



Winners of the Ekushey Padak, the second highest civilian award in Bangladesh, posing for photos with Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque at the Osmani Memorial Auditorium in the capital yesterday. PHOTO: PTD

Will spread Bangla, its literature further

Says PM while distributing Ekushey Padak

UNB, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said the government was trying to spread Bangla, its literature and the country's culture and heritage across the world.

"Our efforts will be to spread Bangla language, literature, and culture more in the international arena and I believe that we will be successful in that," she said.

Hasina said this while distributing the Ekushey Padak, the country's second-highest civilian award, among 24 eminent personalities in recognition of their contributions to various fields. She joined the event at the capital's Osmani Memorial Auditorium from the Gono Bhaban virtually.

Liberation War Affairs Minister AKM Mozammel Haque distributed the prestigious award on behalf of the prime minister.

The premier added that the government has been working relentlessly to change the fate of the grassroots level and deprived people. "More importantly, we want to attain economic emancipation."

Briefly describing the struggle of the country's independence from Language Movement, Hasina said sacrifices of many people have made the Bangladesh independence possible.

"Independence does not come through a sudden declaration of any person; it came through the journey of the struggle. And that struggle was launched by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman."

The PM went on to say, "The contributions of him [Bangabandhu] is the independent Bangladesh ..."

Recalling the efforts to erase the contributions of Bangabandhu after his assassination in 1975, Hasina said his contributions to the Language Movement and Liberation War had also been mostly erased. "But the reality is that no one could erase the truth and history."



MA Malek, editor of Dainik Azadi, Ekushey Padak winner for contribution to journalism

Congratulating the awardees, Sheikh Hasina said the new generation will come forward to devote themselves to the country's welfare and its people following their footsteps.

Hasina reiterated her call to all to take Covid-19 vaccine as the government is providing it free of cost when many rich countries are not doing so.

She urged all the responsible people, both in government and private sectors, to make sure their near and dear ones as well as neighbours are vaccinated.

Sheikh Hasina also called upon all to properly maintain health safety protocols.

State Minister for Cultural Affairs KM Khalid presided over the programme while its Secretary Abul Monsur delivered the welcome address.

Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam conducted the award-giving ceremony and read out the citations of the recipients.

24 AWARDEES

This year, 24 prominent personalities won Ekushey Padak in different fields.

Mostafa MA Matin (posthumous), and Mirza Tofazal Hossain Mukul (posthumous) have been recognised for their roles in the Language Movement.

Zeenat Barkatullah won this award for her contributions to dance and Nazrul Islam Babu (posthumous), Iqbal Ahmed, Mahmudur Rahman Benu to music, and Khaled Mahmud Khan (posthumous), Afzal Hossain and Masum Aziz to acting.

Motiur Rahman, Syed Muazzem Ali (posthumous), QABM Rahman and Amzad Ali Khandaker have been recognised for their contributions to the Liberation War.

MA Malek received the award for his contributions to journalism and Anwar Hossain for his role in science and technology and Prof Gautam Buddha Das in education.

SM Abraham Lincoln and Sangharaj Gyanasree Mahather won the award for their contributions to social work and Kamal Chowdhury and Jharna Das Purkayastha to language and literature.

Enamul Haque, Shahanaaj Sultana and Jannatul Ferdous as a team and Abdus Sattar Mandal as an individual got the Ekushey Padak for their contributions to research.

JOY BANGLA

Cabinet okays proposal on nat'l slogan

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The weekly cabinet meeting yesterday approved the Cabinet Division's proposal to make "Joy Bangla" – the slogan that helped unite Bangladeshis to fight against the Pakistani regime – the national slogan of the country.

The cabinet meeting was chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina who joined virtually from her official residence the Gono Bhaban.

The government will issue a gazette notification within a couple of days to make it effective, Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam told reporters after the meeting.

Once the measure comes into effect, the cabinet secretary said "Joy Bangla" 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.

"Three or four categories are being considered. Constitutional post holders, all government officials and employees will say 'Joy Bangla' at the end of any state or government programmes. Assemblies of all educational institutions and other meetings and seminars will end with the slogan," Khandker Anwarul Islam said.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 5

Fire kills teen in Mymensingh

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Mymensingh

A teenage boy died as he came in contact with a fire that broke out at a fruit store along Hazi Road in Mymensingh's Phulbaria upazila yesterday.

The dead is Abu Raihan, 14, said police.

According to locals, he was sleeping inside the fruit store at night. The fire broke out around 4:00am, leaving him dead on the spot.

Primarily, the authorities suspected that the fire occurred due to an electric short circuit.

Police recovered the body and handed it over to the family members.

A case was also lodged in connection with the death.

2 sent to jail for gang rape, robbery

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A Habiganj court yesterday sent two men to jail on charges of looting and gang-raping a woman in the district's Madhabpur upazila.

The arrestees are Askir Mia and Jasim Mia, of Kalinganj village in the upazila.

In a statement, Rab said that the duo was arrested from Brahmanbaria's Sarail on Saturday. They admitted their involvement in the crime during the primary interrogation.

According to the statement the arrested duo intruded into a house in the upazila and gang-raped a woman. Later, they fled the house with gold ornaments and a mobile phone.

The victim filed a case against four persons with Madhabpur Police Station in this regard.

A tenure defined by voter apathy

FROM PAGE 1

Echoing his views, Mahbub Talukdar, one of the immediate past election commissioners, said, "An aversion to elections has appeared in people's mind, and it is dragging democracy down on the verge of its death."

Talking to The Daily Star, several voters too talked about their apathy towards casting votes.

"We see candidates backed by the ruling party win every time. So, what's the point in casting my vote?" one of them asked, wishing not to be named.

Eight out of 15 people this newspaper reached in Dhaka, Sirajganj and Narsingdi districts said they did not vote in local government elections in their areas.

The five-year tenure of the EC, led by KM Nurul Huda, expired on February 14. Currently, a search committee is working to recommend names to the president for appointing the chief election commissioner and other commissioners for the next five years.

EC data shows the turnout in the 2019 staggered upazila parishad polls under the Nurul Huda-led commission fell by 21 percent compared to the upazila polls held by the Kazi Rakibuddin Ahmad-led commission in 2014.

Voters' presence fell by almost nine percent in the municipality elections and by 4.33 percent in the union polls, the data shows.

Under the Nurul Huda commission, 492 out of 4,850 chairman candidates in upazilas, municipalities and union parishads across the country were elected uncontested, without a single vote being cast. The same happened with the mayor election in Mymensingh city.

All the uncontested winners, except for three, were candidates of the ruling Awami League, according to the data.

Immediately after assuming office in February 2017, the Nurul Huda-led commission earned praises for holding elections to the Cumilla City Corporation. It was also lauded for the Narayanganj city polls held towards the end of its term.

But it came under fire for its role in other local body polls marred by irregularities and violence.

At least 101 people were killed and several hundred others injured in violence centring the staggered union parishad polls held recently.

The BNP and several other political parties boycotted the upazila and union elections, saying no free and fair election was possible under the EC.

M Sakhawat Hussain, a former election commissioner, said the EC should have taken steps to hold discussions with the parties that refrained from joining the elections.

"They said they couldn't do anything if anyone does not participate in polls ...

this is an old tactic to avoid responsibility," he said.

The Nurul Huda commission held the staggered upazila polls in 2019, municipality elections from December 2020 to March last year, and union parishad polls from June last year to this February.

The data from the EC shows the average turnout in the union parishad elections was 71.92 percent, down from 76.25 percent in 2016.

The average turnout in the polls to the 230 municipalities came down to 65 percent from 74 percent in 2015.

In the upazila parishad, the turnout was 40.31 percent, from 61.23 percent in 2014.

Similar trends could be found in the city corporation elections held at different times in the last five years. The polls to Dhaka, Cumilla, Rangpur, Gazipur, Khulna, Sylhet, Chattogram, and Narayanganj city corporations witnessed a fall in the turnout.

However, polls to Rajshahi and Barishal cities witnessed a rise in the turnout.

Sharmeen Murshid, chief executive officer of local election observer group Brotee, said, "The quality of conducting elections has been deteriorating and so has been the voters' participation [in the polls]."

Election irregularities and violence are directly

associated with the decreasing participation of voters, he said.

"As the Election Commission did not take responsibility for the two, many voters have lost faith in it," he also said.

Talking to this correspondent before the end of his tenure as a commissioner, Rafiqul Islam said the voter turnout dropped as many political parties, including the BNP, did not contest the polls. "The elections became less competitive as many diehard BNP supporters refrained from voting."

WINNING ALL TOO EASY

According to EC data, a record number of candidates were elected uncontested in the local government elections during the tenure of the Nurul Huda-led commission.

Chairman candidates got elected unopposed in 369 unions. The number was 207 in the 2016 UP polls.

No chairman candidate was elected unopposed during the five phases of the upazila elections in 2014, but the number shot up to 114 in 2019.

Seven municipalities chairman candidates were elected unopposed in 2015 while nine in the recent elections.

Sharmeen Murshid said almost all of the candidates belonged to the ruling party, which indicates that "power and money play a big role in those polls".

Lost words

FROM PAGE 1

Language Institute identifies Saura as one of the 14 endangered languages of Bangladesh. Only 70 families of the community live in the country.

Twenty-two of the families live in a village in Rajgat Union of Sreemangal, Moulvibazar. The neighbourhood near no man's land is only around 200 yards away from a border gate of India.

The families are tea estate workers and there is not a single member of the families who went to college. They say that their language, culture, and history are disappearing.

Article 30 of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, of which Bangladesh is a signatory, states that individuals should not be deprived of the right to use language with

other members of their community.

Aarti Saura, 65, said, "I got married watching the stars in the sky. It was part of our culture. But nowadays our



Members of the Saura community in Moulvibazar's Sreemangal.

to learn."

Three other members of the community said it won't be long before their language gets lost forever.

Jamini Saura, another

culture and our language are being lost.

"This ritual of marriage was called Sungkra," she said. "We want to teach our children our language and culture but they do not want

sexagenarian, said, "Only two elders could speak our language to some extent. One of them died one and a half months ago. The other is always sick and can't even speak properly. Our

language will disappear when he dies." Alkumar Saura, 52, said, "We have been demanding the government to protect our mother tongue, but nothing has been done."

Austro-Asiatic language Saura is also found in Orissa, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Bihar in India.

There are written forms of the language. There is also a textbook called Saura Primary in Andhra Pradesh.

Researcher Porimol Baraik said Bangladesh's International Mother Language Institute Act (2010) stresses on preservation of languages and introduction of written forms of all the languages of the ethnic groups.

Mesbah Kamal, professor of history at Dhaka University, said there are only three books in five languages of the minority communities.

Ex-bureaucrats dominate the final list too

FROM PAGE 1

and other election commissioners.

Speaking to journalists, Justice Obaidul Hassan, chief of the six-member search committee, said, "The law says the committee will fix the working procedure. We fixed our working procedure and decided not to publish the final nominations. We will submit the names to the president and it is his domain. If he asks us to make the list public, it will be published."

After a two-and-a-half-hour-long meeting at the Supreme Court Judges Lounge, he said, "Without the president's permission, we cannot disclose the list." He said the final 10 names will be fixed at the next

meeting tomorrow.

He declined to make any comment when asked which professional group dominated the list so far.

The last five-member election commission, which had the first ever female election commissioner, was comprised of three former bureaucrats, one former judge and an ex-army officer.

The search committee is expected to submit the names to President Abdul Hamid on February 24, subject to the president's availability and the committee members' Covid clearance, committee sources said.

They added revealing the names before sending them to the president will be "discourteous", and some

quarters may also create a controversy over it.

After its formation on February 5, the search committee asked political parties, professional bodies and individuals to submit names for the upcoming EC, as the tenure of the one led by KM Nurul Huda expired on February 14.

The panel then met with eminent citizens, election experts and media personalities in four phases for 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 them 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.

The BNP and some other opposition parties did not propose any names, citing no confidence in the search committee.

All the 322 proposed names were published on the cabinet division's website, where ex-bureaucrats, followed by educationists and jurists, dominated the list.

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 four ECs.



An air of grief pervaded Old Dhaka's Churihatta lane yesterday, on the third anniversary of the horrific fire that took away 71 lives in 2019.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

'Not here to reminisce'

Affected families of 2019 Churihatta blaze mark anniversary with hard demands

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

They were not here to reminisce the loved ones they lost to the 2019 Chawkbazar fire. The members of the affected families who congregated at the location of the ill-fated inferno were there to drive home their demands yesterday.

They were there hoping to get some compensation, some help, any kind of help. Three years of running families without the primary earning member has bore down hard on them. As such, yesterday's memorial to mark the anniversary of the incident did not feature a harmless ramble down the memory lane.

Instead, they came with hard demands, like completely rooting out the chemical industry from Old Dhaka and providing adequate compensation for the affected families. After all, as the authorities themselves stated, the 71 deaths from the fire could have been prevented had there not been a chemical warehouse in the residential area in the first place.

Dozens of burkha-clad women thronged the narrow lane in Churihatta where everything was burned to cinder just three years ago. They each carried laminated photo of their loved ones, their brothers, fathers, husbands, as if making an ardent appeal to society-at-large: do not forget them.

Their demands also include an end to being

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

'Living in France, running theft gang in Dhaka'

Local cohort arrested over burglary at 2 jewellery shops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Nasir Hossain (50) was already accused in several burglary cases before he left the country years ago, illegally, for France.

Before leaving, he had been involved in theft for about 15 years. But even when in France, he just couldn't stop his criminal activities.

Once a Bagerhat-based thief, Nasir now plans and organises for a gang that loots ornaments from jewellery shops in Dhaka and surrounding areas.

His name came up after the Detective Branch (DB) of police arrested Manjurul Ahsan Shamim (38), who took part in the burglary of two jewellery shops at Rajanigandha Tower in the capital's Kachukhet area on February 5, AKM Hafiz Akhter, additional commissioner of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told a press briefing yesterday.

Owner of the two shops - both named Rangapori Jewellers - primarily estimated that more than 300 tola of gold ornaments worth around Tk 2 crore, diamond worth around Tk 35 lakh and Tk 5 lakh in cash were looted.

A team of DB's Mirpur division arrested Shamim on Saturday, after conducting raids in Gazipur and Munshiganj. DB recovered Tk 9.5 lakh from his possession, which he got from selling the looted ornaments.

The DB official said other members of the gang also have several cases filed against them in Dhaka and Narayanganj.

"Nasir's role is to plan and fund the operations through Shamim. With his money, the gang rented a house in Kishoreganj," the officials said. "After an operation, Nasir get's lion's share of the money, while the rest is shared among the other members."

After primary interrogation, Shamim told DB officials

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Covid restrictions end tomorrow

Masks still a must, says cabinet secretary

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

As the transmission of Covid-19 continues to decline steadily, the government has decided to withdraw existing health restrictions from tomorrow, around six weeks after it was imposed on January 13.

However, all authorities concerned were instructed to ensure that everyone wears masks in all gatherings, said Cabinet Secretary Khandker Anwarul Islam, following yesterday's cabinet meeting where the decision was made.

"A clear instruction has been given to reopen schools (secondary and higher) tomorrow and primary schools on March 1. No Covid restriction will be effective anymore from February 22," Khandker Anwarul Islam said while briefing reporters after the Cabinet meeting.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina chaired the virtual meeting from Gono Bhaban, while others joined from the cabinet division of secretariat.

Yesterday, the daily case detection declined to 1,987 - the lowest since January 13, according to the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS). Besides, a total of 21 Covid patients died in the past 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, raising the total number of casualties to 28,965.

Due to the spread of the highly transmissible Omicron variant, the number of Covid-19 cases skyrocketed since early last month.

The highest positivity rate was reported at 33.37 percent on January 28, which has also declined to 7.82 percent yesterday.

Amid the spread of Omicron, which was first detected in the country on December 9 last year, the government also stepped up its vaccination campaigns and introduced booster doses, initially for senior citizens and frontline workers.

Last week, the DGHS also announced a campaign to vaccinate one crore people with the first dose of Covid vaccines by Saturday.

As of yesterday, around 10.25 crore people received the first dose, which is around 86 percent of the target population.

Noting the special campaign, the cabinet secretary said the cabinet has requested the media



- Schools (secondary and higher) reopen tomorrow
- Primary schools to reopen on Mar 1
- 7.82pc positivity rate as of yesterday
- 10.25cr vaccinated with first dose

All authorities concerned have been instructed to ensure that everyone wears masks in all gatherings.

to conduct a massive circulation of the vaccination drive.

He also said the field administrations, including DCs, SPs and civil surgeons, mayors, chairpersons, other local government representatives and members of different political parties were asked to conduct an all-out campaign so that no one is left out of the vaccination coverage after February 26.

Besides, the health ministry is mulling to vaccinate children aged under 12, adopting experiences from other countries.

On January 13 last year, the government imposed an 11-point Covid-19 restriction till February 7. Later, the restrictions were extended up to February 21.

The education ministry closed all educational institutions from January 21.

Fear of sexual harassment triggering child marriage: survey

Star journo wins Plan Int'l Bangladesh Media Award

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A recent survey by Plan International Bangladesh found that fear of sexual harassment and social exclusion are the major reasons behind parents marrying off their daughter at an early age.

The national level survey was conducted last year among 4,305 households.

The survey, which is yet to be launched officially, showed that around 35.3 percent of parents think that fear of sexual harassment is a big factor behind them marrying off their underage daughters while 25.6 percent does the same out of concerns of exclusion from the society.

"This fear must be overcome. The media must convey this message to the public that marriage is not the solution to these problems," said Kashfia Feroz, director of Girls' Rights, Plan International Bangladesh.

She made the remarks yesterday during the handover ceremony of "Plan International Bangladesh Media Award 2021: Building Better Future for Girls", organised by Plan International Bangladesh, at Jatiya Press Club in the capital.

Nine national and regional journalists were awarded at the event.

The Daily Star's journalist Nilima Jahan has been awarded for her report titled "Good initiative, yet ineffective".

The report focused on how union-level committees to prevent child marriage

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PRAYER TIMING FEB 21



	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

Ekushey fervour takes over Boi Mela

DIPAN NANDY

On the day before February 21, there was an onrush at the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela yesterday to find books on the Language Movement. From visitors' enthusiasm to publisher's marketing, books on the topic took up the fair grounds since morning.

However, publishers cited a lack of new books on the movement, with only two publishing a handful of titles.

Among them are Uzan and Agami Prokashoni, whose proprietor Osman Gani told this correspondent writers don't really delve into this topic much, as it requires substantial research. "If we get good write-ups, we're definitely interested to publish more," he said.

According to Bangla Academy, 468 new books have arrived over the first six

days of the fair, including 89 that were published yesterday.

Although there's no separate category to record books on the Language Movement, this correspondent came across five, including M Abdul Alim's "Rashtra Bhasha Andolan: Jilla Bhittik Itihash" and Habibullah Fahad's "Dui Bhasha Sangramir Mukhomukhi: Ahmed Rafiq and Rafiqul Islam".

All five books are written by the two authors.

However, though not all publishers could unveil new books on the topic, most of them republished old titles.

Meanwhile, yesterday's sudden bout of rainfall scared publishers, some of whom chose not to open shop out of this fear.

Majeedul Hasan of Jayati Prokashan said, "It rains around this time every year. We accept this adversity but hope that the rain won't be too much of a peril for us."



On the day before Ekushey February, much of the fervour centring International Mother Language Day could be felt at the Boi Mela, with visitors looking for books on the Language Movement.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Low-priced essentials for 1cr needy in Ramadan

Hasina directs commerce minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT



Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has given directives to provide daily essentials

at low prices to 1 crore needy families during the upcoming Ramadan.

Food will be distributed to the families twice during the holy month at cheaper prices.

The prime minister gave the directives to Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi during cabinet meeting yesterday.



It's like a blanket of red, yellow and brown has been pulled over this garden at the banks of Sunamganj's Jadukata river. Across this 100 bighas of land, Shimul flowers have blossomed in more than 3,000 trees. It's a delightful scene, and visitors are finding it hard to not spend time here, alone or with their loved ones. This photo was taken from Tahirpur upazila's Badaghat area recently.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR

For 2 days, it was known as the 'Control Room'

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 hosted. For part nine, we take you to the "control room", which was at the very spot where the Central Shaheed Minar now stands.

DIPAN NANDY

On February 4, 1952, an announcement was made from Dhaka Medical College Hospital's Bel Tala for the general strike on February 21. From the get go, the strike started gaining mass engagement. Seeing this, the then Pakistan government felt compelled to declare a Section 144 in Dhaka.

To thwart the curfew, barrack 20 of DMCH was turned into a control room by its students. It is at this very spot that the Central Shaheed Minar stands today.

It can be known from history that the control room became central for the movement after February 21's bloody events. It became the gathering place for activists and leaders of the movement. From its microphone and speakers, stories of the student killing spread across the city. Fast. Soon, shops, hostels and restaurants started closing down one by one.

Besides student leaders, members of the East Pakistan Ain Parishad also delivered speeches from the control room. After walking out of the Parishad building in protest of the violence, Abdur Rashid Tarkabagish went there and delivered an anti-government speech. Aside from his speech, the control was always abuzz with declarations and slogans, as well as announcements of the programmes and activities for the coming days. Inevitably, the

control room became a target of the then government. On February 22, a joint drive by the police and army laid waste to the place. Terrorising students with bayonets, they snatched the microphone in a move to silence them.

In 1952, Sharfuddin Ahmed was GS of Chhatra Union's DMCH unit, and one of the main organisers behind the control room. He later went on to become a colonel.

place thanks to Yahya, who was particularly adept at such things. We hung up a speaker high up on a mango tree at the northwest corner of the hostel, almost parallel to the Parishad building."

Although Shaheed Minar is a fitting replacement of the control room, very few know about its importance.

Language Movement veteran Dr Ahmad Rafiq said, "Judging the



FILE PHOTO

In a memorial piece, he wrote, "We took a decision to break February 21's curfew after discussing with Union VP Golam Mawla in the morning. With this aim, I along with Sayeed Haider, Abul Hashim, Ahmad Rafiq and more turned DMCH's shed-20's room 1 into a control room, complete with microphones and other facilities."

"By noon, everything was in

political climate of those times, the establishment of the control room is a significant historical event. Within just two days, it became the heartbeat of those who loved their mother language. The meetings, statements, announcements and activities carried out from here shook the authorities to their core. To be honest, for those couple of days, it seemed like there was no administrative authority in Dhaka."

RAJSHAHI'S FIRST SHAHEED MINAR

Reconstruction project aborted midway

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

In the immediate aftermath of February 21, 1952, residents of Rajshahi went to work and built a Shaheed Minar near the Muslim Hostel premises of Rajshahi Government College.

The Shaheed Minar still stands today, though not with as much prestige as Dhaka's Central Shaheed Minar is afforded. In fact, the entirety of Rajshahi city doesn't have a Central Shaheed Minar, which means on the International Mother Language Day, people pay homage to the martyrs at the ones at Bhubanmohan Park Memorial and the court area.

In light of this, Language Movement veterans started demanding preservation of the Muslim Hostel Shaheed Minar, which led Rajshahi City Corporation to take up a project in this regard in October 2018.

One Sabera Enterprise was tasked with the construction works, which were slated to be completed by June 2020.

But four-and-a-half years have



passed by and the project is yet to finish.

According to RCC, the work was estimated to cost Tk 50 lakh, which was later revised midway. Owner of Sabera Enterprise Zulfikar Haider told this correspondent they completed the foundation works for the project at a cost of Tk 35 lakh.

However, he alleged that the city corporation is yet to pay his bills, which has compelled him to suspend the works.

Contacted, RCC Executive Engineer Nur Islam claimed the project has been halted as they want to redo the minar with an improved design. "We will restart the works soon," he said.

Meanwhile, Rajshahi lawmaker Fazle Hossain Badsha said he doesn't know the reasons behind the project's delay. He also mentioned that he has allocated Tk 50 lakh for the project.

RCC Mayor AHM Khairuzzaman Liton blamed the delay on working in an "unplanned way", mentioning that they are taking up a new project to construct a separate Central Shaheed Minar spending Tk 16 crore.

"We've already got the allocation. We'll be inviting tenders within a month or two," he said, adding that they are on the process of acquiring Rajshahi Zilla Parishad land to build the minar.

Talking to The Daily Star, former principal of Rajshahi Government College Prof Habibur Rahman said, "The works should not be delayed as it is concerned with the memory of Language Movement veterans. This Shaheed Minar was the first of its kind in Rajshahi, and thus it should be preserved for the future generations."

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
District Primary Education Office
Dhaka
www.dpe.dhaka.gov.bd

Memo No. জেলাশিক্ষা/ঢাকা/২২/২২৭ Date: 16/02/2022

Invitation for Tender (Goods)
e-Tender Notice No. 01/2021-2022

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

Sl. No.	Tender ID	Package No.	Name of works	Tender method	Tender proposal
1	596017	NBIDGPSP-1/G1-0090	Furniture Supply for 75 Nos. Class Room and 8 Nos. Teachers Room of selected 19 Nos. of Govt. Primary School at different location of Dhamrai and Savar Upazila of Dhaka district.	NCT OTM	Last Selling 02.03.2022 at 17.00 Submission: 09.03.2022 at 13.00
2	635184	NBIDGPSP-1/G1-0091	Furniture Supply for 66 Nos. Class Room and 7 Nos. Teachers Room of selected 14 Nos. of Govt. Primary School at different location of Keranigonj Upazila of Dhaka district.	NCT OTM	Last Selling 02.03.2022 at 17.00 Submission: 09.03.2022 at 13.00
3	636539	NBIDGPSP-1/G1-0092	Furniture Supply for 96 Nos. Class Room and 11 Nos. Teachers Room of selected 20 Nos. of Govt. Primary School at different location of Dohar and Nababgonj Upazila of Dhaka district.	NCT OTM	Last Selling 02.03.2022 at 17.00 Submission: 09.03.2022 at 13.00

These are online tenders where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through and registered bank's branch. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Sd/- 16.02.2022
Aleya Ferdousi Shikha
District Primary Education Officer
Dhaka
02-48041059
E-mail: dpeodhaka@gmail.com

GD-335

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Department of Films & Publications
Ministry of Information & Broadcasting
Tatthya Bhaban
112 Circuit House Road, Dhaka-1000
www.dfp.gov.bd

Memo No: 15.57.0000.003.07.022.21.936 Date: 20.02.2022

Invitation for e-Tender

Sl No	Tender ID	Procurement Nature, Title	Ministry, Division, Organization, PE	Tender Publishing date & time	Tender closing date & time
01	661578	Procurement of Printing Books on the Bangladesh Quarterly	Ministry of Information & Broadcasting Department of Films & Publications (DFP)	Date: 20 February 2022 time: 10.15	Date: 15 March 2022 time: 13.00
02	658801	Procurement of Printing Books on the Monthly Sachitra Bangladesh	Ministry of Information & Broadcasting Department of Films & Publications (DFP)	Date: 20 February 2022 time: 10.10	Date: 15 March 2022 time: 11.30
03	645217	Procurement of Printing Books on the Monthly Nabarun	Ministry of Information & Broadcasting Department of Films & Publications (DFP)	Date: 20 February 2022 time: 10.00	Date: 15 March 2022 time: 10.00

- This is an online tender, only e-tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no office/hard copies will be accepted
- Further information and guidelines are available in the e-GP system portal and e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

Sd/- 20/02/2022
Sheelina Aktar
Deputy Director (Admin)
Department of Films & Publications
112 Circuit House Road, Dhaka-1000
Phone: 8300682

GD- 332



Israel PM sees Iran nuke deal 'shortly'

Warns it'll be weak

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett yesterday said that Iran may "shortly" agree a new nuclear deal with major powers but warned it will be weaker than the original 2015 agreement.

Bennett was speaking ahead of a cabinet meeting following indications that the outline of a deal was taking shape at talks in Vienna.

"We may see an agreement shortly," Bennett said, adding that the deal that appeared to be in the making "is shorter and weaker than the previous one".

Bennett has been a staunch opponent of the deal and repeatedly warned any revenue Tehran sees as a result of new sanctions relief will be used to purchase weapons that could harm Israelis.

'Biggest war since 1945' on the cards

Warns UK PM if Russia invades Ukraine; Berlin, Kyiv push back against US warnings



AFP, London

Russia is preparing to plunge Europe into its worst conflict since World War II, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said, warning that any invasion of Ukraine would freeze Moscow out of global finance.

"The fact is that all the signs are that the plan has already in some senses begun," he said in a BBC interview broadcast yesterday from the Munich Security Conference, after two Ukrainian soldiers were killed in attacks around rebel-held enclaves.

"People need to understand the sheer cost in human life that could entail," he said, after previously indicating that the West would continue to support any Ukraine resistance after an invasion.

"I'm afraid to say that the plan we are seeing is for something that could be really the biggest war in Europe since 1945, just in terms of sheer

scale."

US President Joe Biden had said earlier on Friday that he was "convinced" Russian President Vladimir Putin had "made the decision" to attack Ukraine, sending fears soaring that a major conflict could break out in Europe. Johnson has urged western countries to be united like never before to face the challenge.

But the message of unity was slightly undermined by German FM Annalena Baerbock's refusal to echo US claims that Russia could invade Ukraine any moment now. "We do not know yet if an attack has been decided on," Baerbock said.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, attending the same conference, also pushed back against Washington's dire predictions.

Speaking on the main stage in Munich, Zelensky said it was "difficult for me to judge" the US intelligence behind the warnings, but "I trust Ukrainian intelligence, who understand what's going on along our borders".

Saudi Arabia plans for fresh round of talks with Iran

REUTERS, Dubai

Saudi Arabia's foreign minister said on Saturday the kingdom was looking to schedule a fifth round of direct talks with rival Iran despite a "lack of substantive progress" so far, and urged Tehran to change its behaviour in the region.

Saudi Arabia and Iran, which cut ties in 2016, launched talks last year hosted by Iraq as global powers sought to salvage a nuclear pact with Tehran, which Gulf states deemed flawed.

Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud said if the 2015 nuclear pact was revived that should be "a starting point, not an end point" in order to address regional concerns, and that Riyadh remained interested in talks with Iran.

Earlier this month, Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi said Tehran was ready for more talks if Riyadh was willing to hold them in an atmosphere of mutual understanding and respect.

Sunni Muslim Saudi Arabia and Shia Iran are vying for influence in a rivalry that has played out across the region.

UK Queen catches 'mild' Covid: palace

AFP, London

Britain's 95-year-old Queen Elizabeth II tested positive for Covid-19 yesterday but her symptoms are "mild" and she intends to continue with light duties at her Windsor Castle residence, aides said.

The news comes after Prince Charles, the queen's eldest son and heir, tested positive on February 10, two days after meeting his mother at Windsor.

No information was given then on whether Queen Elizabeth -- who this month marked 70 years on the throne -- had taken any Covid tests herself.

She resumed in-person audiences at the castle last week, but complained to one attendee of suffering from stiffness and was photographed holding a walking stick.

While normally secretive about the queen's health, the palace has previously confirmed she is fully vaccinated against Covid-19.

Britain's Press Association said "it is understood a number of cases have also been diagnosed among the Windsor Castle team".

UK health secretary Sajid Javid, tweeted: "Wishing Her Majesty The Queen a quick recovery."

Keir Starmer, leader of the main opposition Labour party, also tweeted his best wishes for "a speedy recovery", adding: "Get well soon, Ma'am."

Nationwide celebrations to mark the queen's Platinum Jubilee are due to be held in June.

The queen, whose husband Prince Philip died aged 99 last April, has spent much of the coronavirus pandemic at Windsor Castle, with a reduced number of household staff dubbed "HMS Bubble". Respecting the government's then rules on Covid distancing, she sat alone at Philip's funeral.



Fresh hearing, fresh hope

FROM PAGE 12

and ordered that Myanmar takes provisional measures to prevent further acts of genocide in the Rakhine State.

On October 23, 2020, The Gambia filed a memorial of more than 500 pages in its lawsuit against Myanmar, detailing how the Myanmar government was responsible for the Rohingya genocide.

Myanmar has not yet taken any initiative to grant citizenship or ensure other basic rights that Rohingyas have been deprived of.

Moreover, the Aung San Suu Kyi-led government while in power raised objections on January 20 last year over the eligibility of The Gambia for filing the case.

The political scenario changed in Myanmar with the country's military seizing control and the elected Suu Kyi-led government running a parallel government, the National Unity Government (NUG).

Although the NUG is yet to get international recognition, the UN

General Assembly has kept Kyaw Moe Tun -- appointed during the Suu Kyi-led government -- as the incumbent Permanent Representative for Myanmar to the UN.

On February 1, the NUG said it had withdrawn all preliminary objections to the case and that it accepts the jurisdiction of the ICJ for hearing the allegations.

The NUG also said it will work towards international criminal accountability and grant jurisdiction to the International Criminal Court for all crimes within Myanmar covered by the Rome Statute since July 2002.

It however is not certain whether this would affect the legal process as the NUG said that through a "bureaucratic idiosyncrasy" the ICJ has been communicating with Myanmar diplomats in Brussels who were under the junta's control.

"Should the ICJ recognise the military, it would embolden the junta to continue and escalate its daily atrocity crimes," the NUG said.

The NUG said given that the "illegal military junta itself has unlawfully detained Myanmar's agent and deputy agent", Ambassador Tun is the acting alternate agent authorised to engage with the ICJ.

According to a Reuters report, the registered representatives for Myanmar were junta-appointed Ko Ko Hlaing, its envoy for international coordination, and Myanmar Union Attorney General Thida Oo, who will head an eight-member legal team for the hearings.

International relations analysts say while the NUG is trying to gain international recognition by cooperating with the ICJ, its public statements of working for a federal democracy and supporting international criminal justice for Rohingyas could have far-reaching implications.

"Majority of Myanmar people are against military rule and we believe the NUG would regain power today or tomorrow as the legitimate elected government," said Nay San

Lwin, co-founder of Free Rohingya Coalition.

The NUG also has many secret documents proving the military junta's genocidal intent -- a fact that can establish the genocide case in the ICJ, he said.

Former Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque said it does not matter if the military or NUG represents at the ICJ. The issue is Rohingya justice, and the NUG is publicly pledging to ensure it.

"In recent times, the Rohingya genocide case appeared dormant. This hearing is bringing the issue to the fore again," he said.

Prof Imtiaz Ahmed of the Dhaka University's international relations department said the Myanmar military is now under serious international pressure and even the ASEAN is not including it in meetings.

"This is the right time for the international community to come together strongly on the case of Rohingya justice, their citizenship and repatriation," he said.

ACC puts up 13 allegations

FROM PAGE 12

individuals suspected of corruption without a court order.

There was also an allegation that Sharif kept about Tk 93.6 lakh, which was seized from an accused, in his own custody for one year and four months.

Sharif said he kept the money at the vault at ACC office in Chattogram by informing his superiors, which is a common practice.

"I requested the bank to impose a no debit status on the accounts. It was a procedural mistake. It was done in good faith. I informed the bank that I would get a court order

soon."

In June 2021, Sharif was transferred to Patuakhali from Chattogram. A rights organisation then filed a writ challenging the transfer order. A fake order stating that "the High Court stayed his transfer" was circulated at the time.

The HC then asked the ACC to probe the matter. At the press conference yesterday, the ACC did not clarify whether Sharif had any involvement with the fake order.

Other allegations against Sharif were summoning innocent people, investigating at whim, and taking advantage by misusing power.

Sharif said the allegations were not true and said the ACC should prove the charges.

About the allegation that he failed to join the workplace in Patuakhali on time, Sharif said he had Covid at the time and medical documents about the infection were submitted to the commission.

Ten days before he was sacked, Sharif filed a general diary with Khulshi Police Station in Chattogram mentioning that his life had been threatened by individuals he was investigating.

The ACC secretary yesterday said the commission was not aware

of the matter.

However, The Daily Star has a copy of a letter Sharif wrote to the commission about the threats.

There was also an allegation that he misused power to get his brother recruited at Karnaphuli Gas Distribution Company Limited (KGDCL).

Sharif said in 2017, the KGDCL outsourced certain tasks to dozens of youths including his brother.

He said he didn't talk to any KGDCL official about recruitment.

Meanwhile, 10 Supreme Court lawyers, wrote to the registrar general, requesting him to examine the termination of Sharif.

Cabinet okays

FROM PAGE 2

The cabinet secretary also cited a High Court order in 2020 that directed the government to take necessary steps to make "Joy Bangla" the national slogan.

"Joy Bangla" was the strongest slogan during the Liberation War and it helped Bangladeshis get united and fight against

the Pakistani regime.

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 people of all classes and ages irrespective of political affiliation during

the nine-month Liberation War in 1971.

National poet Kazi Nazrul Islam used the words "Joy Bangla" in his poem "Purna Abhinandan" in 1922.

Eighteen eminent citizens hailed the government's decision to make "Joy Bangla" a state slogan.

They are Abdul Gaffar

Chowdhury, Syed Hasan

Imam, Anupam Sen, Ramendu Majumdar, Ferdousi Majumdar, Sarwar Ali, Abed Khan, Selina Hossain, Laila Hossain, Abdus Salam, Mofidul Hoque, Shofi Ahmed, Shahrir Kabir, Nasiruddin Yousuff, Muntassir Mamoon, Sara Zaker, Shimul Yousuff and Golam Quddus.

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বিশ্বাসীর বিশ্বয়
আমার অহংকার

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Facing it together

FROM PAGE 12

the place of Dr Osman Gani.

After some time, we brought out a procession which went towards Race Course Ground. Police didn't stop us. Our procession returned to the Medical College gate and ended there. The whole area was devastated. We

returned to the hostel with a heavy heart.

Shafia Khatun was the vice president of Dhaka University Women's Students' Union during the Language Movement. Source: Bhasha Andolon Shatchallish theke Baanna (Ed. Mostofa Kamal, Bangladesh Co-operative Book Society Ltd, 1987).

Poet Quazi Rosy

FROM PAGE 12

January 1, 1949, she was a former official of departments of information and films and publications.

Rosy received the Bangla Academy Award in literature in 2018 and the Ekushey Padak in 2021 for her contributions to

poetry.

"Pothghat Manusher Naam" and "Amar Piraner Kono Map Nei" are the prominent poetry books among her literary works.

After a state honour at her Dhanmondi home, the freedom fighter was buried at Mirpur Martyred Intellectuals' graveyard.

Diplomacy

FROM PAGE 12

must take Russia's security demands 'seriously'. Putin and Macron agreed to 'intensify' diplomatic efforts on Ukraine and work for ceasefire, Macron's office said.

After the conversation

with Putin, Macron talked with Zelensky on the telephone, the French presidency said.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken yesterday said President Joe Biden ready to engage Putin "at any time in any format".

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The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

Justice eludes Churihatta fire victims

Old Dhaka with its many warehouses remains a ticking time bomb

AS is often seen in the wake of tragedies in Bangladesh, it seems the authorities have all but forgotten about the 71 lives lost in a warehouse fire that took place in a residential building in Chawkbazar's Churihatta area on February 20, 2019. How else would you explain the behaviour of the owners of the same building who, again, rented out its basement parking lot as a warehouse for plastic toys (a known fire hazard)? Even after three years since the tragedy, the renovated basement has no fire exits, and only four fire extinguishers. Warehouses like this continue to fly in the face of the Bangladesh Environment Conservation Rules 1997, which states that no industrial units using hazardous chemicals or goods can operate in and around a residential area.

The accused in the Churihatta fire case, including the building owners, are currently out on bail, enjoying their unearned freedom. Conversely, the families of the victims and survivors, far from getting justice, are living a life of uncertainty. Out of the 71 people who died, the families of only 21 received some compensation from the government. Others got shops to run or cleaning jobs with the DSCC. This is but a poor attempt at making up for their loss, barely enough to sustain an average family.

And what of the reported Tk 30 crore deposited into the government's national relief fund solely to help the survivors and victims' families? A collective of the families says that they have not received a penny from that fund, not even in the form of a loan. How heart-wrenching that the families of those who perished in a fire caused by the authorities' negligence should have to plead for compensations that they are entitled to.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Small and Cottage Industries Corporation's promise to relocate the chemical stores and plastic factories of Old Dhaka to a designated place after the Nimtoli fire—which killed at least 124 people on June 3, 2010—remains unfulfilled. At least 1,924 chemical warehouses are currently operating in the area, 98 percent of which fall under the category of "moderately risky." Their number, of course, would be much higher if we count all the residential buildings housing illegally set up warehouses like the one mentioned above.

We urge the government to speed up the pace of its warehouse relocation process. New establishments stocking hazardous materials in Old Dhaka must be prevented from being set up, while existing factories must be shuttered as soon as possible regardless of when the relocation project is completed. Most importantly, victims and survivors of previous fire tragedies must be given justice and due compensation.

Indomitable Ekushey

But have we done enough to honour the sacrifices of the martyrs?

AS we observe the 70th anniversary of the historic Ekushey February, which in 1952 saw the culmination of a bloody struggle for the state recognition of Bangla language, we humbly recall the sacrifices made by the martyrs and all those who were engaged in the fight to put Bangla in its rightful place, and establish our right to talk, write and conduct official work in our mother tongue. It is a tribute to the martyrs—and a matter of pride for us—that February 21 has been recognised as the International Mother Language Day by Unesco.

But along with the joy of recognition and all the festivities comes a troubling question: Have we done enough to fulfil the dreams of our language fighters and martyrs? We often forget that Ekushey February had laid the foundation of our nationhood based on mother language. But has Bangla been given its rightful place in the country? Have other mother languages that exist here? In fact, one would not be remiss in suggesting that Bangla, as the official language of Bangladesh, has suffered from neglect at all levels. One notices with regret the lack of use of Bangla in official communications and correspondences. While no one can take issue with acquiring proficiency in a second language—which, in our case, is English—the poor treatment that Bangla is routinely accorded is a far cry from the vision we so proudly embraced in 1952.

Although the High Court Division issued a rule on February 17, 2014 for use of Bangla at all levels, offices and forums in the country—and there happens to be a Bangla Language Implementation Act, 1987—Bangla still suffers from abject neglect. Admittedly, it is a matter that neither a judicial decree nor an act of parliament can help resolve. It has to be internalised by all of us, and ingrained in our collective psyche. Only then can Bangla be fully established as a national language.

We believe that learning Bangla should be made compulsory at all levels and facilities should be provided to pursue higher education in Bangla, which—given the current condition in which Bangla books of references are few and far between—is well-nigh impossible to do. We should also not lose sight of the fact that there are a number of ethnic groups who have their own languages. They have the equal right to use their mother languages. And there can be no better tribute to the martyrs than helping them nurture their native languages.

A modern tax system can generate more resources



MACRO MIRROR

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

FAHMIDA KHATUN

IN the run-up to the budget for the 2022-23 fiscal year (FY), the National Board of Revenue (NBR) has initiated discussions with various professional and business organisations—like the previous years. The finance ministry also does the same. The NBR's focus is mainly to seek fiscal proposals from the stakeholders. This is a commendable practice, which extends the opportunity to businesses and organisations to suggest not only how various sectors can get respite from tax burden, but also how to improve the revenue mobilisation by improving the collection system. It is widely discussed that despite Bangladesh's impressive growth, the domestic resource mobilisation is too poor. Unfortunately, the NBR is yet to gain any visible success in bringing all the eligible income earners under the tax net. It is hoped that, through such regular consultations between the NBR and stakeholders, a better tax system will come about in the near future.

The NBR has the most important role in creating fiscal space for the government to undertake its activities. However, the target imposed on it has remained unfulfilled in the last several years. Indeed, the targets seem to be unrealistic and beyond the NBR's capacity given its current institutional framework. One may recall that, in the budget for FY2021-22, the revenue income—which includes both tax and non-tax income—has been set to be 11.3 percent of GDP. Of the total revenue target, tax mobilisation is the highest—about 85 percent. Also, in FY22, the revenue growth target has been set at 27 percent. But the trend of revenue growth in July-October of FY22 indicates that achieving this target will require more dynamic efforts, since revenue mobilisation has to grow by 30.7 percent in the rest of the fiscal year.

Though several infrastructural projects are being financed through foreign loans, domestic resource mobilisation is crucial for achieving the government's short-, medium- and long-term objectives. With domestic resources, the government can prioritise its spending in line with policy priorities. But the constant shortfall of domestic resources creates

a real challenge for the government in fulfilling such pledges. At the current level of domestic resource mobilisation, implementing its political commitments is difficult.

As Bangladesh is set to become a developing country by 2026, higher domestic resource mobilisation will become even more important. As a developing country, we will not be eligible for foreign aid and concessional

government to eliminate such perceptions by providing hassle-free services to the citizens. The policymakers will also have to ensure that taxpayers' money is not wasted in the name of development or misappropriated through corruption. Good governance in the implementation of development projects and economic and social programmes is, therefore, key to mobilisation of higher domestic resources.



ILLUSTRATION: STAR

While there is a lack of awareness regarding the responsibility to pay tax as a citizen of the country, there is also a strong argument for not doing so. The onus is, hence, on the government to eliminate such perceptions by providing hassle-free services to the citizens.

loans. Of course, the country's image will be enhanced and the strength of our economy will help us source funds from the global market. But that may be expensive, since we have to pay the market rates of interest for securing such loans. This could increase the debt burden on the country. As the size of the economy is expanding, the need for additional finance will continue to increase. With the current effort for tax collection, it is not possible to meet the resource requirements.

It was reported in the FY22 budget speech that the number of taxpayers in Bangladesh was only 2.5 million. In a country of more than 165 million people, this number is astonishingly low. Reasons for tax avoidance are many. Some people feel once they have a tax identification number (TIN), they are stuck forever and have to pay tax even when they have income below the threshold level. Some feel there's no point of paying tax since they don't get their expected service from the government as citizens. Some feel since they need to pay bribes at levels of the government to get their jobs done, they shouldn't have to pay additional money as tax. So, while there is a lack of awareness regarding the responsibility to pay tax as a citizen of the country, there is also a strong argument for not doing so. The onus is, hence, on the

As for the NBR, a number of specific measures should be taken to increase revenue mobilisation. One is implementing e-governance. Technology can help establish an easy tax collection procedure and increased compliance as well. It can also be used to track people's lifestyle to determine their tax rates. Often, there is a mismatch between the declared income of individuals and their expenditure patterns. This is known to the NBR. With a modern system, more human resources and higher skills, NBR's efficiency can be enhanced in this regard.

A number of reform measures proposed a few years back are yet to be completed. Among the proposed measures are the upgradation of Automated System for Customs Data (ASYCUDA), consolidation and integration of Integrated Budget and Accounting System (iBAS++), electronic return filing, electronic tax deducted at source (e-TDS), automated customs risk management, and introduction of authorised economic operator system. These measures could help bring much efficiency in tax management. As the NBR formulates revenue measures for various sectors in the national budget for FY2022-23, the operationalisation of reform measures, some of which are already on the table, should not be sidelined.

What about the ethics of fashion retailers?



RMG NOTES

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

MOSTAFIZ UDDIN

“UK retailers ditch unethical suppliers,” cried a recent headline in several international news outlets. Did I read that correctly? Apparently so. A new report from a major global commercial bank claims that the pandemic and an increasing focus on environment, sustainability and governance (ESG) issues are shifting business priorities among retailers in the West. The bank carried out a study on more than 300 retail decision-makers. The majority (51 percent) said sustainability was more important now than it had been two years ago, while 49 percent said the same about ethical standards.

The report highlights fashion buyers—our customers—as a key driver of the trend, with RMG retailers cancelling an average of 7.5 contracts compared to an overall average of six. The most common reasons for cancelling contracts were the use of unsustainable materials (39 percent), unfair working hours among suppliers (37 percent), and a lack of accreditation to an ethical or sustainable membership organisation (32 percent).

There are two ways of looking at these findings. Firstly, they reaffirm the belief that, as suppliers, we have to invest more heavily in environmental and social governance issues. As this report makes it clear, if we, as suppliers, are found wanting in this area, our customers will ditch us.

I accept this argument to a large degree, and there is no doubt that RMG suppliers have spent heavily to meet the

requirements of buyers in the past few years. The cost of auditing alone is quite frightening at times, and the trend for these costs is upwards. However, I do feel compelled to point out another aspect to this issue. The headline of this story was “Retailers ditch unethical suppliers.” What about the ethics of these retailers? I have to be honest: such headlines do grate on one's nerve, given the experiences of the past couple of years. When the Covid

these cases? Missing in action, it would seem.

This is not just an issue around the pandemic—the challenge of purchasing practices continues to be a huge concern for all suppliers. This is why there are so many different initiatives in this area. If the purchasing practices by brands were focused on ESG issues and were supportive of sustainability among suppliers, we wouldn't be constantly having conversations about this issue.

But we all know that this is not the case. While some fashion retailers are supportive and ethical where purchasing practices are concerned, others—some of whom are big names—continue to push the limits of what is fair, or even legal, in some instances.

The study mentioned above talked about unethical suppliers being ditched. Perhaps they deserved to be ditched. But, perhaps, there were also suppliers who simply could not afford to invest in the kind of accreditations that their buyers insisted they acquire. Or maybe the suppliers felt they had already jumped through enough hoops and felt aggrieved at being asked to pay for multiple audits, many of which checked the same thing.

As an RMG supplier, I will always beat the drum for a more sustainable industry, and I am pleased that ESG is now being discussed in our industry. There should be no place in our industry for businesses who treat their workers poorly, and the results of this survey suggest that there no longer will be, as we move forward.

At the same time, large retailers in the West surely cannot talk about the importance of ESG on the one hand, while using cowboy tactics themselves when doing business on the other. To take our industry as an example, it is only right and proper that we are all held to the same standards where ESG is concerned.

For a truly sustainable industry, with ESG at its core, we must all do our part (retailers and suppliers). We should all walk the walk, not just talk the talk.



Ethical standards in fashion is not just the suppliers' responsibility; the retailers are equally accountable.

FILE PHOTO: STAR

pandemic broke, many fashion retailers cancelled orders. Then they refused to pay for those orders, even when the orders were either complete or had already been shipped to the clients. In other cases, retailers demanded huge discounts on orders which had been completed. Suppliers were left with little choice but to agree to the discounts.

We all know that the pandemic was tough on everyone when it first broke out in 2020. Some retailers went bust, while others could barely afford to pay their bills—just like their suppliers. But there were some others who refused to pay their bills simply to protect their balance sheets. Where was the “governance” in

70TH ANNIVERSARY OF AMAR EKUSHEY

Our Language Movement: Moments, Momentum, Milieu



AZFAR HUSSAIN

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OUR Bhasha Andolan—the Language Movement—was undoubtedly a major event in our political history. In fact, it was the first major political movement in East Pakistan (present-day Bangladesh). Although 1952 is taken as the year of this movement, it neither began, nor did it end, in 1952 as such. Its history can be traced as far back as 1947 with the formation of the first Rashtra Bhasha Sangram Parishad (State Language Movement Council) in October that year. But Ekushey February—February 21, 1952—marks a watershed moment in our history, when thousands of students assembled in front of the old Arts Faculty building of Dhaka University, shouting slogans like “Rashtra Bhasha Bangla Chai” (We Demand Bangla as the State Language), and later disobeyed Section 144. The police eventually opened fire, killing five students and injuring many more. As a Bangla poem succinctly put it once, “Bangla was written in blood in 1952” (translation is author’s own).

Indeed, the students themselves gave a conjunctural, but decisively fierce, voice to the Language Movement. But it quickly morphed into a people’s movement, as Badruddin Umar’s monumental, three-volume historical study of this movement rigorously reveals. Language itself turned

out to be a massive site of class struggle. In fact, this movement would not have been possible without the extensive participation of peasants and workers. And the movement increasingly assumed a liberationist, emancipatory character, at least cutting the first turf for our national liberation movement of 1971—fundamentally a people’s war against Pakistani neocolonialism—driven as it was by its three distinctly pronounced principles: equality, justice, and human dignity. But the very anticolonial ethos of our Language Movement was also evident right from the beginning, as the movement confronted and combatted what I wish to call linguistic colonialism.

But the era of linguistic colonialism is by no means over. Our middle-class, soggy, sentimental nationalism continues to celebrate the Ekushey on a yearly basis, while erasing, obscuring, and even occulting the sites of actual material contradictions and antagonisms that involve—among other things—the questions of class and gender, as well as the question of equality. This routine celebration also continues to evacuate the Ekushey of its radical content and emancipatory politics. Also, given the ways in which our mainstream, ruling-class political culture has

evolved—a culture characterised by anti-people, anti-democratic, and even fascist elements today—the Dhaka-centric annual “celebration” of the Ekushey repeatedly reveals how it’s reduced to a narrow “cultural” event, giving one the outrageously misleading impression that our Language Movement has nothing to do with the emancipatory aspirations and struggles of the oppressed in Bangladesh.

And the question remains: Along with economic justice or economic equality, where is linguistic justice or linguistic equality in our country today? There are violently unequal power relations between the privileged ones who know or use English, and the wretched of Bangladesh who speak or use Bangla (the ruling-class folks also use Bangla; but, no, I’m not speaking of them, and obviously they don’t belong to the wretched in question). The language question in this instance continues to be the question of class, although the former also ranges beyond the latter. There are also unequal power relations between what is institutionally and otherwise legitimised as “standard Bangla,” and non-standard Bangla/regional languages/dialects, etc. And, no less significantly, the languages of other nations, indigenous peoples, or ethnic

minorities in Bangladesh decisively remain the most marginalised languages in the country. Of course, despite the narratives of so-called progress—the Caribbean poet Derek Walcott’s line comes to mind, “Progress is history’s dirty joke”—we haven’t had any egalitarian language policy at the national level yet.

What all this means is that we have not yet been able to live up to the anticolonial spirit of our Language Movement. In fact, both our Language Movement and Liberation Movement have remained decisively and disastrously unfinished.

Finally, I’m not against learning English (or any foreign language), nor am I against what is called “technological progress.” But then, I question those who continue to celebrate the English language in the name of globalisation, conveniently mystifying the stubborn facts that globalisation itself is a euphemism for the current stage of disaster capitalism and digital imperialism; that it is a “globaloney” (to use Eduardo Galeano’s word) for many; that this very “globalisation” globalises unequal class relations, unequal race relations, unequal gender relations, and even unequal language relations themselves, as globalisation keeps unevenly connecting and interconnecting peoples, places, cultures, and languages across the world. And I think it is in this light that what has come to be known as the Fourth Industrial Revolution should be critically interrogated. But what we actually need is a new, even revolutionary politics that remains deeply committed to ensuring the integrity and equality of all mother tongues, among other things.



ILLUSTRATION: NOOR US SAFA ANIK

Bangla is our first language, we should treat it as such



MOHAMMAD AZAM

Dr Mohammad Azam is a professor at the Department of Bangla in Dhaka University.

SEVENTY years after the events of February 21, how far have we really been able to live up to the anti-colonial spirit of our Language Movement? The answer to this question is by no means a simple one.

If we look at the Pakistan regime as a colonial rule, we could say that we have succeeded, since the Language Movement is considered to be the foundation of our independence struggle in any discourse. But if we consider the issue of colonialism from a broader perspective, there are more failures than successes. The reason for our failure is that we have not been able to establish a similar critical view in the case of English as we did for Urdu. Other non-English-speaking nations deal with the dominance of English, a global language,

in their own ways, but we have not been able to come up with any mechanism yet to deal with it. From that perspective, we can say that we have not been able to live up to the spirit of our Language Movement.

There is much to be done when it comes to fully embodying the overarching spirit of our language struggle.

Given our history of struggle to give our own language, Bangla, its due respect, one may wonder: What ought to be its role in today’s globalised world. Unfortunately, we have not been able to ensure proper use of Bangla in our country. This is because, as much as we have seen Bangla from a nationalist point of view, as much as we have seen it emotionally, we have not seen it as a language of practical use.

First, I want to problematise the use of the word “mother tongue” when referring to Bangla, and use instead the term “first language”. There are many first languages in Bangladesh, but Bangla may be the language which is most in use.

First language can be used in offices,

A language must have its own economic potential—something we have failed to achieve in the last 70 years. And it won’t happen, unless we can establish Bangla as the first language at all levels of education, everywhere.

in higher education and for many other purposes. Although the use of Bangla is widespread in primary, secondary and even tertiary education, the same cannot be said in case of higher education and research. While common people use Bangla in their day-to-day life, we can’t say the same for our elite neighbourhoods. The section of people who are able to use English for economic purposes are not actually using Bangla. They are also not interested in teaching their children Bangla effectively as a language to read or write. A language must have its own economic potential—something we have failed to achieve in the last 70 years. And it won’t happen, unless we can establish Bangla as the first language at all levels of education, everywhere.

Establishing the use of Bangla in every sphere of society is important, because without doing so, we cannot make any plans for our entire population. What we need to do is use Bangla as the first language of instruction in education, while English should be made the second language. This doesn’t mean English should be neglected, however.

English should be taught systematically, so that students can achieve a good command over the English language through 12 years of schooling, which will ensure that they face no difficulty in using English when they pursue higher education. It is a wrong idea that our books in higher education should be in Bangla. Our students must be proficient in using English books, but the medium of instruction should be Bangla. All the research work must be done in Bangla as well. We should also use online platforms to teach English everywhere in the country. No one should feel that they are falling behind because they have no scope for learning the language.

If we can establish the use of Bangla in higher education and research, we will automatically see the changes we want everywhere. I think we should make a plan to teach at least 50 percent of the courses in higher education in Bangla by the next 20 years. If we can do that, we will be able to rid ourselves of the unnecessary worry of falling behind others.

As told to the Editorial Desk of The Daily Star.

QUOTABLE Quote



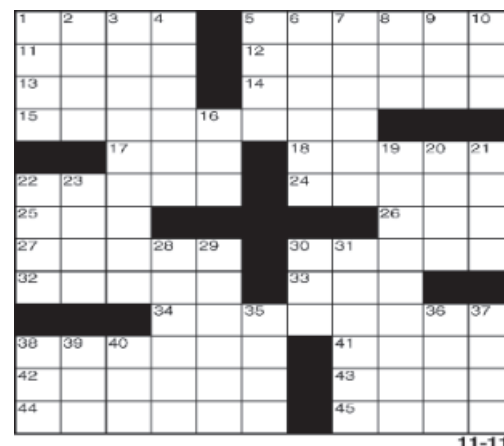
NELSON MANDELA

(1918 - 2013) Former South African president

If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his language, that goes to his heart.

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Dog’s dogs
 - 5 Gift bag liner
 - 11 Soothing stuff
 - 12 Black Sea port
 - 13 Whittle down
 - 14 Straight
 - 15 Makes major demands
 - 17 Pig’s place
 - 18 Heavy drinker
 - 22 Western resort
 - 24 Sleep sound
 - 25 – Jima
 - 26 Relieve
 - 27 “Meet John Doe” director
 - 30 Fishing spots
 - 32 Bandleader Kay
 - 33 Co. abbr.
- DOWN**
- 34 Buffet staple
 - 38 Pleistocene
 - 41 Tug-of-war need
 - 42 Brosnan’s Bond predecessor
 - 43 Fencing sword
 - 44 Set straight
 - 45 Helper: Abbr.
 - 1 One of a bear trio
 - 2 Weary word
 - 3 Artisans’ places
 - 4 Handles
 - 5 Turnpike cost
 - 6 Lunkheads
 - 7 Forwarded
 - 8 Toronto-to-D.C. dir.
 - 9 Much of N.
 - 10 Corn unit
 - 16 Pro vote
 - 19 One of Homer
 - 20 War of 1812 port
 - 21 Some wines
 - 22 Clock sound
 - 23 Not at home
 - 28 Sales offer
 - 29 Region of Spain
 - 30 Tell tales
 - 31 Tenor Bocelli
 - 35 Lane’s co-worker
 - 36 Big galoots
 - 37 Convene
 - 38 Altar promise
 - 39 Sedan or SUV
 - 40 Yale rooter



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ANTI-COLONIAL MOVEMENTS AS PASSIVE REVOLUTION

ABDUR RAZZAQ'S insights on 1947

Razzaq is at his best where he rises to lay bare the secret of Indian nationalism: "Political movements, basically, have voiced the sentiments and expressed the needs of these allies. There is no question of a struggle by the educated middle class against the indigenous allies of imperialism in India for the simple reason that the educated middle class has essentially belonged to the same class as the allies themselves" (Razzaq 2022: 79).

SALIMULLAH KHAN

This stain splattered daybreak, this night bitten dawn,
This is not the dawn which we were waiting for in ferment,
This is not the dawn with longing for which Friends walked on hoping to find somewhere or else.
(Faiz 1971: 122-23)

These lines which open Faiz Ahmed Faiz's famous poem *Subh-e-Azadi (August 1947)*, translated as 'Freedom's Dawn (August 1947)', agonised and agonising as it is, the poem also provides a measure of naïveté. As if a daybreak of the kind was never apprehended. Included in *Dast-e-Saba* (1952), the poem became emblematic of what commentators would call the pity of Partition. A Bengali contemporary of the Panjabi poet's, 'Abdur Razzaq of Dhaka', as he was known to some in England, around that time was engaged in drafting a thesis on political parties in undivided India (Wilson 1971: Dedication).

When the *Independence of India Act*, passed in the British parliament on July 16, 1947 and received royal assent in two days, setting up the two Dominions of India and Pakistan was providing for, among many other things, the territorial division of British India, constituting two provinces each in the former Panjab and Bengal of British India, Abdur Razzaq was a graduate student at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), described as "an institution of higher education for elites within the British Empire, in particular India" (Moscovitch 2012: 35).

The Act also provided a separate Governor-General for each Dominion and a legislature with full authority to make laws, thus bringing British colonial rule to an end. Razzaq was neither surprised nor lamented the facts. He analysed instead. Going beyond safe platitudes, he only asked two elementary questions: what imperatives determined the liquidation of British rule in India and what propelled it to divide their handiwork into two Dominions of India and Pakistan? Conclusions he reached in 1950 may appear new even three quarters of a century later because they are facts of experience. Setting the loose talk aside, Razzaq goes for the plain facts of experience. He records: "When Independence did come, it came in the form of an Act of Parliament". But why? In asking this question, he had to ask, necessarily, probe another: what on earth were the political movements in India doing, only to discover that they had no programme beyond the demand of freedom from foreign domination principle?

non-cooperators also provided the principal cooperators to the British administration in India. "The fact," he rightly observes, "is that the political evolution of India has been the result not merely of a political struggle" (Razzaq 2022: 78). Objective trends include developments in the state apparatus as well as the economic laws of motion underwriting the social formation. The state apparatus in British India, as elsewhere, formed no exception to the rule of forming historical blocs. In colonial India too, the exercise of political power, at least since land revenue ceased to be the principal source of government's income following changes in the economic formation, depended on the native allies of the foreign bureaucracy collaborating with the master.

Razzaq is at his best where he rises to lay bare the secret of Indian nationalism: "Political movements, basically, have voiced the sentiments and expressed the needs of these allies. There is no question of a struggle by the educated middle class against the indigenous

broke the fabric of India's body politic? The mountain Razzaq took on shoulders is to provide the answer: the educated Indian, the Indian bourgeoisie or the middle class, you name it, who was also in part the product of the British rule in India. Abdur Razzaq took the challenge "to explain the division of India with reference to the climate of thought of the educated Indian whose task it was to initiate the political movements in India" and I am obliged to say that he achieved it remarkably well. His method is all the more remarkable inasmuch as he sought the thought-climates of the educated Indian, "in the permanent contributions to the two vernacular literatures of Bengali and Urdu in India," leaving behind resolutions of political bodies, press clippings, etc., to the proper baskets they belong. "In the permanent contributions to these literatures," Razzaq adds, "is enshrined the results of the searchings of the heart that began in the early years of the 19th century," or so Razzaq writes (Razzaq 2022: 5).

The place where Razzaq uncovers the political

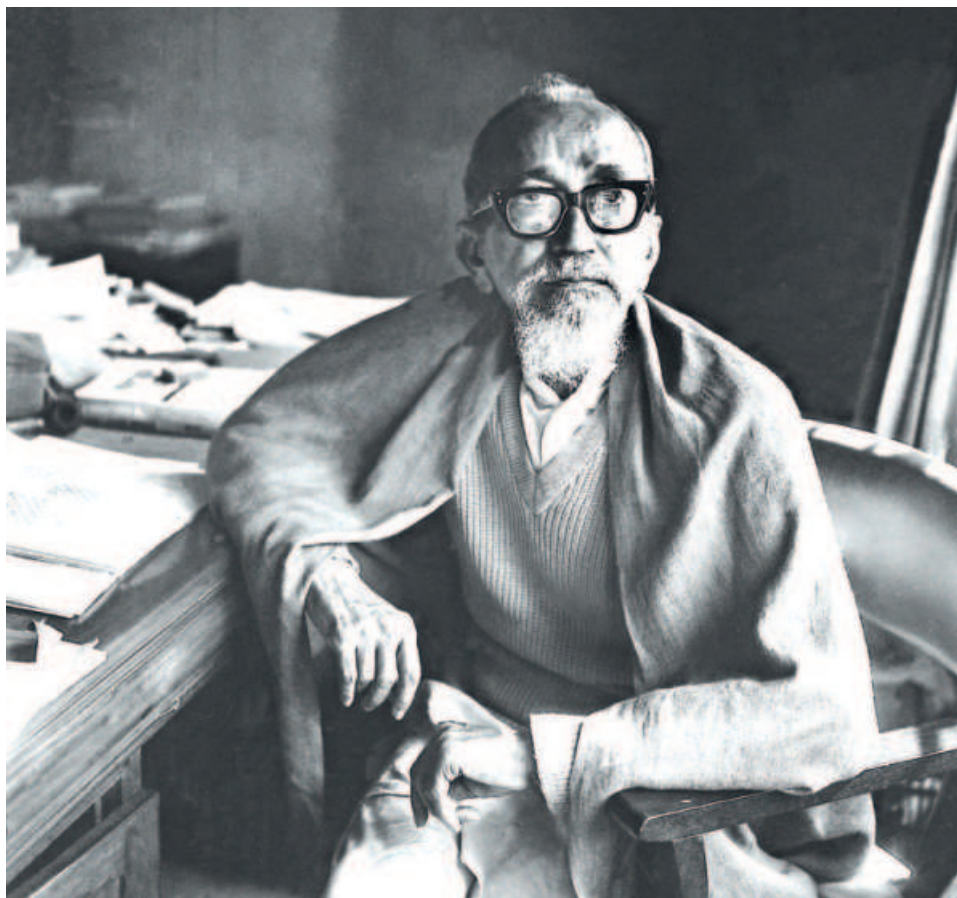
coming middle class" (Razzaq 2022: 104).

If one primitive motif that drove English education in the late 18th century was providing men able to understand the language well enough working as interpreters between the English merchants and indigenous trading classes, the other was the moral regeneration of the people insofar as it would facilitate conversion to Christianity. The content of the education imparted through English, or adapted from the English source materials, had invariably this all-important objective in view. "The first organized attempt to introduce English," as Razzaq notes, "was inextricably connected with the missionary aim of conversion" (Razzaq 2022: 107).

It must be one of those ironies of history, that the missionary efforts at promoting English education to facilitate conversion to Christianity "seemed to produce only a reformed Hinduism", as men like Rammohan Roy were moved by altogether different motives. "The missionary," notes Razzaq, "in fact, by his uncontrolled and indiscreet enthusiasm had achieved an end exactly contrary to his wishes. The indigenous movement for reformation was the direct answer to the proselytizing zeal of the missionary. So far as the larger question of the long-term development in the society was concerned, it had one very unfortunate consequence. The introduction of English which could have been a wholly secular question was as a matter of fact, instrumental in bringing forth a revivalism in the educated class which did not exhaust itself even by the end of the century" (Razzaq 2022: 107-08).

On Rammohan Roy, protagonist of English education and European—at least English—leaning in India, Razzaq only has this unsavory remark to offer: "All through the period of his active life the subjects to which he was mostly devoted were purely religious" (Razzaq 2022: 108). The worse was yet to come though. The owl of Minerva only takes flight after the sun has set. "If the society had contained the devotees of one religion, this religious trend might have developed into a secular outlook. But in the context of India, with devotees of more than one religion, it was merely a prelude to further and disastrous complications" (Razzaq 2022: 109).

With Bankimchandra Chatterjee, who dominates the field of creative activity in the late 19th century, push comes to shove, disastrous complications became a full-fledged *trauerspiel*. In Bankim's most widely appreciated literary work *Ananda Math*, "a piece of most impassioned writing on the theme of Hindu-Muslim struggle," occurs 'Vande Mataram', war song of the sons going to battle against the Muslims. "The book," remarks Razzaq, "is



National Professor Abdur Razzaq.

PHOTO: NASIR ALI MAMUN/PHOTOSEUM

allies of imperialism in India for the simple reason that the educated middle class has essentially belonged to the same class as the allies themselves" (Razzaq 2022: 79).

What, then, was the eventual contribution of *Swaraj* in the actual political development of India's freedom movement? The mentality of a pressure group only, to be brief, and no political programme or party for that matter: "The attempt to fashion a political party with a positive programme was suddenly abandoned. In its stead, the political movements since 1920 formulated their problem in the negative terms of liquidating foreign control over the country" (Razzaq 2022: 4).

Class composition of the political movements, in other words, explains it all. "The Congress consisting as it did of diverse elements and ideologies was united in one thing only—that of achieving freedom from foreign domination. The predominance of pressure group mentality consequent upon the absorption in a negative task, had fatal consequences for the growth of political parties in India." These consequences, of course, included the prevention of working out a common political programme. Abdur Razzaq's thematic question, "Why was there no political party in India?", was thus firmly answered: no programme, no party. "[The] notion of a positive welfare state," interpolated he, "could not be reconciled with 'ploughing the wilderness' to pursue the one-point agenda that the Congress programme had become" (Razzaq 2022: 4-5).

II For Razzaq, the Independence of India Act, 1947, with its provisions for dividing India into two states—India and Pakistan—owes it to this lack of a programme for a positive welfare state. The imaginary opinion which treats the division of 1947 as a function of the Machiavellian tactics of the 'third party' bent on dividing "what nature and history of man in India had designed as a unity," according to Razzaq is not sustainable (Razzaq 2022: 5).

The idea of India's 'natural unity' itself is a cultural idea, 'an article of faith' for a long time, indeed, and moreover, a highly contested idea. There were, to be brief, many nations in India, some developed and some still developing. The 'unity of India' or otherwise has always been an administrative fiat even before the British rule united the sub-continent by the fact of conquest and subordination. "The concept of the unity of India, the one concept on which political India was irreconcilably divided," Razzaq writes, "was primarily derived from the history of British administration in India" (Razzaq 2022: 96).

If it was the Briton who united it, who then

feared excellence of the educated Indian is on the plane of the mind, the second mode on the trail. If this class or class-bloc, if you will, was not good for much else, they were worthy in preventing further split in the successor Dominions by their permanent hostility to self-flagellation.

Abdur Razzaq catches the Indian National Congress out in its own words, as incarnated in an official history, c. 1935. The Congress, according to its official historian, was destined to full two great missions. It, on the one hand, as an avowedly national body was committed to the political objective of uniting all Indians, irrespective of religious creed, caste, or nationality, for attaining freedom from foreign power. While also assuming as "the organ and exponent of national renaissance" the solemn duty of evolving a grand synthesis of various schools of Hindu religious thought, "so as to be able to dispel prejudice and superstition, to renovate and purify the old faith, and reconcile Vedantic idealism with the nationalism of the new age." It is indeed a pity that the Congress did not quite look in the face to see any contradiction between its two great missions. Razzaq's wry remark undeniably reaches its target: "In the degree to which [it] attained success in fulfilling this great mission, the Congress was, by implication, working hard for the division of India, notwithstanding the numerous protestations to the contrary" (Sitaramayya, 1935: 22-23; Razzaq 2022: 5-6).

The third party, however, had supplied the final cause: English education as the royal road to social and economic power. An imbecile middle class, since the third quarter of the fateful 18th century, "came into being through embracing the deliberate attempts to introduce English education" as "all roads to improved status during Company rule in India have been through the connection with company's administration" (Razzaq 2022: 103). As Razzaq has noted neither the great merchants and traders, nor even the members of the landed aristocracy as such were the dominant groups in Indian society, because entry to the landed aristocracy itself was determined primarily by way of connections with the servants of the Company. "The growing classes of Indian employees of the Company," in Razzaq's words, "were the men who were the natural leaders of Indian society. Undoubtedly, they held minor positions in the Company but still as a class they were the most powerful as well as prosperous among the Indians. The principle and the method of their recruitment, as well as the manner in which they were educated and the subjects on which they were educated, determined the intellectual climate of the

Abdur Razzaq's take on the failure of the much trumpeted revolutionary idea of Swaraj in the early 1920s to attain its avowed goal is also deceptively simple. Non-cooperation, an idea integral to its attainment, lacking appropriate sanction, remained in the end only a great idea.

the work of a genius who has portrayed the whole of his talents in the creation of a hymn of hatred against the Muslims" (Razzaq 2022: 115). He leaves us with two questions: "Under the circumstances, how did the national movement come to pick its theme song from such a book? How did the book come to be so popular?" (Razzaq 2022: 115).

It's a pity that I now run out of room for either of these or the question of Muslim reform and revivalist movements in India, something only slightly older than its Hindu counterpart. However, let us say for a thread that the disaster came not when people had gone 'fanatic', but only when the revivalist phase died down yielding place to a 'secular' frame of mind.

Abdur Razzaq's none too edifying remarks on Mohandas Gandhi also seem to be echoed by a later writer who probably couldn't consult him. "Perhaps this is a jarring note," writes Antony Copley, "on which to end this comparison, and it is not intended to suggest that Gandhi was in the least a Fascist; it is simply to comment on the way any political movement with a religious idiom is in danger of arousing a religious and communal response within India's religiously plural society" (Copley 1988: 19).

Salimullah Khan is a Professor at the General Education Department, University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB).

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served to draw attention to changes or impending changes in the manner and method of the exercise of power in India. Independence did not come as a dramatic culmination of mass struggles against an implacable foe, but as a legal undertaking initiated by Parliament to cede control over its previous colony (Razzaq 2022: 2-3).

Abdur Razzaq's take on the failure of the much-trumpeted revolutionary idea of *Swaraj* in the early 1920s to attain its avowed goal is also deceptively simple. Non-cooperation, an idea integral to its attainment, lacking appropriate sanction, remained in the end only a great idea. "The reason behind its failure to bring about *Swaraj*," Razzaq observes, "was that the action taken to create sanction behind the idea was not commensurate with its greatness. The predominant body of men on whose active cooperation the Government was being carried on in the 1920s came from the educated and propertied classes. The great idea alone had no power to move them in the direction of non-cooperation" (Razzaq 2022: 4).

Abdur Razzaq hits the bull's eye with this one simple fact. The 'educated and propertied classes' from which came the ostensible

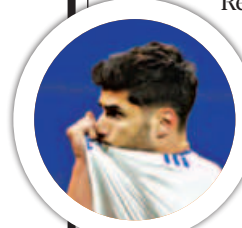


Experienced campaigner Mushfiqur Rahim was seen having a chat with all-rounder Mehedi Hasan Miraz during Bangladesh's first training session at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday ahead of their upcoming three-match ODI series against Afghanistan. [Inset] Afghanistan also enjoyed a fruitful practice session under their interim head coach Stuart Law.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Real extend lead

REUTERS, Madrid



Real Madrid dug deep in a 3-0 home win against lowly Alaves, scoring all three in the last 27 minutes of the game after the visitors gave them a few scares early on and threatened to pull off an upset at the Bernabeu stadium on Saturday.

Marcos Asensio roused the Bernabeu in the 63rd minute with a brilliant curled shot into the top right corner from outside the box.

Vinicius Jr extended the lead in the 80th minute, and Karim Benzema added one more with a stoppage time penalty kick.

The LaLiga leaders moved up to 57 points from 25 games, seven ahead of Sevilla and 14 clear of Real Betis - both of whom have a game in hand over Real. Champions Atletico Madrid are fourth with 42 points, three more than Barcelona.

"Our fans ask us to win always and we have to deliver it, we are used to the pressure, and in the second half they gave us the support we needed to win," Dani Carvajal told reporters.

"I understand the fans being upset, in Real Madrid the highest level is a must," Carvajal said, referring to booing from the stands after a goalless first half against the second from bottom side.

While the result may have looked comfortable, Real looked tired and sluggish from the start, managing only two shots on target in the first half. The win may give Real a bit of breathing room at the top of the table - but not enough to lower the pressure or expectations they face from their fans.

SL deny Aussies perfect summer

REUTERS

Opener Kusal Mendis struck an unbeaten 69 off 58 balls to help secure a consolation five-wicket victory for Sri Lanka, who fired with both bat and ball against Australia in the fifth and final T20I on Sunday.

The hosts posted a middling 154-6 after opting to bat in Melbourne, but the Sri Lankan batsmen finally found their feet to reach 155-5 with one ball remaining, ending the series 4-1 in Australia's favour, although they were hurt by a first loss in any format since losing to England in the Super 12 stage of the T20 World Cup on October 30, 2021.

Mendis batted positively, but sensibly, with captain Dasun Shanaka (35) in an 83-run partnership which powered Sri Lanka to their first win against Australia in any format since 2017.

Aaron Finch said: "Sri Lanka are a very dangerous side and to win four games in a row was really good."

Tigers looking to counter spin threat

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh will take on Afghanistan in the first of three ODIs on February 23 and the visitors' spin threat will be the key component around which the Tigers base their strategies.

Despite Afghanistan's dominant spin attack, national selector Habibur Bashar said that the Tigers, having gotten back key players, are confident going into the series.

"Afghanistan have world-class spinners in their side like Rashid Khan and Mujeeb Ur Rahman alongside others like Qais [Ahmad] who have quality. Afghanistan are also a good side in the white-ball format but we have a stable side at the moment and ODI is a format that experienced players in the side find more favourable. Every side has a key option to rely on and such players can make the difference. But when it comes to international cricket, you have to have the ability to come up with answers to such challenges," Bashar told The Daily Star yesterday.

Bangladesh last played an ODI in July last year during a three-match ODI series against Zimbabwe. Although the core remains intact for the Afghanistan series, there are quite a few changes to the squad.

"Our best players are in the side. Although there may have been some issues with batting previously, batters are finding their rhythm. We expect to

do well with these players. We have been out of ODI cricket for a while and the pressure of doing well at home only adds to the challenge. But I feel the players are confident enough to bring out good performances," Bashar stated.

The wickets will be in focus at Chattogram but the recently-concluded



BPL has seen high scores. "The tracks at Chattogram have been batting-friendly. We will know more when we get there," he concluded.

The Bangladesh squad reached Chattogram yesterday and took part in their first practice session, albeit without two key stars in Shakib Al Hasan and Mustafizur Rahman. It was learned that

both would arrive in Chattogram today.

Squad members alongside staff tested negative for Covid-19 after the latest round of tests on Saturday before entering the bio-secure bubble, but batting coach Jamie Siddons tested positive yet again. Jamie, who initially tested positive on February 12, will have to isolate in Dhaka. However, under current guidelines, he will be able to join the side in a few days without any further tests.

"Siddons returned a positive test once again. But it has been eight days since he initially tested positive. According to the Tokyo 2020 Guidebook, he can join the team without undergoing any test 10 days after returning a positive for the first time. He is also doing well," Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) physician Monzur Hossain Chowdhury informed The Daily Star yesterday.

Afghanistan also underwent their first practice session in Chattogram following a week-long preparation camp in Sylhet. Former Bangladesh coach Stuart Law, who was named interim head coach by Afghanistan on Saturday, oversaw the practice session.

Meanwhile, the Bangladesh Cricket Board is trying to convince concerned authorities to permit the stadium to operate at 50 per cent capacity during the upcoming series. The full version of DRS was not available during the BPL, but will be available for the series against Afghanistan, BCB confirmed.



Nantes stun wasteful PSG

REUTERS, Paris

Nantes stormed into a three-goal halftime lead and then rode their luck to win 3-1 at home on Saturday and hand runaway leaders Paris St Germain their second Ligue 1 loss of the season.

Nantes saw little of the possession, had a player sent off only to see the red card overturned on VAR review and then watched as Neymar squandered a penalty in a thrill-a-minute clash at the Stade de la Beaujoire.

PSG, who started the game 13 points clear of second-placed Olympique de Marseille, pulled a goal back a minute into the second half as Lionel Messi set up Neymar for a clinical finish.

The Brazilian, back in the starting line-up for the first time since November, then had a chance to further reduce the deficit when Apiah again brought down Mbappe, but Neymar's penalty was a weak effort straight at Alban Lafont.

Mbappe then produced an uncharacteristic miss from point-blank range in the final 20 minutes as PSG kept up the pressure but were unable to make use of their numerous chances.

The win saw Nantes leap from 10th to fifth in the Ligue 1 standings as they push for a spot in next season's European club competition.

Conte masterminds 'perfect game'

REUTERS, Manchester

Antonio Conte praised his Tottenham Hotspur side's ability to turn defence into attack as they shrugged off a dreadful recent run to stun Premier League leaders Manchester City with a Harry Kane-inspired 3-2 win at the Etihad Stadium on Saturday.

After three successive league defeats, Tottenham's top-four ambitions but the Italian, who has been under the spotlight all week after an interview in which he appeared to suggest Tottenham had been left weakened in the transfer window, masterminded the "perfect game" to stop the Man City juggernaut.

Tottenham only had 28% of possession against City, but defended diligently and somehow always looked a threat on the counter-attack with Kane, who scored twice including the 96th minute winner, linking superbly with Son Heung-min.

City had made it 2-2 in stoppage time through Riyad Mahrez's penalty, and it looked likely that the leaders would even snatch a last-gasp win, but Tottenham had other ideas as they revived their hopes of challenging for



the top four. "You know when you play Manchester City you will concede 70% of possession. But I say to my players that when you are defending, in your mind you must always be attacking. In your mind you want to win the ball and attack," Conte said.

"To have this thought, in the final minutes, their goal could have killed you. Instead my players wanted to win. I think in every moment of the game my team wanted to attack them. Every time we had the ball I was thinking we could hurt them." The surprise win lifted Tottenham back into seventh spot.



Beijing doused its Olympic flame on Sunday night, closing a Games that will be remembered as much for the extremes of its anti-Covid-19 measures as the performances on display. Chinese President Xi Jinping was on hand for the snowflake-themed ceremony at the Bird's Nest stadium, where IOC President Thomas Bach described the Beijing Games as "truly exceptional" before declaring them closed.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Sports Clinic to begin activities

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh Association of Sports Medicine (BASM) has decided to begin activities of the Sports Medicine Clinic to ensure modern treatments to athletes.

The decision was made at the first meeting of the newly-formed BASM executive committee on Saturday, chaired by its president and BSSMU vice-chancellor professor Dr. Md. Sharfuddin Ahmed. "The BASM, along with the Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical University, will begin activities of the Sports Medicine Clinic immediately with the help of experts to ensure the modern and contemporary health service and treatments to sportspersons and the individuals related to the sports," said a BASM statement today.

The establishment of a Sports Medicine Institute at the BSSMU was also finalised.

CAP 10 OF THE STEEL INDUSTRY
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RECORD HOLDER
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FIRING OF SHARIF ACC puts up 13 allegations

The former officer refutes them all

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three days after sacking Sharif Uddin, the Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday came up with 13 allegations against the former officer whose investigation into a land acquisition scam made headlines in 2020 and 2021.

ACC Secretary Mahubb Hossain at a press conference at his office in the capital said Sharif was sacked to bring order to the commission.

"He [Sharif] tortured Idris, an accused in a graft case filed on March 10, 2020. It is a clear violation of the law," Mahubb said.

Soon after the ACC press conference, Sharif sent an email in the evening to journalists with his response to the allegations.

He said Chattogram Medical College Hospital in a report on January 29 concluded that Idris was not tortured.

Another allegation mentioned that Sharif did not properly investigate the case regarding the land acquisition scam in Cox's Bazar.

Sharif said he submitted his investigation report to the deputy director in January 2021. "If there were loopholes, why wasn't it mentioned at the time?"

Another allegation against Sharif mentioned that he imposed no debit status on 33 bank accounts of



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Poet Quazi Rosy passes away

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Ekushey Padak-winning poet Quazi Rosy, who played a significant role as a prosecution witness in the war crimes case against executed Jamaat leader Abdul Quader Mollah, died at a city hospital yesterday.

She was 74. Former MP Rosy, also a freedom fighter, was hospitalised on January 30 after contracting Covid-19, said her daughter Sumi Sikander.

President Abdul Hamid, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury and many cabinet members and noted personalities and organisations expressed condolences at the demise of Rosy, a lawmaker in a reserved seat for women in the 10th national parliament.

Born in Satkhira on

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4

Diplomacy on amid war fears

Putin says US, Nato must take Russia's security demands 'seriously' over Ukraine



Protestors gather to oppose a US war with Russia over Ukraine at Grand Central Terminal in the Manhattan borough of New York City, US on Saturday.

PHOTO: AFP

AGENCIES

Last-ditch diplomatic efforts were underway yesterday to prevent what Western powers warn could be the imminent Russian invasion of Ukraine and a catastrophic European war.

Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskiy yesterday called for an immediate ceasefire in the eastern part of the country, where clashes between pro-Russian separatists and Ukrainian forces intensified in recent days.

He also said Ukraine supports peace talks within the Trilateral Contact Group, where Ukraine

participates along with Russia and the Organization for Security and Co-Operation in Europe (OSCE).

"We stand for intensifying the peace process. We support the immediate convening of the TCG and the immediate introduction of a regime of silence," Zelenskiy said on Twitter.

French President Emmanuel Macron yesterday called Russian leader Vladimir Putin about the situation in Ukraine.

During talks with Macron which lasted 105 minutes, Putin blamed Kyiv's 'provocations' for escalation on frontline and said US and Nato

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4



Facing it together

SHAFIA KHATUN

As the vice president of Women's Students' Union, I was responsible for organising female students. I sent some of them to girls' schools to bring the girls to the meeting at Amtala [February 21, 1952]. I can't forget their enthusiasm for the movement. They have immense contribution to the language movement.

The meeting started around 11:00 am. Initially, student leaders were not in favour of violating Section 144.

It created a heated debate. Finally, someone suggested that students should come out in groups of four. I was adamant to break Section 144. I told them to take a firm decision and march forward unitedly instead of in groups. Seeing them hesitant, I denounced the meeting and went to the women's common room. After some time, some male students came and requested us to attend the meeting in the greater interest of students' unity. Then we decided to go and face it together.

Meanwhile, police took position in the campus area. As the meeting ended, students started coming out in groups. We were in the third batch. Police stopped the first two batches of male protesters and rounded them up. But they let us march forward. When we reached the main gate of the Medical College, police started firing tear gas shells. I was seriously affected by tear gas. Someone took me to the Medical College for treatments.

After getting some first aid, I came out and tried again to organise female students. Meanwhile, police opened fire on students. I managed to gather some girls, and took shelter at

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4

কোটি বারেন মানিনি তো হার, একুশ অমর, একুশ আমার অহংকার
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ICJ ROHINGYA CASE Fresh hearing, fresh hope

PORIMOL PALMA

The International Court of Justice will begin a fresh round of hearings into the Rohingya genocide case amid renewed hope for justice today, a little over two years after The Gambia filed the case with the court.

The first round of hearings from Myanmar and The Gambia will be held at The Hague on February 21 and 23 and the second round on February 25 and 28 in a hybrid format, combining virtual and in-person presence.

The Gambia, backed by the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), opened the case against Myanmar at the ICJ in November 2019 for failing to prevent the genocide against Rohingyas.

About a million Rohingya refugees, who faced persecution in Myanmar's Rakhine State, are sheltered in Bangladesh. The largest influx of Rohingyas - some 750,000 - to Bangladesh was in 2017 following a military crackdown that the UN said had "genocidal intent".

After a preliminary hearing, the ICJ found that The Gambia's claims were substantial

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

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