



And we know that when cases increase, so do deaths. ... We call on all countries to remain vigilant. The pandemic is not over.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus as world sees 8 percent rise in Covid-19 cases in a week

YOUR RIGHT TO KNOW

SECOND EDITION

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'Tear down' the new wall in Europe

Ukraine president pleads as shelling kills dozens; Biden slams 'war criminal' Putin

AGENCIES

Ukraine's leader yesterday charged Moscow with building a new Cold War wall across Europe "between freedom and bondage", as his government said Russian shelling had killed 21 civilians near one city.

Three weeks in to their devastating invasion, Russian forces also stood accused of bombing a theatre sheltering many civilians and marked with the word "children".

Kyiv emerged from a 35-hour curfew to new destruction, as Russian troops try to encircle the Ukrainian capital as part of their slow-moving offensive.

Beneath a Kyiv apartment block damaged by a downed rocket, AFP journalists saw a distraught man crouched over a body draped in a bloodstained cloth, after the latest in a series of early-morning attacks.

The 21 were killed when overnight artillery fire pounded a school and a cultural centre in the town of Merefia outside the hard-hit eastern city of Kharkiv, regional prosecutors said.

In besieged Mariupol to the south, searchers were combing through the smoking rubble of the Drama Theatre where more than 1,000 civilians had been sheltering in a basement bomb shelter, and Ukrainian officials said that Russian shelling was continuing.

Kremlin denied it had targeted the theatre, and also rejected an order by the top UN court to halt its Ukraine invasion.

President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday addressed the German parliament a day after a speech to the US Congress, when he secured \$1 billion in new US military aid, including Stinger anti-aircraft missiles used against Soviet forces in Afghanistan.

Zelensky reached back to that Cold War era as he drew on a 1987 speech in Berlin by US president Ronald Reagan: "Dear Mr Scholz, tear down this Wall," he implored German Chancellor Olaf Scholz.

"It's not a Berlin Wall -- it is a Wall in SEE PAGE 2 COL 8 MORE ON PAGE 12

HOLIDAY NOTICE

The Daily Star offices will remain closed today on the occasion of Shab-e-Barat. Therefore, the newspaper will not be published tomorrow.



"I returned home empty-handed for the last two days. I am here again today to get some essentials. We were already struggling with daily expenses, but this time the prices have just gone out of reach."

Nasima, a resident of Kazipara

FOOD SAFETY SCHEMES

- Vulnerable Group Feeding
- Vulnerable Group Development
- Open Market Sales
- Gratuitous Relief
- Employment Generation Programme for the Poorest
- Food for Work/Money for Work
- Test Relief
- Food friendly Programme

OMS

The food ministry runs 1,948 OMS centres across the country -- of which 137 are in Dhaka city -- where lentil, edible oil, onion and sugar are currently sold at a subsidised price.

RATION CARD

First introduced in the sub-continent during the British rule centring on the famine in 1943; abolished at the beginning of the 1990s.

PRICES IN DHAKA KITCHEN MARKETS

ITEMS	LOWEST TO HIGHEST March 18, 2019	LOWEST TO HIGHEST March 16, 2022
Rice (coarse)	Tk 38-42	Tk 45-48
Soybean (1 litre bottle)	Tk 100-106	Tk 165-170
Lentil (small)	Tk 85-95	Tk 115-130
Flour	Tk 27-30	Tk 35-40
Sugar	Tk 50-55	Tk 78-80

SOURCE: TCB



SUBSIDISED ESSENTIALS

OMS can't keep up with queues

HELEMUL ALAM and SHAHEEN MOLLAH

Nasima Begum, in the advanced stages of pregnancy and carrying her two-year-old, was waiting for over two hours at the designated point in the capital's Kazipara Bus Stand for a TCB truck to arrive with daily essentials.

The 25-year-old defied her doctor's advice to avoid strenuous activities in her desperation to buy essentials at lower prices from a mobile shop of the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB). But the truck was nowhere in sight.

"I returned home empty-handed for the last two days. I am here again today to get some essentials. We were already struggling with daily expenses, but this time the prices have just gone out of reach," said Nasima, whose husband, a construction worker, is the breadwinner in the family.

Like Nasima, several thousand low-income people and middle-class residents in Dhaka have been scrambling to buy essentials at different open market sales (OMS) points of the TCB.

OMS is a government price support programme for the low-income group to cushion the blow of rising food prices. The food ministry is running 1,948 OMS centres across the country -- of which 177 are in Dhaka city -- where lentil, edible oils, onion and sugar are sold at subsidised prices.

However, the queues in front of the TCB trucks are getting longer than ever with many returning home empty-handed as the supply of goods remains inadequate.

Talking to The Daily Star, a number of people said their suffering was due to a flawed system.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Ration cards a pressing need now

HELEMUL ALAM

The demand for the reintroduction of ration cards has been growing in recent times with the continued rise in the price of essentials.

The High Court on Tuesday, in response to a writ petition, ordered the government authorities concerned to distribute daily essentials -- edible oil, onion, rice, wheat, sugar, and lentils -- among the people through ration cards under the open market sale (OMS) policy.

But the OMS has proved to be too scanty to provide the support to the poor who often return empty-handed from long queues before OMS trucks. This has prompted many,

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

EDIBLE OIL PRICES

Hike on despite the tax cuts

AKANDA MUHAMMAD JAHID and MUHAMMAD SUMAN

The prices of edible oil have gone up at the wholesale level yesterday despite the 30 percent tax exemption at the import and production stages.

Amid public outcry over the spiral in the prices of edible oil, the government on March 14 waived 15 percent value-added tax at the production stage and 5 percent at the retail level. Two days later, another 10 percent VAT was cut at the import stage.

And yet, the wholesale prices of soybean and palm oils increased by Tk 200-Tk 280 per maund in a day to Tk 6,200 and Tk 5,250 respectively at Khatunganj in Chattogram.

Retailers at several kitchen markets in Dhaka were seen selling a litre of bottled soybean oil for Tk 168 while the five-litre bottle was selling at Tk 795. Loose soybean oil was not available at most of the shops in the capital yesterday.

However, data from the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) showed that the price of bottled soybean oil has remained unchanged in Dhaka since March 14.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

AKS

100% REFINED STEEL



Abul Mansur Ahmad's 43rd anniversary of death today



STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Today is the 43rd death anniversary of Abul Mansur Ahmad, a renowned litterateur, journalist, and politician of the sub-continent. He died in 1979.

One of the greatest satirists of Bangla literature, he was also a pioneer of modern and progressive journalism. He worked for prominent newspapers such as Krishak, Nabajug, Sultan, and Mohammadi, and was editor of the Kolkata-based Daily Ittehad from 1946 to 1948.

He wrote about the language issue from early 1940s and contributed to the Language Movement as

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



The death of a PLAYGROUND

Used as a field for 50 years, Tetultola now on way to becoming a police station

HELEMUL ALAM

At first glance it may not seem like much: a small piece of land, devoid of greenery or any sort of facility. But to locals, especially children, the Tetultola playground has always been a place to escape from the daily grind of life.

But the same place that was full of frolicking children even two months back, a place that has welcomed all for the last 50 years, is now surrounded by barbed wires.

On January 31, Dhaka deputy commissioner's office handed over the playground's land to Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) to set up an establishment for Kalabagan Police Station, which is currently located at a rented place on 30 North Road.

Amid a dearth of open spaces in the capital, this is yet another example of how the city dwellers are continuing to be deprived of playgrounds and parks.

However, residents refuse to give up hope to retain the playground. For several months, they've been demonstrating with the demand to keep it as it is, for the sake of children.

Over the years, Tetultola playground, which covers around one bigha of land, has been in use in multiple ways. It has acted as a playground, an Eidgah, and a place for namaz e- janaza.

"There is no other place for our children to play. We've been playing in the field for the last 50 years," said Syeda Ratna, coordinator of Tetultola Math Rokkhyo Andolon.

According to Kalabagan resident Masud Mahub Shamim, a former engineer of DIT used to own the land. After he left the country, it was recorded as abandoned property through the then president's order, following the Liberation War. It then came under the housing and public works ministry.

After the place was announced abandoned, different people and

groups tried to grab the land using fake documents, but each of their ploys was foiled by locals, Shamim added.

On behalf of locals, Shamim even wrote a letter to the prime minister on January 20, 2014, requesting her to save the land from grabbers. Following the letter, the premier had directed authorities to look after the matter, he said.

Contacted, an official of the DC office said the land was never a

commissioner (Ramna division) of DMP, Dhaka DC, the land's custodian and a representative of the government, handed over the land through the national land allotment committee. Police received the land after paying the necessary amount.

This was a government decision. As there is no permanent establishment for Kalabagan Police Station, they applied for the land, said another DMP

respectively, Habib said.

According to the playground, open spaces, parks and water bodies conservation act, no one can change the characteristics of a playground. As the place has been used as a playground for a long time, changing its characteristics will be illegal, he said.

According to a 2014 High Court judgement, there is a specific direction for the DC office to take action against any encroachment on open spaces or playgrounds, but the office is not taking any steps in this situation.

Urging city mayors to save the playground, Habib said according to the Local Government (City Corporation) Act 2009, city corporations can protect these kinds of playgrounds on an immediate basis.

Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association (Bela), said choosing a police station instead of a playground is the most

"uncivilised" decision. By no standards of urban planning can this be justified. She said the plan must be scrapped, or law enforcers will come face to face with a generation that will never respect them.

Stressing the need to protect the playground, Adil Mohamad Khan, former general secretary of Bangladesh Institute of

Planners, said ideally, a neighbourhood park is required for every 5,000 people, while a community park is necessary for 20,000-30,000 people in a ward. More than one city park is required for a large city.

Thirty percent of wards in Dhaka city

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

'A threat to freedom of expression'

Tech companies, rights bodies slam draft rules on social media

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The new draft social media regulation poses a threat to freedom of expression, said Global Network Initiative (GNI), a collective of top tech companies and rights bodies of the world.

The collective's members include Meta, Microsoft, Uber, Zoom, Telenor Group, Yahoo, Google, Nokia, Vodafone, Verizon, Human Rights Watch, Wikimedia, Committee to Protect Journalists and more.

GNI made these remarks in a letter sent to Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission on March 9.

"We are concerned by the very broad scope of the bill, from the companies and content it covers, to the significant, often-vaguely defined obligations and enforcement authorities, to potential 'traceability' and data-sharing provisions that may infringe on privacy rights," said the letter.

The statement expressed alarm at the fact that the regulation includes a "sweeping range of content and conduct that intermediaries

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Country observes birth anniversary of Bangabandhu

BSS, Dhaka

The birth anniversary of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and National Children's Day were observed yesterday in a befitting manner with various socio-political and cultural organisations holding diverse programmes across the country.

Ruling Awami League and political and socio-cultural organisations placed wreaths at the portrait of Bangabandhu, and offered munajat seeking eternal peace of his departed soul.

People from all walks of life thronged Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at the capital's Dhanmondi, and made a vow to work together following Bangabandhu's ideals. The day was a public holiday.

On this day in 1920, the nation's architect was born in Tungipara of Gopalganj. Marking the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3

Bangladesh should respond to UN concerns

Says HRW on human rights

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Human Rights Watch (HRW) yesterday urged the government to meaningfully respond to United Nations' concerns regarding grave allegations of torture, enforced disappearance, and extrajudicial killings in the country.

The US has already sanctioned the country's Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) under the Global Magnitsky Human Rights Accountability Act for serious rights violations and should be excluded from UN peacekeeping deployment, the New York-based human rights organisation demanded in a report published on its website.

On March 3, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights urged the government to follow through on its commitment to respond to allegations of torture reported during a 2019 review of its obligations under the Convention against Torture.

That same day, during a meeting with UN Secretary-General António Guterres, Foreign

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



On the occasion of Bangabandhu's birth anniversary, an art competition was held in front of Suhrawardy Udyan yesterday morning. With pen, pencil, paper and colour, children participating in the contest let their imaginations loose and were awarded for their efforts afterwards.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

'Not ready to let it end'

Curtain falls on Amar Ekushey Boi Mela

DIPAN NANDY

It was a bittersweet scene at the Amar Ekushey Boi Mela yesterday.

The last day of the 31-day long book fair was marked by both the joy of finally having a book fair after the difficult days of the pandemic and the sorrow that inevitably came with its conclusion.

This year's fair was the longest ever, which saw a significant volume of sales, as well as incessant attendance from booklovers, who said even 31 days were not enough for this much awaited occasion.

Even though the fair started at 11:00am yesterday, book purchases went on even when the stall lights were turning off at 9:00pm, seeming as though the readers wanted to stretch out the fair even longer.

"As a booklover, I look forward to this fair all year round," said Tariq Islam, a young reader. "The few days that the book fair go on are days that's spent in immense joy."

Eminent novelist Imdadul Haque Milon said the fair fared far better this year, since more than 3,000 books have been published. In the evening, the closing ceremony of the book fair, organised by Bangla Academy, was held at the main stage. There was also a cultural programme at Suhrawardy Udyan.

PRAYER
TIMING
MAR 18

	Fazr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	5-00	12-30	4-30	6-14	7-45
Jamaat	5-35	1-15	4-45	6-18	8-15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

In Memory of Bushra Hossain, 1974-2020



You left in the spring, so we console ourselves
Each year when the flowers bloom

CTG AIRPORT
Man held with 10 gold bars

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg
Customs officials yesterday detained a man with 10 gold bars at Chattogram Shah Amanat International Airport.
The detainee is Sazzad Hossain, a passenger of Biman Bangladesh flight that landed at the airport from Jeddah around 11:30am, said Neyamul Hasan, deputy commissioner of Customs. The bars were detected hidden in a lithium battery inside a toy car.

A threat to freedom

FROM PAGE 3
"However, the draft regulation fails to define what 'due diligence' means in this context, leaving intermediaries clueless as to how to protect themselves and their employees from such liability," said GNL.
The association also said the harsh penalties proposed in the regulation will put undue pressure on companies to restrict content or share user data. The statement also expressed concern about the requirements to break, or compromise end-to-end encryption in secure messaging.
The statement points out that social media intermediaries must appoint a locally-based compliance officer who can be held culpable for not doing "due diligence" in making sure that the regulation is followed.

Country

FROM PAGE 3
National Implementation Committee for Birth Centenary Celebration of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman organised a special programme titled "Tungipara: Hridoye Pitribhumi".
The programme included paying tributes to Bangabandhu by placing wreaths at his grave at Tungipara, a discussion and cultural function.
In the morning, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina paid tributes to Bangabandhu by placing a wreath at his portrait in front of Bangabandhu Memorial Museum at Dhanmondi-32 in the capital. Awami League also paid tributes to Bangabandhu by placing wreaths there.
President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina also paid homage to Bangabandhu by placing wreaths at his grave at Tungipara in Gopalganj. Afterwards, they stood in solemn silence for some time as a mark of respect.
AL President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina joined a programme at Tungipara in the afternoon. Another discussion will be held at Tungipara on March 18.
A delegation of AL central working committee also paid homage to Bangabandhu by placing a wreath at his grave at Tungipara and joined a doa mahfil there.
Marking the day, special prayers were held at all the places of worship.
Besides, Bangladesh Betar, Bangladesh Television and other private TV channels and radio stations aired special programmes highlighting the significance of the day.

Abul Mansur Ahmad

FROM PAGE 3
the editor of the Ittehad.
A very successful politician, Abul Mansur Ahmad played a key role in the formation of the Awami Muslim League. He served as vice-president of the organisation from 1953 to 1958.
Abul Mansur Ahmad was the author of the famous Ekush Dafa (21-point programme) election manifesto of Jukta Front in the 1954 election through which the Muslim League was ousted from power.
The Ekush Dafa was the first comprehensive articulation of the political, economic and cultural demands of the Bangalees of the then eastern part of Pakistan.
He was elected a member of East Bengal Provincial Assembly in that election, and served as health minister in the United Front cabinet under Sher-e-Bangla AK Fazlul Huq. In 1955, he was elected a member of Pakistan Constituent Assembly.
He was the minister for education in the United Front government of East Pakistan in 1956 and the minister for commerce and trade in 1956-1957. After the promulgation of martial law by Ayub Khan in 1958, he was imprisoned and subsequently released in 1962.
He then retired from politics.
Abul Mansur Ahmad was known for his strong stand in favour of regional autonomy of East Pakistan. He also made remarkable contributions to industrialisation of the long neglected East Pakistan.
He always propagated

secularism in a manner unparalleled in the forties, fifties and sixties.
Ahmad's publications include great satires like "Aina", "Asmani Purdah", "Gulliver Safar Nama" and "Food Conference". He also penned insightful works on social and political history of Bengal such as "Bangladesher Culture". He has two autobiographical writings -- "Atma Katha" and "Amar Dekha Rajniti Panchash Bachar".
He was born in 1898 in Dhanikhola village of Trishal, Mymensingh.
In 2015, five researchers were awarded for their works on Abul Mansur Ahmad -- Dr Nurul Amin, Dr Rajib Humayun, Dr Chengis Khan, Dr Mizanur Rahman, and Imran Mahfuz. A special honorary memorial award was given to Professor Emeritus Dr Rafiqul Islam for editing a six-volume work of Abul Mansur Ahmad.
Marking the 43rd death anniversary of Abul Mansur Ahmad, a discussion on his life and works will be organised by Sanjeeban Jubo Sangstha at the Muslim Institute, Mymensingh at 11:00am tomorrow.
Notably, this year five contestants have won two separate book review competitions on two books of Abul Mansur Ahmad, organised by Abul Mansur Ahmad Smriti Parishad.
Jannatul Ferdous (first), Munaja Mahin (second), and Aminul Haque (third) are the winners for review of the book "Atma Katha", while Fahim Ahmed Mandal (first) and Puja Paul (second) have won the competition for review of the book "Amar Dekha Rajniti Panchash Bachar".

FOOD SECURITY

Bangladesh, WB sign \$120m financing deal

UNB, Dhaka
The government and World Bank have signed a \$120 million financing agreement to help improve the irrigated agricultural and fisheries production and increase the incomes of 170,000 poor people vulnerable to climate change.
The Climate-Smart Agriculture and Water Management Project will improve climate resilience by modernising flood management, drainage and irrigation infrastructures.
The project will help with climate resilient and improved irrigation, flood management and drainage service covering 120,000 hectares of land, which will reduce damage to crops from floods by 60 percent, said the global lending agency yesterday.
"Bangladesh's success is well-rooted in the agriculture sector. With a large population and scarce arable land, it is a major accomplishment for the country to achieve its level of food production today. But the climate change and increased natural disasters pose threat to food security," said Dandan Chen, acting WB country director for Bangladesh and Bhutan.
The agreement was signed by Fatima Yasmin, secretary, Economic Relations Division, and Dandan Chen on behalf of Bangladesh and World Bank, respectively.
The credit is from the World Bank's International Development Association (IDA), and has a 35-year term, including a five-year grace period.

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Seller is very motivated.
Contact-01751321602

Bangladesh should

FROM PAGE 3
Minister AK Abdul Momen reportedly asked him to appoint Bangladeshi nationals to more high-level positions in UN peacekeeping operations, including at the level of the special representative of the secretary-general, the report mentioned.
"The Bangladesh government is seeking greater influence at the UN while simultaneously ignoring the UN's inquiries into human rights violations by Bangladesh security forces," said Brad Adams, Asia director at Human Rights Watch. "Bangladesh authorities are only jeopardizing the country's standing in UN peacekeeping operations by ignoring allegations of abuse and failing to clean up their act."
In July 2019, following its review of Bangladesh's record, the UN Committee against Torture noted that "in general, one got the impression that the police, as well as other law enforcement agencies, were able to operate with impunity and zero accountability."
The rights body recommended that the government "establish an independent vetting procedure, with appropriate UN guidance, for all military and police personnel proposed for deployment in UN peace missions and ensure that no person or unit implicated in the commission of torture, extrajudicial killing, disappearances or other serious human rights violations is selected for service."
However, the government has not demonstrated any efforts to improve vetting, and instead is seeking more senior UN peacekeeping positions for its police and military personnel, HRW claimed.
HRW added, "The government has not responded to repeated requests by the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances to visit Bangladesh, first sent on March 12, 2013, and most recently re-issued on April 23, 2020."
According to Bangladesh human rights groups, nearly 600 people have been forcibly disappeared by security forces since Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina took office in 2009.
While some victims have been released or produced in court after weeks or months of secret detention, others became victims of extrajudicial killings that are falsely claimed to be deaths during gunfights, HRW said.
HRW has documented 86 of these cases in which victims remain missing. The government has repeatedly denied that security forces routinely commit enforced disappearances.

The World Bank seeks to recruit a dynamic professional as a Financial Sector Specialist, based in Dhaka, Bangladesh, for the World Bank's South Asia Region's Finance, Competitiveness and Innovation Global Practice Team. This is a 3-year Term appointment.
The candidate should have a Master's degree in Finance, Economics, Management or a related field; with a minimum of 5 years of working experience on financial sector development issues in Bangladesh, including in the private sector and/or public sector (e.g., central bank or other financial sector regulatory bodies), and/or international organizations, with strong track record of results and impeccable reputation.
This is a country office position in Bangladesh subject to local recruitment under the Bangladesh compensation plan. The World Bank offers a locally competitive package.
Details (req16540) are available in the World Bank Careers website: www.worldbank.org/jobs. All applications must be submitted through this website. The World Bank Group is committed to achieving diversity in terms of gender, nationality, culture and educational background. Individuals with disabilities are equally encouraged to apply.
Closing date is March 26, 2022.
Only short-listed candidates will be contacted for interview.
Working For a World Free of Poverty

THE WORLD BANK
Financial Sector Specialist
The World Bank seeks to recruit a dynamic professional as a Financial Sector Specialist, based in Dhaka, Bangladesh, for the World Bank's South Asia Region's Finance, Competitiveness and Innovation Global Practice Team. This is a 3-year Term appointment.
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Working For a World Free of Poverty

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Executive Engineer
District: Panchagarh
www.lged.gov.bd
Memo No. 46.02.7700.000.14.001.22.543
Date: 16.03.2022
Invitation for Re-Tender (Works, OTM)
e-Tender Notice No. 27/2021-22
e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for 02 (two) Nos. Package for this district.
Sl. No. Name of work and package No. ID No.
01. 1. Minor Maintenance of 6.90m RCC Box Culvert on Boda-Panchpir GC (Menogram) via Boloram Hat Road at Ch. 673m [177252004]. 2. Minor Maintenance of 15.10m RCC Box Culvert on Sakowa GC-Fulbari GC via Panchpir GC Road at Ch. 8153m [177252002]. 3. Minor Maintenance of 10.30m RCC Box Culvert on Sakowa GC-Fulbari GC via Panchpir GC Road at Ch. 5385m [177252002]. 4. Minor Maintenance of 6.90m RCC Box Culvert on Boda-Panchpir GC (Menogram) via Boloram Hat Road at Ch. 953m [0177252004] & 5. Minor Maintenance of 6.80m RCC Box Culvert on Sakowa GC-Fulbari GC via Panchpir GC Road at Ch. 981m [0177252002] under Boda Upazila District: Panchagarh, Package No. SupRB/Pan/Main/21-22/W-240
02. Construction of 30.0m long PSC Girder Bridge on Harivasha UP to Joidal G.C (RH0) road via Jinnathpara & Bangpukirhat road at Chainage: 330m under Replacement category [177733003] of Sadar Upazila, District: Panchagarh, Package No. SupRB/Pan/Replace [21-22/W-166
This is online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.
To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited through online from any registered bank branches up to 04-April-2022, 16.00 for ID No. and 11-April-2022, 16.00 for ID No. 673820. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).
Md. Shamsuzzaman
Executive Engineer
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এতদ্বারা প্রকৃত পরিবেশক বা সরবরাহকারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট থেকে The Public Procurement Act-2006, The Public Procurement Rules-2008 এবং Standard Request for Quotation (SRFQ) Procurement for Goods অনুযায়ী সীলমোহরকৃত বামে বর্ণিত শর্তাবলী অনুযায়ী দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাবে।
১। মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ অভ্যন্তরীণ সম্পদ বিভাগ।
২। দরপত্র/অভিদরপত্র কাস্টমস, এন্ড্রাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট, রংপুর।
৩। ব্যয়ের উদ্দেশ্য সরকার অনুমোদিত বাজেট। অর্থনৈতিক কোড-৪১১২১০১।
৪। দরপত্র আহ্বানকারীর নাম কাস্টমস, এন্ড্রাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট, রংপুর।
৫। দরপত্র তফসিল প্রান্তির দরপত্রের নাম সাধারণ শাখা, কাস্টমস, এন্ড্রাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট, রংপুর।
৬। দরপত্র গ্রহণের দরপত্রের নাম ও ঠিকানা সাধারণ শাখা, কাস্টমস, এন্ড্রাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট, রংপুর।
৭। দরপত্র বোলার দরপত্রের নাম ও ঠিকানা কাস্টমস, এন্ড্রাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট (সদর দরপত্র), জি.এল রায় রোড, পূর্ব কামালকাছনা, রংপুর।
৮। দরপত্র বিরতনের শেষ তারিখ ও সময় ১৩/০৪/২০২২খ্রিঃ তারিখ দুপুর ১১.৩০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
৯। দরপত্র দাখিলের শেষ তারিখ ও সময় ১৩/০৪/২০২২খ্রিঃ তারিখ দুপুর ১১.৩০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
১০। দরপত্র বোলার স্থান, তারিখ ও সময় ১৩/০৪/২০২২খ্রিঃ তারিখ বেলা ৩.০০ ঘটিকা, কাস্টমস, এন্ড্রাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট, রংপুর।
১১। দরপত্র দাখিলের যোগ্যতা সমন্বিত গাড়ি সরবরাহে সক্ষম এমন অভিজ্ঞতা সম্পন্ন প্রকৃত বাণিজ্যিক প্রতিষ্ঠান/আমদানিকারক/পরিবেশক বা এজেন্ট/সরবরাহকারী প্রতিষ্ঠান, যারা সিদ্ধিভলে বর্ণিত শর্তাবলী পালনে সক্ষম।
১২। কাজের সংশ্লিষ্ট বিবরণ কাস্টমস, এন্ড্রাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট, রংপুর দরপত্র বাহরকারে জন্য নিম্নলিখিত (০১ (একটি) জীপ ও ০১ (একটি) কার সরবরাহ সরক্রেতা (বিজ্ঞপ্তিত টেকনিক্যাল স্পেসিফিকেশনে উল্লেখ রয়েছে)।
ক। ২০২১/২০২২ মডেলের নতুন জীপ ও ২০২২ মডেলের নতুন কার।
খ। সিডিউল বর্ণিত কার ও জীপ গাড়ির টেকনিক্যাল Specification শর্ত মোতাবেক।
১৩। সিডিউল মূল্য প্রতি সেট ১,০০০/- (এক হাজার) টাকা।
১৪। টেন্ডার সিডিউলটি সিডিউলে বর্ণিত শর্ত মোতাবেক।
১৫। বিশেষ শর্তাবলী (ক) দরপত্র সম্পর্কিত সকল কার্যাবলি হালনাগাদ পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট আইন, ২০০৬ ও পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট বিধিমালা, ২০০৮ অনুযায়ী পরিচালিত হবে।
(খ) দরপত্রের সহিত নিম্নবর্ণিত দলিলাদির সত্যায়িত ফটোকপি অবশ্যই দাখিল করতে হবে।
১। হালনাগাদ নবায়নকৃত ড্রেড লাইসেন্স।
২। হালনাগাদ আয়কর পরিশোধের সনদ।
৩। জাতি রেজিস্ট্রেশন সার্টিফিকেট।
৪। দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি প্রকাশের তারিখ পর্যন্ত ব্যাক সলভেন্ট সার্টিফিকেট যাবে স্থিতির পরিমাণ উল্লেখ থাকবে।
৫। টেন্ডার ডকুমেন্টের সাথে বর্ণিত দলিলাদি।
(গ) অনুচ্ছেদ-১২ তে বর্ণিত পণ্যের দরপত্রদাতা/দরপত্রের সাথে যোগিত মূল্যের ৩% হারে আর্কাইভেড হিসেবে বেকেন তফসিলী ব্যাংক হতে পে-অর্ডার/ব্যাংক ড্রাফট এর মাধ্যমে জামানত (ফেরতযোগ্য) কমিশনার, কাস্টমস, এন্ড্রাইজ ও ভ্যাট কমিশনারেট, রংপুর এর অনুকূলে দরপত্রের সাথে দাখিল করতে হবে।
(ঘ) বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক, রংপুর শাখা/সোনালী ব্যাংক লিমিটেড, কর্পোরেট শাখা, রংপুর এ ১,০০০/- (এক হাজার) টাকা (অফেন্ডেযোগ্য) ট্রেজারী চালান কোড নং-১১৩৩-০০৪৫-২৩৬৬ তে জমা দিয়ে চালানের মুদ্রকপিসহ দরপত্রের সাথে দাখিল করতে হবে।
(ঙ) দরপত্রের সাথে প্রস্তাবিত জীপ ও কার গাড়ি ক্যাটাগরিসহ টেকনিক্যাল স্পেসিফিকেশন যথাযথ পূরণপূর্বক দাখিল করতে হবে।
(চ) পণ্য সামগ্রী ব্র্যান্ড নিউ ও বেস্ট কোয়ালিটি হতে হবে এবং কমপক্ষে ০১ (এক) বছর ওয়ারেন্টিসহ সরবরাহকৃত পণ্য সরবরাহকারী বেকেন মুহুর্তে প্রতিস্থাপনে বাধ্য থাকবে। এ ব্যাপারে দরপত্রের সাথে একটি ৩০০ (তিনশত) টাকার স্ট্যাম্পে যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষ কর্তৃক স্বাক্ষরিত অঙ্গীকারনামা দাখিল করতে হবে।
১৬। কর্তৃপক্ষ কোনরূপ কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে যে কোন দরপত্র গ্রহণ বা সকল দরপত্র বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সরক্ষণ করেন।
সুরেশ চন্দ্র বিশ্বাস
কমিশনার
জিডি-৫৩০
সভাপতি, দরপত্র মূল্যায়ন কমিটি

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Office of the Executive Engineer
Barisal PWD Division, Barishal
Tel: 0431-64801, Fax: 0431-2173232
E-mail: ee_bari@pwd.gov.bd
Memo-3672/2
Dated: 15/03/2022
Invitation for e-Tender
e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the Procurement of following works given below:
Sl. No. Tender ID Invitation Reference No. Name of works Tender closing date & time
1 667404 PWD/Bar/SHISHU/E/M/2-021-2022 Remaining work of Construction of Govt. Shishu Hospital at Barishal. S.H-1-PA/Sound System.S.H-2-Digital Conference System S.H-3-CC Camera System S.H-4-Digital Sign Board S.H-5-On Grid Solar System
This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.
To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (Email: helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).
Gerald Oliver Guda
Executive Engineer
PWD Division, Barishal

The death of
FROM PAGE 3
do not have any playground or park, which particularly harms the mental and physical growth of children, as they have no space to play and interact with friends, he said.
According to the proposed DAP, 25 out of 75 wards under Dhaka South City Corporation and 10 out of 55 wards under Dhaka North City Corporation do not have a single park or playground.



Carrying an assortment of colourful, inflated gas balloons in the shape of animals, Ashik sets off to different fairs in Khulna city. Children gleefully greet him and tug at their parents to get them their balloons of choice. Selling each for Tk 50, Ashik earns Tk 1,000-1,200 daily, with which he supports his family. This photo was taken at Khalishpur Probhati High School field recently.

PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

AMBULANCE service in trains

Railway to add 4 such cars to its fleet as part of project to procure 200 new carriages

TUHIN SHUBIRA ADHIKARY

Bangladesh Railway (BR) is on course to procure 200 broad gauge (BG) passenger carriages to meet the ongoing crisis of rail engines and expand its services by adding new trains to its fleet.

Among the carriages, there will be four AC ambulance sleeper cars as well.

Once the sleeper cars are added to the fleet, for the first time a train in Bangladesh will have ambulance facilities for ailing patients, BR sources said.

The state-run transport agency will procure the carriages under a Tk 1,704.34 crore project within June 2025.

The project, where European Investment Bank will provide Tk 1,331.20 crore as loan, is likely to be placed before the next Ecne meeting on Tuesday, BR sources said.

The development comes at a time when 190 BG carriages, out of 468 (around 41 percent), are overaged, causing obstruction to train operations and improvement of passengers services, they said.

Once the new carriages are added to the fleet, it will also increase the availability of carriages and help to replace the old and overaged carriages.

The ambulance sleeper cars will have all the facilities an ICU ambulance provides. Each of the cars will have such facilities for 12 ailing patients.

Moreover, BR will be able to operate more trains on new routes to meet growing demands and increase revenue of the losing concern, the sources added.

According to project documents, of the 200 carriages, 80 will be Shovan Chair Cars, 42 AC Chair Cars, 25 AC Sleeper Cars, 16 Shovan Chair Cars with dining car and prayer room, and 26 AC Power Cars with luggage van and guard brake.

AMBULANCE FACILITIES

Meanwhile, each of the four AC ambulance sleeper cars will cost around Tk 7.51 crore, according to project documents.

AT A GLANCE

- BR to get **200** new carriages
- 80 Shovan chair cars
- 42 AC chair cars
- 25 AC sleeper cars
- 16 Shovan chair cars with dining car and prayer room
- 26 AC power cars with luggage van and guard brake
- 7 more cars for other purposes

AMBULANCE CARS

- 4 AC ambulance sleeper cars to be added to fleet
- Each costing around Tk **7.51** cr
- Cars to have facilities of standard ICU ambulances

PROJECT COST

- Carriages to be procured under Tk **1,704.34** cr project
- European Investment Bank will provide Tk **1,331.20** cr as loan
- Currently, **190** out of **468** broad gauge carriages are overaged



A BR official, who is well-informed about the project, said the ambulance sleeper cars will have all facilities a usual ICU ambulance provides.

Each of the cars will have such facilities for 12 ailing patients.

Huge traffic congestion on the road and providing people with improved services at a relatively low cost are the reason behind introducing the ambulance service, the BR mechanical engineer told The Daily Star yesterday.

WHY MORE CARRIAGES?

Currently, BR has a total of 3,093km rail lines across 43 districts, of which 879.85km are Broad Gauge (BG) while 533.7km are Dual Gauge (DG) while the rest are Metre Gauge lines, according to BR's latest Information Book.

All BG lines are in the west zone.

However, the railway is currently implementing a 30-year master-plan for 2016 to 2045, divided into six phases.

A total of 230 projects, with an estimated cost of Tk 5,53,662 crore, have been proposed in the plan.

According to the masterplan, gauge conversion to BG is to be accomplished gradually so that within 30 to 35 years, the whole track will be converted to BG as part of the infrastructure rationalisation policy, show BR documents.

Additionally, the construction of Padma Bridge with rail line and dedicated railway bridge over the Jamuna river will improve connectivity between railways zones as well as with neighbouring countries, which will ultimately enhance passenger and freight traffic growth.

Internal enhanced demand, replacement of old carriages and ensuring internal traffic handling will create a necessity of 400 BG passenger carriages within two to four years, of which 200 will be required soon, reads the document.

The number of BG carriages were 324 in 2010, out of which 114 were more than 35 years old. In 2019, the number increased to 467 and stood at 468 till October last year.

Once the 200 new carriages are added to fleet, the replaced carriages could be used in local or commuter trains, based on condition reports.

Mentionable, railway has a total of 1,203 metre gauge carriages, and at least 52 percent of them are overaged.

Monjur-ul-alam Chowdhury, additional director general (Rolling Stock) of BR, and Mohammed Kudrat-E-Khuda, chief mechanical engineer (west), who is leading the project, could not be reached over phone for comments, despite several attempts.

Trader held with 663 sacks of rice meant for poor

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Members of Rapid Action Battalion (Rab) yesterday arrested a man at Tangail Sadar upazila and seized 663 sacks (497 maunds) of rice, meant for the disadvantaged, from his warehouse.

The arrestee was identified as Sharat Chandra Sutradhar (60) of College Para in Karatia union in the area.

Mohammad Ershadur Rahman, commander of Rab-12, said acting on a tip off, they raided a depot near the main gate of Karatia Zamindar Bari area in the morning and arrested Sharat.

The law enforcers later seized the rice.

After arrest, Sharat admitted to the law enforcers that he used to



PHOTO: STAR

sell rice, which was meant for the disadvantaged under a government scheme of Tk 10 per kilogramme, on black market.

The official also said Sharat used to sell the rice to people at higher prices at his store.

A case was filed against him, he added.

6 killed, 2 hurt in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Six people were killed and two injured in road accidents in four districts during the last two days, according to reports from our correspondents.

In Narsingdi, three people died when a bus collided head-on with a microbus on Dhaka-Sylhet highway near Morjal bus stand around 4:00am yesterday, said SI Khaled Mahmud of Bhairab highway Police Station. The deceased – the driver and two passengers of the microbus – could not be identified immediately.

In Manikganj, a pedestrian was killed after being hit by a battery-run auto-rickshaw yesterday, said OC Riyaz Uddin Ahmed Biplob of Ghior Police Station. The deceased, Md Jalal Uddin (70), was a resident of Sribari.

In Dinajpur, two people were injured as three trucks crashed into four roadside shops in Phulbari area yesterday. Hasu Sheikh (52), one of the truckers from Pabna; and Golap Hossain (50) from Dinajpur were undergoing treatment at Phulbari Upazila Health Complex. The incident happened at Laxmipur village, said OC Md Ashrafur Islam of Phulbari Police Station.

Initially, a truck rammed into a roadside shop as its driver lost control over the vehicle after one of its tyres got punctured, said the OC. Later, two other Dhaka-bound trucks hit three shops.

In Natore, a bicyclist was killed as his cycle and a human haulier collided at Moukharahat in Baraigram yesterday. Shahidul Islam (40) from Uttarpara was declared dead at a hospital.

In Kaharol upazila, Md Sultan Ahmed (40) died after a speeding truck hit his cycle at Ichhail village on Wednesday.



PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Better care for newborns CMCH introduces neonatal unit

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

With a view to providing better treatment to critical neonatal patients, the authorities of Chattogram Medical College Hospital introduced Special Care Neonatal Unit yesterday, marking the birth anniversary of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and National Children's Day.

CMCH Director Brig Gen Shamim Ahsan inaugurated the 30-bed unit established under the Neonatal Ward at the hospital.

The critical neonatal patients – aged between 0 day and 28 days – will benefit from the unit, said doctors.

Earlier, the newborns had to receive treatment with other patients at the Neonatal Ward, hospital sources said.

Tahmina Begum, who transferred her premature baby to the newly-introduced unit from a private hospital, said doctors at the private hospital suggested her to keep the baby in an incubator, which she could not afford.

"At the neonatal unit, babies like mine will get better treatment for free," she said.

According to doctors, not only the newborns, but also babies born underweight, with infection and breathing difficulties will be treated there.

The unit is equipped with modern treatment facilities – including phototherapy, ventilator and maintenance of temperature, said the director.

Prof Dr Jagadis Chandra Das, head of Neonatal Ward, said alongside other facilities, Kangaroo Mother Care has been introduced at the unit.

Kangaroo care, also called skin-to-skin contact, is a technique of newborn care where babies are kept chest-to-chest and skin-to-skin with a parent, typically their mother, said Dr Dhiman Chowdhury, a consultant at the pediatric ward of the hospital.

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Kazi Golam Mahboob
(1927-2006)

An activist of the 1952 Language Movement and President of the Bangladesh Supreme Court Bar Association

"A heart of gold" is what every family member and friend has complimented about our father. His love for our family, especially our mother, was paramount.

He consistently lifted up those around him, whether it was through financial support, or simply a funny joke or a compliment. We salute him for the sacrifices he made for the nation as the convener of the Language movement and his noble patriotism.

Sixteen years ago we lost our father only in body, but not in spirit. We remain grateful and comforted knowing how much he positively affected the lives of others. The love he spread on this Earth continues to grow and will live on, and that is the ultimate measure of any human being.

A milad mahfil and prayer congregation will be held in Dhaka and his birthplace Gournadi, Barisal.

- Family Members



Diving into the trajectories of the forerunners in art

The exhibition showcases over 120 artworks, including paintings, prints, drawings, tapestries, audio and video materials, books and memorabilia, curated from several institutional and private collections. The show is open for all from 3 pm to 8 pm every day except Sundays till June 18.

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR

On the occasion of the golden jubilee of Bangladesh's independence, HSBC and Bengal Foundation jointly organised the tribute exhibition, "Forerunners Rashid Choudhury, Murtaja Baseer, Debdas Chakraborty – their pedagogy and modernist approach". The exhibition opened on March 16 at Bengal Shilpalay, Dhanmondi, Dhaka.

The show, curated by leading pedagogue and contemporary visual artist Dhali Al Mamoon, seeks to explore the contexts, trajectories, and interpretations that characterise fifty years of institutional art practice in Chattogram.

The Governor of Bangladesh Bank Fazle Kabir was present at the inaugural ceremony as the chief guest while CEO of HSBC Bangladesh Md Mahub ur Rahman, Professor Dr Syed Manzoorul Islam, and the founder and chairman of Bengal Foundation Abul Khair Litu were present as special guests.

The programme began with an introductory note by Dhali Al Mamoon. He expressed how Rashid Choudhury, Murtaja Baseer, and Debdas Chakraborty foregrounded new modernist thinking that resisted conventional categorisation, setting new idioms and parameters, while keeping up with the politics of their time.

This was followed by a speech by Professor Dr Syed Manzoorul Islam. "When an artist looks into the work of their predecessors, they discover new dimensions while tying their thoughts to the old masterpieces and that's the beauty of this exhibition," he

shared.

His speech was followed by remarks by Md Mahub ur Rahman.

Afterwards, Fazle Kabir took to the stage to share his thoughts. "I got to meet these legends at University of Chittagong and I still miss their presence," he said. "We have lost them, but their work never cease to revive their legacy. Through such initiatives, we

come across the opportunity to relive their heritage."

The exhibition showcases over 120 artworks, including paintings, prints, drawings, tapestries, audio and video materials, books and memorabilia, curated from several institutional and private collections. The show is open for all from 3 pm to 8 pm every day except Sundays till June 18.



The Governor of Bangladesh Bank Fazle Kabir, CEO of HSBC Bangladesh Md Mahub ur Rahman, Professor Dr Syed Manzoorul Islam, the founder and chairman of Bengal Foundation Abul Khair Litu and artist Dhali Al Mamoon at the exhibition. PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

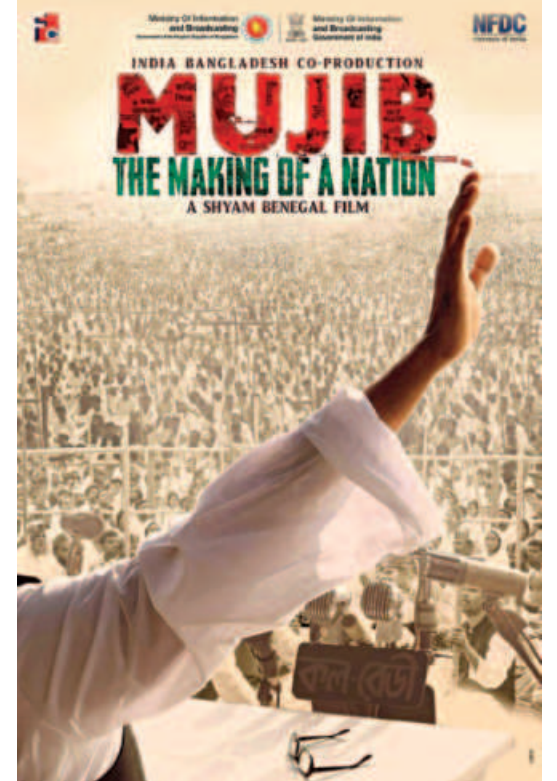
Poster of Shyam Benegal's biopic on Bangabandhu unveiled

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The poster for Shyam Benegal's much-anticipated biopic on Bangabandhu was released yesterday. Titled "Mujib: The Making of a Nation", the film is jointly produced by Bangladesh and India as part of the birth centenary celebration of the Father of the Nation of Bangladesh.

Atul Tiwari and Shama Zaidi have written the screenplay of the film, while Nitish Roy is the art director. Shantanu Moitra directed the movie's music, and Akashdeep is the director of photography.

Popular Bangladeshi actor Arifin Shuvoo is set to play the role of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.



COUNTRYWIDE

CHAR BIJOY riddled with dead fish

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

A new shoal covering an area of about 5,000 acres has sprung up in the deep Bay of Bengal, about 30 km south of Kuakata.

Tourists have dubbed it "Char Bijoy", after discovering it in the month of December in 2017. Due to the free movement of migrant birds and red crabs, the shoal has started attracting seasonal tourists, who mostly come from Kuakata on trawlers and speed boats.

Patuakhali Forest Department has already started planting 1.5 lakh trees in the shoal. Thousands of tourists have visited the shoal this season to enjoy the natural beauty and they are still coming.

Although it remains submerged in the rainy season, it resurfaced in the winter with an area of 5,000 acres.

Fishermen stay here and in the vicinity during the winter

season to catch fish including hilsa. They make temporary shelters for fishing and drying up the fish. Due to the less movement of people, guest birds flock here in winter. Host of red crabs and guest birds are adding a new dimension to the beauty of the shoal.

Some seasonal tourists come here from Kuakata in hired trawlers or speed boats to enjoy the serenity of the pristine shoal.

Arifur Rahman, a tourist, said more than a hundred seasonal fishermen were seen fishing and drying up fish there. During low tide, they bury small nets in the sand, and at certain distances, they place bamboo twigs next to the nets. When the water recedes during low tide, large and small fish of various species get caught in the nets. The big fish are collected by the fishermen but the small fish are left there; they die.

For this practice, various

species of fish are being killed prematurely, he added.

He said, "I have seen innumerable small dead fish in several nets while roaming in the char."

Authorities need to take immediate action to stop the killing of such fish, he added.

Contacted, Patuakhali Divisional Forest Officer Abdullah Al Mamun said, they have already started planting 1.5 lakh trees in the char this year. This will make the char permanent and the birds will be able to take shelter.

District Fisheries Officer Mollah Edadullah said, fishermen were not allowed to fish there and proper surveillance could not be carried out as the char was isolated and there was no water vessel to patrol there.

The matter of killing small fish was not known but action will be taken in this regard, he said.



A section of fishermen fishing near Char Bijoy has been killing fish fries. The photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

How to prevent osteoporosis?

FROM PAGE 12

People aged between 18-50 should consume around 1,000 mg of calcium daily. The amount increases for older women and men.

Good sources of calcium we can have daily are dairy products, green leafy vegetables, seafood

like salmon and fish, soy products etc.

You can also consider taking calcium supplements as per the dosage your doctor recommends.

Vitamin D is essential for bone health as it helps absorb the calcium you consume. The most basic source of

vitamin D is sunlight. Dietary sources are cod liver oil, trout and salmon etc. There are several brands of milk and cereal available nowadays, which claim to be fortified with vitamin D.

People with limited access to vitamin D sources may also take supplements.

Most people need around 600 international units (IU) of vitamin D per day.

Exercise also helps you build strong bones and slows down the process of bone loss. It is best to start exercising when you're young and continue throughout life.

BNP to wrap up councils by year-end

FROM PAGE 12

is taking time but we will do it by the year end," said Fazlul Huq Milon, BNP organising secretary (Dhaka Division).

He said in Dhaka division, there are 10 organisational districts. The committee of one has been formed and the rest will be completed soon.

In Rajshahi division, there are nine organisational districts, of which all ward and union committees have already been formed.

"We are expecting to complete all the thana committees by the end of

this month. After that, we will start holding district councils," Ruhul Kuddus Talukder Dulu, Rajshahi divisional organising secretary, said.

Although BNP is yet to decide whether it will contest the 2023 national polls, its focus this year is to complete the party reorganising process and be ready for both a movement and elections.

The rationale behind reorganising is that the party wants to be in a stronger position from where it can mount pressure on the government to hold the polls under

a non-partisan interim government – a demand it has been making since the system was abolished a decade ago.

"The main focus is to restore democracy and return voting rights to the people. The revamping will continue and at the same time, the movement for restoring democracy will go on," said Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir, secretary general of the party.

BNP leaders said that if the government pay heed to their demands, they will take to the streets.

The party has also been holding various

programmes in different district and divisional headquarters on pressing issues like the price hike of daily essentials.

"We want to restore the election-time neutral government and for that, the reorganisation of the party and the movement will go on simultaneously," said Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, BNP standing committee member.

The BNP had boycotted the January 5 polls in 2014 but later took part in the 2018 election that was marred by ballot stuffing. It got only a handful of seats in parliament.

Howler monkeys play to reduce group

FROM PAGE 12

signals, such as shaking their heads.

However, scientists say play is an energy-costly activity for howler monkeys, who generally have an inactive lifestyle due to their primarily leaf-based diet.

These monkeys typically

eat leaves as fruit is a highly prized resource that generates competition among the monkeys. The study found that play among adults increases in line with time spent foraging for fruit.

Researchers said the amount of adult play is also linked to the number

of potential playmates, increasing with the size of the group.

Adults spend more time playing with other adults rather than juveniles, while adult females spend more time engaged in play than adult males, the study noted.

Since juveniles do not pose a threat or provide competition at fruit trees, scientists believe that play among adults is a mechanism for solving conflicts within the group, in a similar way that grooming is used by some other primate species.

Holy Shab-e-Barat tonight

FROM PAGE 12

happiness for themselves, their families, relatives and friends.

On this night, devotees would visit graves and pray for their loved ones seeking

eternal peace of their departed souls.

On this occasion, the Islamic Foundation has drawn up programmes at the Baitul Mukarram national mosque.

Tomorrow will be a public holiday on the occasion of the holy Shab-e-Barat.

Bangladesh Television, Bangladesh Betar, and private television channels

and radio stations will air special programmes on the occasion. Newspapers published special supplements highlighting the significance of the night.



A person mourns next to a wrapped body near a residential building which was hit by the debris from a downed rocket in Kyiv, Ukraine, yesterday. Inset, The damaged apartment block.

PHOTO: AFP

WASHINGTON'S NEW ARMS FOR UKRAINE

AFP, Washington

Ukraine's leader Volodymyr Zelensky made a desperate appeal for help against Russia to the US Congress on Wednesday, and within hours of the speech, President Joe Biden responded by promising \$1 billion in new weapons to fight "war criminal" Vladimir Putin's invading army. The new arms and equipment includes: S-300 MISSILE DEFENSE: Ukraine has had the ability to shoot down Russian aircraft and cruise missiles at relatively close quarters. Washington is arranging for it to acquire systems that can strike attacking aircraft much further away. According to a military source, the systems are the Soviet/Russian-made S-300, which like the US-made Patriot system, is a fully automated, ground-based radar-and-missile launcher unit that can detect, track and fire at multiple incoming aerial threats at long distances.

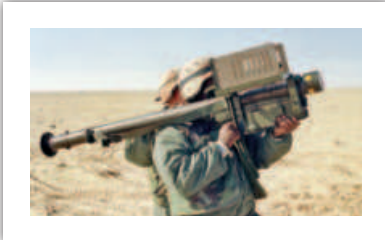
'KAMIKAZE DRONES':

Washington will send Ukraine 100 Switchblade drones, essentially camera-equipped, remote-controlled flying bombs that can be directed by an operator to find and then, when ready, plunge onto a target, exploding on contact. Dubbed "kamikaze drones," Switchblades can extend the range of attack on Russian vehicles and units to beyond the sight of the user.

'SAINT JAVELIN': Western allies have already provided the Ukrainian army with some 17,000 lightweight, shoulder-launched self-guided missiles which have become the weapon of choice in the ground war. Among those, the US-made Javelin, with dual charges designed to defeat Russian tanks' anti-missile defenses, has become legendary in its effectiveness. Biden said Washington will send 2,000 more javelin missiles.

ANTI-AIRCRAFT STINGERS: The United States is also giving 800 more Stingers, which are shoulder-mounted infrared anti-aircraft missiles. Ukrainians have used them effectively against Russian helicopters and slower, lower-flying fixed-wing attack aircraft.

GUNS, AMMUNITION, BODY ARMOR: The new US arms provisions also include 7,000 other anti-armor weapons, thousands of machine guns, rifles, and grenade launchers, 20 million rounds of small arms ammunition fitting both Russian and Nato standards, and 25,000 sets of body armor and helmets.



COST OF MOSCOW'S INVASION OF UKRAINE Russians feeling the pinch



AL JAZEERA ONLINE

Russians are starting to feel the economic pinch after Western countries imposed an unprecedented set of sanctions over Moscow's invasion of Ukraine.

Following weeks of mounting tensions, Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered a land, sea and air invasion on February 24, triggering a wave of financial restrictions that have plunged the value of the rouble, skyrocketed inflation and left many jobless.

The official Rosstat statistics agency said on Wednesday inflation was 2.1 percent between March 5-11, the second-highest weekly figure in more than 20 years. According to the ministry of economics, annual inflation jumped to 12.5 percent as of March 11 from 10.4 percent the previous week.

The business newspaper Kommersant reported a 10.4 percent increase in food prices from February 26 to March 4 - the highest rise since 1998.

The Russian currency has lost an estimated 20 percent of its value over the past three weeks, triggering many retailers to raise their prices.

One of these is Procter & Gamble, which raised its prices by an average of 40 percent, Kommersant reported, because of higher costs in logistics, materials and the drop in the rouble. Female hygiene products now cost as much as 30 percent more.

To contrast cost increases, retailers committed to a five percent markup of basic goods, including dairy products and some vegetables, TASS news

agency reported.

Sasha, a woman living in Saint Petersburg, who asked to remain anonymous, described an "endless queue" in front of pharmacies with prices of medicine increasing. Two of her friends, she said, were considering going to Finland to get needed medication.

While sales of drugs are not subjected to sanctions, prices are expected to increase, though not as much as other goods, after major shipping companies halted their services to Russia. Local media reported drug prices in the Saratov region increased by 2.3-6.7 percent.

After some hesitation, Western nations agreed to remove some Russian banks from the SWIFT international payment system, meaning companies like Visa, Mastercard and others would greatly limit their services.

Such a move, coupled with other sanctions, could cause Russia's economy to contract by 10 percent, according to Elina Ribakova, an economist at the Institute of International Finance.

While official numbers are not yet available, the closure or departure of a large number of multinational companies such as Apple and IKEA are expected to have a significant effect on employment figures. US fast-food franchise McDonald's lamented the fallout for about 62,000 people employed at 850 restaurants in Russia before halting its operations on March 8.

An analyst quoted by Kommersant estimated an "inevitable" fall in wages and an increase in unemployment of about seven percent by the end of 2022.

WAR IN UKRAINE Developments

AGENCIES

NEGOTIATIONS ON

After days of cautious optimism about peace talks between Russia and Ukraine, Zelensky reiterates his demands: an end to the war, security guarantees and a return to sovereignty and territorial integrity. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Russia would announce progress when there was progress to report.

BIDEN TO SPEAK WITH XI

US President Joe Biden will speak today with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping about issues including Russia's war in Ukraine, the White House said. China is under intense diplomatic pressure from the United States and its European allies to pull its lifeline from an isolated Russia. But three weeks after the invasion of Ukraine, Beijing has shown few signs of abandoning its friends in the Kremlin.

RUSSIA THREATENS US, TRAITORS

Former Russian president Dmitry Medvedev yesterday warned the United States that Moscow had the might to put the world's pre-eminent superpower in its place and accused the West of stoking a wild Russophobic plot to tear Russia apart. The Kremlin said that many people in Russia were showing themselves to be "traitors" and pointed to those who were resigning from their jobs and leaving the country.

PUTIN 'WAR CRIMINAL'

President Joe Biden brands Vladimir Putin a "war criminal" for the first time. The Kremlin quickly punches back, calling the comment "unacceptable and unforgivable".

MARIUPOL SHELTER BOMBED

Authorities in the besieged port city of Mariupol say Russian forces bombed a theatre where "hundreds" of civilians were taking shelter and share a photo showing the middle part of the building completely destroyed. The pavement outside the building was clearly marked "children" according to aerial photos. No death toll has yet been given.

NEW 'WALL' IN EUROPE

A day after pleading with the US Congress to send more help to Ukraine, President Volodymyr Zelensky addresses Germany's parliament by video link. He warns that Russia is building a new "wall" in Europe and calls on Chancellor Olaf Scholz to tear it down, echoing US President Ronald Reagan's Cold War appeal to Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.

GLOBAL GROWTH HIT

The fallout from the war in Ukraine could cut global growth by over one percentage point over the coming year, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) says.

NO DEBT DEFAULT

Russia's finance ministry says it has carried out interest payments on two foreign bonds, quashing fears of a debt default as the country reels from unprecedented Western sanctions. Putin says the West's "economic blitzkrieg" against Moscow has failed, but admits the situation is "not easy" for Russians and announces an increase in all social payments.

PUTIN DOUBLES DOWN

Putin repeats claims that the "pro-Nazi Kyiv regime" is carrying out "genocide" and trying to obtain "weapons of mass destruction", including developing "military biological programmes" with the "financial support of the Pentagon."

RUSSIA BLOCKS BBC

Russia's media watchdog Roskomnadzor on Wednesday blocked access to the BBC's main news website, with Moscow's foreign ministry warning of more retaliatory measures against the media. The website of the BBC's Russian service was also blocked. The service posted a video instructing Russians how to keep accessing the media via a VPN and on apps.



Of course they (the West) will try to bet on the so-called fifth column, on traitors - on those who earn their money here, but live over there... And there is one aim - the destruction of Russia.

Russian President Vladimir Putin vows to cleanse country of traitors and scums

TALIBAN RULED AFGHANISTAN UN establishes formal ties

AFP, United Nations

The UN Security Council yesterday voted to establish formal ties with Taliban-run Afghanistan, which has yet to win widespread international recognition.

It did so in approving a resolution that does not use the word Taliban and spells out the new one-year mandate of the UN political mission in Afghanistan, which it said was "crucial" to peace in the country.

The vote was 14 in favor, with one abstention, by Russia. The resolution includes several strands of cooperation, on the humanitarian, political and human rights fronts, including those of women, children and journalists.

"This new mandate for UNAMA (the UN mission to Afghanistan) is crucial not only to respond to the immediate humanitarian and economic crisis, but also to reach our overarching goal of peace and stability in Afghanistan," Norwegian UN ambassador Mona Juul, whose country drafted the resolution, told AFP after the vote.

The Taliban seized power on August 15 amid a hasty withdrawal of US-led foreign forces, and since then the country's humanitarian crisis has deepened.



A man walks in front of his damaged restaurant in Shiroishi, Miyagi prefecture yesterday, after a 7.3-magnitude earthquake jolted east Japan the night before. The tremor left thousands of homes without water and power. At least two people died and 161 were injured.

PHOTO: AFP

Global Covid cases up by 8pc: WHO

AFP, Geneva

The World Health Organization voiced alarm Wednesday that registered Covid cases are once again rising globally, despite testing levels having dropped significantly.

After falling for weeks, reported Covid cases rose globally by eight percent last week, with more than 11 million cases and over 43,000 new deaths registered, WHO said.

WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus warned that the lack of visibility due to reduced testing meant "the cases we are seeing are just the tip of the iceberg."

"And we know that when cases increase, so do deaths," he said. "We call on all countries to remain vigilant," he said, stressing "the pandemic is not over".

No excuse for ACC's bias for top govt officials

What is the point of having an anti-graft watchdog, if not to investigate graft?

WE are appalled to learn about the "soft stance" of the Anti-Corruption Commission towards top government officials, particularly those in the admin cadre. According to a report published in this daily, the ACC top brass is reluctant to pursue graft cases against the admin cadre officials; instead, they ask the ACC investigators to go after petty employees. Our report has cited at least three instances where corruption allegations against some of the top bureaucrats were swept under the rug by the top tier of ACC. Rather than take action against those systematically swindling taxpayers' money, the ACC seems more keen on reprimanding those investigators who dared try to expose the corruption.

Reportedly, in 2017, an ACC commissioner (investigation) ordered an assistant director of the commission to probe a graft allegation raised against the government's social safety net programme in Narail's Lohagara upazila—about Tk 2 crore was allegedly misappropriated through fake projects to pocket funds from the government scheme. As the commission filed two cases against the government officials and others involved, and were preparing to file two more cases, the assistant director investigating the matter was served a show-cause notice by the commission. The ACC then appointed a new investigation officer who recommended submitting a final report, instead of a charge sheet, before the court. Eventually, the two cases that were filed in this connection were also closed.

The ACC's apparent bias towards the country's top bureaucrats was exposed recently when the commission sacked Sharif Uddin, a deputy assistant director of the commission. According to ACC insiders, he was "punished" for bringing corruption charges against some top government officials.

This begs the question: What is the point of the anti-graft watchdog, if not to look into graft charges and take appropriate actions? ACC was formed as an independent body to investigate and curb corruption. Sadly, it is gradually losing its independent character and seems to be giving in to the pressure from the corrupt quarters, as exposed by the incidents mentioned above. It has also been reported that ACC investigations are dominated by former bureaucrats sent to the commission on deputation. Naturally, they have little knowledge about ACC's investigation method, which also comes in the way of an impartial investigation.

We urge the ACC to play its designated role and not give a clean chit to the corrupt government officials. They must take action against those who are corrupt, no matter how powerful they are. If the ACC fails to do so, they will not only lose their reputation, but also public trust.

Why spend crores if you won't finish the projects?

Inefficient river excavation work too frequent to be forgiven

WE are puzzled by Bangladesh Water Development Board's (BWDB) excavation strategy for the country's rivers and canals. According to a report by this daily, over Tk 23 crore was spent last year to excavate a 65km stretch of rivers and canals in five upazilas of Lalmonirhat. But the excavated earth, piled up on the banks, made their way back into the water bodies, rendering the project redundant.

Moreover, the project was not even completed as per the original plan. Initially, a work order of over Tk 35 crore was given to contractors for the re-excavation of a 98.1km stretch of small rivers and canals in the five upazilas. However, only 66 percent of the work had been done by the project's deadline, which was June last year. Though the Lalmonirhat Water Development Board refunded around Tk 16 crore to the government, the fact remains that this was a most poorly done job, through and through.

While excavating rivers and canals to improve navigability is done routinely in Bangladesh, it is rarely ever successful. Either the work is done inefficiently by the relevant board and contractors, or the project is left unfinished. Unfortunately, both of these have happened for the case in point.

As to why the excavation work was unsuccessful on their end, the executive engineer of Lalmonirhat Water Development Board said the contractor could not work fully due to obstruction by the land owners along the rivers and canals. Are we to believe that an organisation under the government lacks the tact and resources to work around such issues? We are beginning to doubt how important these organisations deemed the excavation project to be, given how they let their work—and crores of public money—be lost for nothing. Unfortunately, this is not an outlying event and is proof that the BWDB is perhaps not learning from its past failures in terms of river excavation. In 2020, it had reportedly excavated an 80km stretch of the Charalkantha River in Nilphamari, only for the dug up earth to flow back in and re-obstruct the river's flow, even narrowing it down to a mere channel in places.

Not only do such poorly done projects waste public money, but they also exacerbate the suffering of citizens. The BWDB and its district offices must be held to account for their inefficiency. It's not acceptable that funds and time should be wasted in this way while officials move on to the next large-scale, government-funded project—only to presumably do that ineffectively, too.

The impossible quest for an ideal CEC



Abu Sayem is a barrister and a human rights defender.

ABU SAYEM

THE formation or the journey of an Election Commission has rarely been a welcoming event in Bangladesh. It is always the chief election commissioners (CECs) who are blamed for all electoral evils. Their image starts to tarnish as soon as they are sworn in. But the simple truth is that, irrespective of whether they are impartial or want to hold credible elections, there is little space for them to act independently. We may not like it, but a CEC has no choice but to follow the sitting government's—more precisely, the ruling party's—arrangements in Bangladesh.

Ironically, however, a failed Election Commission is negatively branded with its CEC's name. I have little doubt that the defamed CECs would have performed differently under a neutral government, whereas they surrendered their conscience to the government—either because they were weak or because their appointment demanded unconditional loyalty. Even with this knowledge, people want to see a CEC having the courage to disregard the establishment. To me, they want a TN Seshan taking the role of their CEC—an impossibility at the present moment.

Many would ask: Why couldn't we find a TN Seshan—i.e. the man who cleaned up the Indian electoral system in the 1990s—in Bangladesh? I can cite at least two reasons. To begin with, Indian politicians, even in their quest for power, did not intend to completely destroy their constitutional institutions. On the other hand, I am sure Indian pressure groups or intellectuals would not have accepted any such move. As a result, TN Seshan had a fertile land in which to work independently, without fear.

In Bangladesh, we are still looking for an ideal CEC. Will one be born? If yes, will they be able to work independently? Mahbub Talukdar, a member of the Nurul Huda commission, showed some courage. Yet, he was not the decision-maker. KM Nurul Huda, probably the most incompetent and shameless CEC in Bangladesh's history, sidelined Mahbub

and upheld the government's agenda. As a matter of fact, what determines an answer to my question is the mindset of our politicians and intellectuals. If they all agree today, a courageous CEC will emerge tomorrow. But will they be able to conduct free, fair and impartial elections here? Again, the answer rests on the mindset of our politicians and

is misplaced. We all know that neither the enactment of legislations nor even the sacred provisions of the constitution can protect the people's rights—unless their enforcers are willing to do so. Who can deny the long saga of abuses of our constitution and our laws for the last 50 years? The newly passed legislation in order to form an Election Commission has also proven to be unhelpful. The Awami League's intention behind enacting the law is not clear. Was it in good faith?

The appointment of the current Election Commission under the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners' Appointment Act, 2022 has brought no significant changes to the existing situation. Whoever becomes a CEC through the given process is unlikely to serve impartially. The apparatuses of the state are fully controlled by the sitting government and will not act against the leader's wish.

Habibul Awal's action will prove whether he will act as TN Seshan. Only time will tell whether the ruling party will start to engineer the upcoming general elections in the way they did before to ensure their return to power. If they do, Bangladesh is certain to experience another controversial election in late 2023 or early 2024. No legislation, including the newest one, can prevent that from happening.

In Bangladesh, the legal framework for holding a free and fair election existed under the applicable laws, even before the enactment of the new law. The difficulty lies in the lack of will of those running the government and those who follow them. The ruling party and their ideological intellectuals or pressure groups are adamant to hold on to power. Unless this attitude changes, an entire generation will be deprived of the chance to cast their first vote.

For Bangladesh, the sole mechanism to ensure trustworthy elections is returning to the interim government who will exercise constitutional powers to impartially conduct general elections. Despite the Supreme Court's verdict against the non-party caretaker government, which in my opinion is a judgment of misconceived jurisprudence, our politicians must act for an ultimate consensus—that of restoration of the interim government for free, fair and impartial elections.

A legislation or a Kazi Habibul Awal will not be able to rescue us.



▲ Is it possible to hold a free and fair election under a partisan government?

FILE PHOTO: STAR

intellectuals.

If we analyse the elections held in recent times during the Awami League's regime, what can we conclude? The party's mindset is completely focused on winning elections, by whatever means possible—not on credible elections. They are not bothered about the gradual disappearance of the institution of democracy. The parliamentary elections of 2014 and 2018 were nothing if not farcical; yet, it wasn't just the ruling party activists but also many of the country's top intellectuals who extended their unequivocal support for the regime. The common objective of this coterie comprising both political and non-political elements have left no scope for acceptable elections in Bangladesh under a partisan government.

Unsurprisingly, a few people are always excited about new laws. For those having common sense, this enthusiasm

ASSANGE EXTRADITION

On to the next hurdle



Craig Murray is a British author, broadcaster, human rights activist, and a former diplomat. This article was originally published on the author's blog.

CRAIG MURRAY

WITH Julian Assange still, for no rational reason, held in maximum security, the legal process around his extradition continues to meander its way through the overgrown byways of the UK's legal system. On March 14, 2022, the Supreme Court refused to hear Julian's appeal, which was based on the grounds of his health and the effect upon it of incarceration in the conditions of the US prison service. It stated that his appeal had "no arguable legal grounds."

This is a setback that's most likely going to keep Assange in jail for at least another year.

The legal grounds, which the High Court had previously ruled to be arguable, were that the US government should not have been permitted to give an appeal new (and highly conditional) diplomatic assurances about Julian's treatment, which had not been offered at the court of first instance to be considered in the initial decision. One important argument is that, if given to the original court, the defence could argue about the value and conditionality of such assurances; evidence could be called and the matter weighed by the court.

By introducing the assurances only at the appeal stage, the US avoided any scrutiny of their validity. The Home Office has always argued that diplomatic assurances must simply be accepted without question. The Home Office is keen on this stance, because it makes extradition to countries with appalling human rights records much easier.

In saying there is no arguable point of law, the Supreme Court is accepting that diplomatic assurances are not tested

and are to be taken at face value—which has been a major point of controversy in recent jurisprudence. It is now settled that we will send someone back to Saudi Arabia if the Saudis give us a piece of paper promising not to chop their head off.

It interested me in particular that the Supreme Court refused to hear Julian's appeal on the basis that there was "no arguable point of law." When the Supreme Court refused to hear my own appeal against imprisonment, they rather stated their alternative formulation; there was "no arguable point of law of general public interest." Meaning there was an arguable point of law, but it was merely an individual injustice that did not matter to anyone except Craig Murray.

My own view is that, with the Tory government very open about their desire to clip the wings of judges and reduce the reach of the Supreme Court in particular, the court is simply avoiding hot potatoes at present.

So the case now goes to Home Secretary Priti Patel to decide whether to extradite Assange or not. The defence has four weeks to make representations to Patel, which she must hear. There are those on the libertarian right of the Tory party, who oppose the extradition on freedom of speech grounds, but Patel does not have a libertarian thought in her head and appears to revel in deportation, so personally I hold out no particular hope for this stage.

Assuming Patel does authorise extradition, the matter returns to the original magistrate's court and to Judge Baraitser for execution. That is where this process takes a remarkable twist.

The appeals process that has just concluded was the appeal initiated by the US government, against Baraitser's original ruling that the combination of Julian's health and the conditions he would face in US jails meant that he could not be extradited. The US government succeeded in this appeal at the High Court. Julian then tried to appeal against that High Court verdict to the Supreme Court, and was refused permission.

But Julian himself has not yet appealed to the High Court, and he can do so once the matter has been sent back to Baraitser by Patel. His appeal will be against the grounds which Baraitser initially found in favour of the US. These are principally: i) Misuse of the extradition treaty which specifically prohibits political extradition; ii) Breach of the right of freedom of speech; iii) Misuse of the US Espionage Act; iv) Use of tainted, paid evidence from a convicted fraudster who has since publicly admitted his evidence was false; and v) Lack of foundation to the hacking charge.

None of these points have yet been considered by the High Court. It seems a remarkably strange procedure that, having been through the appeals process once, the whole thing starts again after Priti Patel has made her decision, but that is the crazy game of snake and ladders the law puts us through. It is fine for the political establishment, of course, because it enables them to keep Julian locked up under maximum security in Belmarsh.

The defence asked the High Court to consider what are called the "cross-appeal" points at the same time as hearing the US appeal, but the High Court refused.

So the ray of light that was Baraitser's ruling on health and prison conditions is now definitively snuffed out. That means that rather than the possibility of release by the Supreme Court this summer, Julian faces at least another year in Belmarsh, which must be a huge blow to him just before his wedding.

On the brighter side, it means that finally, in a senior court, the arguments that will really matter will be heard. I have always felt ambivalent about arguments based on Julian's health, when there is so much more at stake, and I have never personally reported the health issues out of respect for his privacy. But now the High Court will have to consider whether it really wishes to extradite a journalist for publishing evidence of systematic war crimes by the state requesting his extradition.

Now that will be worth reporting.

It seems a remarkably strange procedure that, having been through the appeals process once, the whole thing starts again after Priti Patel has made her decision, but that is the crazy game of snake and ladders the law puts us through.

Bangladeshi media's troubling tango with fake news



Qadaruddin Shishir is a fact checker based in Dhaka.

QADARUDDIN SHISHIR

Ofentimes, we hear politicians, academics and journalists laying great emphasis on how the mainstream media can play its part to fight the menace of fake news and misinformation. In such a discussion last year, speakers said the role of the media was "more important than ever amid a growing surge of false information intended to mislead the public."

But sadly, in Bangladesh, we have been witnessing a disappointing phenomenon where some mainstream media outlets have been amplifying misinformation, instead of combating it. It may sound unpleasant to many, but the reality is that a section of the media has been contributing to the proliferation of misinformation online.

On February 3, 2022, international news agency AFP's fact-checking unit rated a news story published by a reputed Bangladeshi TV station, which recently reached the landmark of 10 million subscribers on its YouTube channel, as "false information." Crediting the state-owned Saudi Press Agency (SPA), the story claimed that the Saudi government had approved a draft amendment to redesign its national flag to remove *Kalima Tayyiba* (Islamic declaration of faith) from it. Currently, the green flag of Saudi Arabia is emblazoned with *Kalima Tayyiba* above a sword.

However, in reality, neither the SPA nor any other Saudi news media said anything like this in their reports about the approval of the draft amendment, which actually was revised to propose new regulations regarding the use of the flag. Rather, some Saudi newspapers categorically mentioned in their reports that the revised draft did not propose any changes to the contents of the flag.

Interestingly, not only that leading TV channel, but several other top media outlets in Bangladesh—newspapers and online portals—published this fake news, leading to a flood of reproduction on

social media platforms.

This incident is no anomaly, as outright false information, photos and video footage are frequently being carried by top Bangladeshi media outlets.

The ongoing Ukraine crisis can be another case in point to illustrate how heedless our gatekeepers are in the

they had detected 23 pieces of fake news in mainstream media outlets between March and December in 2020. Arguably the most popular TV channel in the country was caught 10 times in that 10-month period broadcasting fake news. Many other TV stations, newspapers and online-only portals were also identified

among the public.

Sometimes, some fake news or out-of-context information does not seem harmful to anyone. But we know as a matter of fact that this menace can turn deadly at any time. Bangladesh has seen, in recent past, murders of innocent people due to rumours spread on Facebook. Widespread violence against religious minorities was sparked by online misinformation on many occasions. When the problem is this big, the media has a crucial role to work out how to deal with the threat. And the first thing to do is ensure that it has not become a vehicle of fake news.

Analysing the types of fake news that have been carried by our mainstream media, we can identify two major factors that have contributed to the problem: One is a lack of proper understanding about scientific topics, including health-related issues, that journalists were reporting on, and the other is mistranslation from English.

Exhaustive information ecosystem, especially the volumes of user-generated content (UGC), makes anyone vulnerable to fake news. But for a journalist, verifying a piece of information found online is no tough job at all. What they need is the desire to be fool-proof when it comes to the accuracy of information. Oftentimes, some simple searches on Google about the origin of the content or basic image and video verification techniques can save a newsperson from falling into the trap of fabricated information. Present-day journalists, especially those who deal with the UGC, have to have a standard level of knowledge of how to verify a piece of information using modern technologies.

While social media platforms are increasingly becoming sources of revenue for the media in developing countries, tech companies like Facebook and Twitter have turned against the publishers of fake news, penalising them in the strictest ways possible. Under the third-party fact-checking programme of Facebook, pages of several Bangladeshi media outlets faced temporary restrictions in terms of reach and revenue, and the programme is only expanding. So, the newsroom bosses in Bangladesh have to be more watchful about what is being published and broadcast in their outlets.

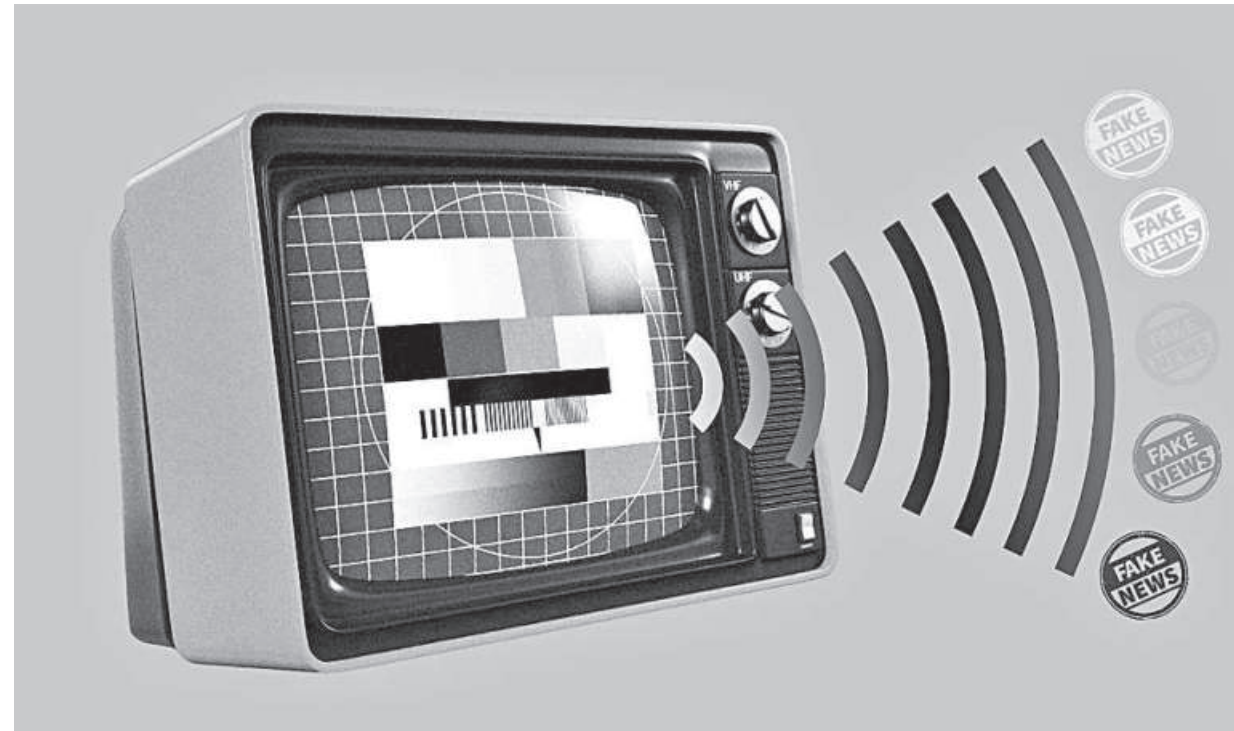


ILLUSTRATION: STAR

newsrooms in ensuring the accuracy of what they publish, especially on a sensitive issue like war. Fact-checkers identified more than one TV channel in Bangladesh that aired footage from video games as real-life scenes of the Russia-Ukraine war. Some broadcasters used in their reports old and unrelated clips and photos with false or misleading descriptions to stoke emotion among their viewers. Unsubstantiated claims picked up from social media platforms found places in news reports as "information."

Numerous news items published by the Bangladeshi mainstream media outlets have been rated as false or misleading by national and international fact-checking organisations in recent years. In a report in January 2021, Boom Bangladesh, a third-party fact-checking partner of Facebook focused on Bangladesh, said

as fake news proliferators during the same period. Those fake news items were mostly centred around health, politics and religious sentiments. The year 2021 saw a similar trend when Boom Bangladesh encountered 11 fake news stories in the media. Other fact-checking organisations also detected misleading news stories in Bangladeshi media in the same year.

As a fact-checker who has been working with different organisations for around five years, I have to struggle to name five news outlets in the country that have not been rated at least once as spreaders of fake news. While the media in Bangladesh, which has ranked low in the Press Freedom Index for years, has contributed immensely to the development of the country, despite all odds, the problem of fake news that it currently faces can diminish its credibility

Are celebrities liable for the brands they endorse?



Hassan Munhamanna is a musician and a sub-editor at The Daily Star.

HASSAN MUNHAMANNA

ON December 4 last year, in the immediate aftermath of the crumbling of Evaly's empire of sand, celebrities Rafiath Rashid Mithila, Tahsan Khan and Shabnam Faria were sued by a customer of the e-commerce platform for "aiding and abetting fraud."

Over the next few weeks, the issue became something of a sensation on social media, sparking conversations in some intellectual quarters about the premise of the lawsuit, about whether the three very popular celebrities could be held responsible for Evaly's wrongdoings.

Though the conversation died down soon—as is always the case on social media—the issue stuck with me. What really is the ethics of celebrity endorsements, which have become an integral and rather indispensable part of the equation in this current phase of capitalism?

Before we get to an answer to this, let's consider what actually happens when a celebrity figure, or an influencer, endorses a brand or business in exchange for money.

It's simple, really. A celebrity, throughout their career, builds up a rapport with the public. This imbues the celebrity with a certain kind of aura—there's the trustworthy celebrity, the bad boy, the family-first person, the celebrity with professional expertise, and the list goes on.

This rapport (or, social capital) is then "sold" to a company in exchange for the company's money. The transaction

here, then, is one of monetary capital for social capital, and vice versa. Beyond just face value, when a celebrity appears on our screens representing a company, we immediately link the celebrity's brand value or aura with that of the company.

The three celebrities in question over the Evaly scam all possess the same trustworthy sort of face value. Mithila is widely regarded as a strong, sincere feminist personality. Tahsan Khan has a carefully curated brand name for being a kind and gentle soul. And Shabnam Faria comes off as a sincere and loyal person, thanks to all the roles she has played on-screen over the years.

If we agree that a popular figure's brand value is not just a result of their real selves, but can also be calculated quite carefully and with intent, we can shed light on how this element works in the discourse of celebrity endorsements.

There are two layers of "deception" that operate here. On one hand, the performer-artist poses as being different from how they are in order to obtain a certain kind of social capital from their audience. For the second layer, the artiste uses that social capital to strike deals with brands and drive their audience towards said brands.

Given how the Evaly scam played out, the more pressing concerns of the issue came to the fore quite forcefully. But this issue is not just limited to fraudulence.

When a celebrity, known for their good health, lends their social capital to a beverage company whose product can have debilitating effects on consumers' health, is it not the same kind of deception?

You see, given how society works today, a brand cannot build a relationship with its market without a little help from figures who already have a connection with the people. Seen this way, a celebrity who has once signed



ILLUSTRATION: KAZI AKIB BIN ASAD

As the activities of corporations are deemed not innocent due to those being done only for profit, shouldn't the role of celebrities in enhancing the corporations' success be scrutinised as well?

the contract to endorse a brand can no longer be seen separately from it, or from the consequences of its business. So when things come crumbling down, the affiliated celebrities cannot just be allowed to run and hide, claiming they didn't know any better.

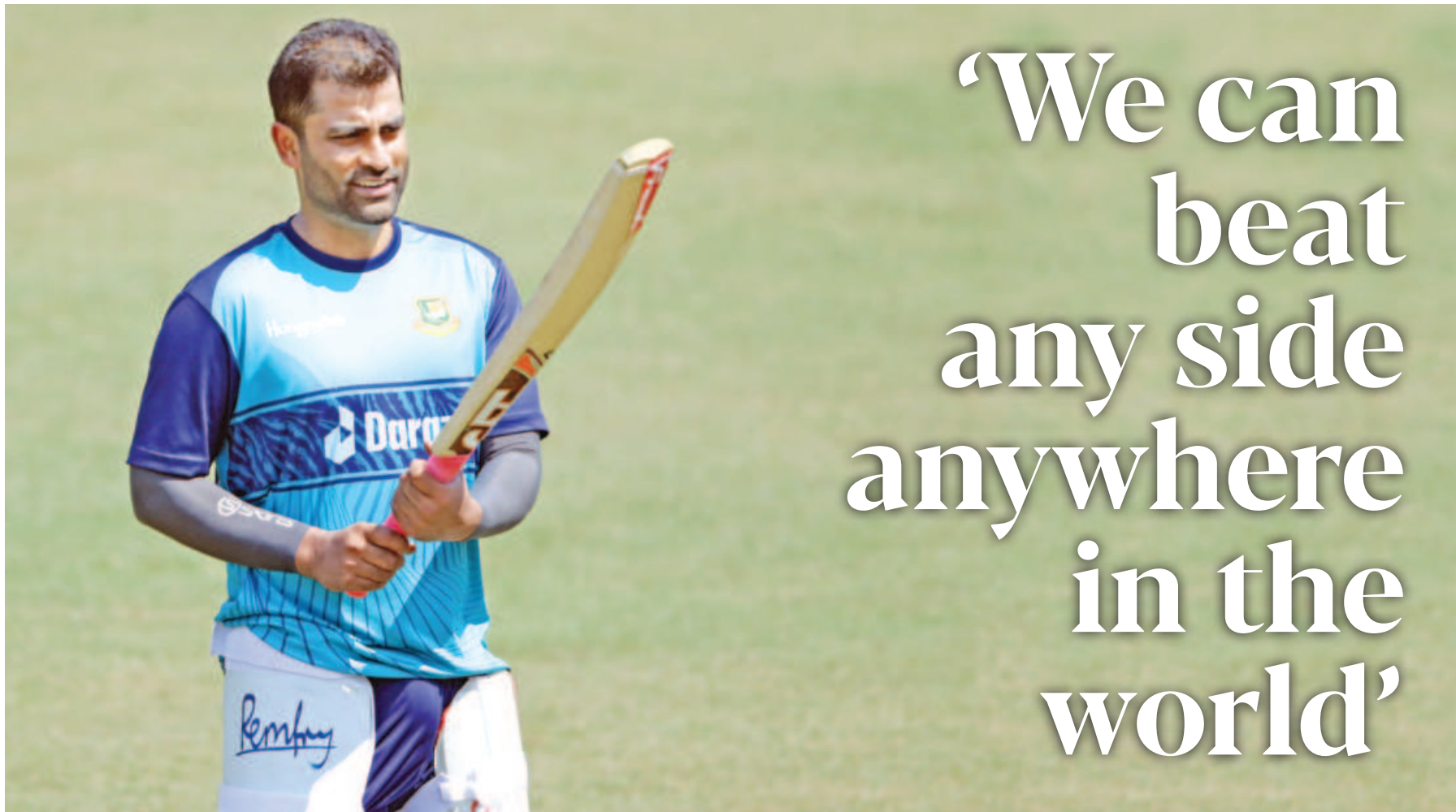
Brands themselves are aware of this, and don't wait even a second before cutting off their prized endorsee when a controversy develops in the latter's personal life. Case in point: Cristiano Ronaldo and Nike.

Another case study that sheds light on this issue is that of Scarlett Johansson's role as an ambassador for both Israeli soda-maker Sodastream and the INGO Oxfam. After online activists found out that one of Sodastream's factories is located in an illegal settlement on the West Bank, they started hounding Johansson for her connection to the company—a criticism which also extended to Oxfam for their connection with her.

As this case illustrates, when the activities of corporations stop being innocent in the name of doing business and raising a country's GDP, should not the role of celebrities in enhancing the corporations' fate be scrutinised as well?

As the activities of corporations are deemed not innocent due to those being done only for profit, shouldn't the role of celebrities in enhancing the corporations' success be scrutinised as well?

But beyond just scrutiny, we ought to move into a culture wherein, before signing a deal, a celebrity conducts background research on a brand—the same way brands do, quite extensively, when taking a celebrity on board. And this fact-checking exercise shouldn't be limited to legal matters or instances of public backlash, but also in terms of whether a celebrity's philosophy aligns with the company's. If a self-proclaimed nature-lover signs up for a top-five polluter, for instance, that's more than a little contradictory.



'We can beat any side anywhere in the world'

“
The players you have mentioned [Shakib Al Hasan, Mushfiqur Rahim, Tamim Iqbal] are very experienced. They are the guys who have played here in South Africa, they are the guys who have played in Australia. So, you know from a mental point of view, they know what to expect.

South Africa skipper
Temba Bavuma



ABDULLAH AL MEHDI

Whether to focus on the batting line-up's form and ability to counter South Africa's pacers or to focus on their own pace battery's performance on South African soil is what may boggle the Bangladesh think-tank most going into the first ODI at Centurion today.

Bangladesh have never won on South African soil in any format, so rather than going in with shaky feelings and a half-hearted approach borne from past defeats, Tamim Iqbal opted for brevity. "We know that South Africa is always a difficult tour for us. We want to change that and for that we have to prepare ourselves for a difficult challenge and be brave," the ODI skipper claimed at the press conference yesterday, a day ahead of the game.

Bangladesh have historically struggled in South Africa, especially with the pace and bounce. The likes of Kagiso Rabada terrorised them in the recent T20I World Cup at UAE too. Anrich Nortje's pace could be a handful while in Tabraiz Shamsi they have the kind of bowler that Bangladesh have not really had much experience with.

The ground at Centurion has produced runs in the last three ODIs, with the latest two being the Proteas' series against Pakistan. Tamim, who said that his side had been able to get a feel of the pitch by practicing in the centre wickets, was finding hope from the team's last match against South Africa in ODI format – a 21-run win at The Oval in the 2019 World Cup.

"This is a ground where, if you go by the statistics, you see that a lot of runs are scored because the ground is a bit smaller and the outfield is fast. But whatever the statistics say, you have to accept that we have to play well. We're ready for the challenge. We know they will be onto us. We have to handle the pressure. We played well against them recently and I believe there is no reason not to do well. The most important thing will be how we start tomorrow," Tamim said.

▶▶ Bangladesh are already on top of the ICC ODI Super League table with 100 points from 15 matches. Even a single win from the three-match series against South Africa would further solidify the Tigers' chances of qualifying for the 2023 ODI World Cup in India.

▶▶ South Africa, meanwhile, are 10th in the Super League table with just 39 points from 10 matches. Bangladesh are yet to win in any formats away to South Africa. The Tigers have played nine ODIs, six Tests and four T20Is against the Proteas in their backyard.

▶▶ Playing in 14 of the 21 ODIs between

Bangladesh and South Africa, Shakib Al Hasan has scored 397 runs – the highest among the players from the current squads of the two sides.

▶▶ Quinton de Kock is just behind Shakib in the top-scorers' chart. However, De Kock took only seven matches to score 354 runs at an average of 59.

▶▶ With 13 wickets in seven ODIs, Kagiso Rabada is the active player with the most number of wickets against Bangladesh.

▶▶ Shakib also scalped the same number of wickets as Rabada but the all-rounder played seven more games than the pacer.

The team will be buoyed by the fact that ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan is keen on taking on the Proteas as well. "He is with the team and he's fully available for all the matches. Shakib is waiting for tomorrow's match and he wants to do well. Just like I want to do well, the other members of the team want to do the same," Tamim informed.

Alongside exactly how much of an advantage fast bowlers will get on tracks that might be flat, the main worry may be how the top-order can weather and push past the early storm.

"We know it will be challenging. If you think about it, bar one or two, most of the members of our side are quite experienced with at least 40-50 ODIs in the bag. Everyone

knows what to expect. The most important thing will be the mindset. If we have a good day, I feel we can beat any side anywhere in the world," Tamim said.

South Africa captain Temba Bavuma was counting on having a good day too. Bangladesh had the experience and for Bavuma the Tigers deserved respect.

"The players you mentioned [Shakib, Mushfiqur Rahim, Tamim] are very experienced. They are guys who have played here in South Africa... they are guys who have played in Australia. So, from a mental point of view, they know what to expect. They [Bangladesh] are on top of the [ICC ODI Super] League, so we will give them the respect. But it's what happens on the day that matters," he concluded.

Diya, Nasrin dazzle to guarantee gold

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh already secured a gold medal before the actual gold medal event as archers Diya Siddique and Nasrin Akter landed in the final of the women's individual recurve event yesterday at the 2022 Asia Cup World Ranking Tournament Stage 1 in Thailand. "It is really a different feeling that we, two Bangladeshis, will play the final of an international event," an elated Diya told The Daily Star over phone yesterday.

Apart from success in the individual events, Bangladesh, after yesterday's matches, will also be eyeing a gold in the women's team recurve event, and bronzes in men's individual and team recurve events and in men's compound event as well.

Diya, despite losing two of the first three sets, overcame top seed Ridhi Phor of India 6-4 in the first round and went on to convincingly beat fourth seed Tisha Punia of India 7-3 in the semifinals.

Nasrin, however, went through a much tougher challenge on the road to meeting Diya in the final. First, she handed Laxmi Hembrom of India a first round exit by edging past the tenth seed 6-5 in tiebreakers and then underwent another gruelling battle in the semifinal against Malaysia's Nur Fozi as Nasrin won again by the exact margin.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh women – comprising Diya, Nasrin and Famida Sultana Nisha – ousted Kazakhstan 5-1 in the semifinals and thus reached the team recurve event's final, where India stand in between them and the gold.



Khorsshedur treble fires BD to top

SPORTS REPORTER

Penalty-corner specialist Khorsshedur Rahman netted a hat-trick to help Bangladesh earn a hard-fought 3-2 win over Oman in Jakarta yesterday and emerge as Group B champions in the Men's AHF Cup.

The unbeaten Bangladesh team will meet Pool A runners-up Kazakhstan in the semifinal while Oman will take on Pool A champions Sri Lanka in the other semifinal on Saturday.

With three wins from as many matches, Bangladesh and Oman both took to the field to decide who would finish on top of the group.

Bangladesh started positively by taking the lead in the eighth minute as Khorsshedur converted the second penalty corner of the match.

However, Oman hit back two minutes into the second half, with Rashad Al Fazari scoring from a counter-attack in the 32nd minute before Fahad Al Lawati gave Oman a deserved lead in the 48th minute with a clever flick.

After falling behind, Bangladesh began to press and converted their third penalty corner through Khorsshedur in the 56th minute, before he completed his hat-trick and secured a win by converting another penalty stroke two minutes from time.

Tuchel praises players' focus

Chelsea coach Thomas Tuchel praised his players for remaining focused amid the uncertainty about the club's future after they progressed Wednesday to the Champions League quarter-finals, where he said they would be "the team nobody wants to play". The reigning European champions came from behind to beat Lille 2-1 in northern France and win their last-16 tie 4-1 on aggregate with Christian Pulisic and captain Cesar Azpilicueta scoring their goals. "Chelsea is so clear what it demands from every employee and from every player – play your role to the limit, live up to it and take responsibility," Tuchel said when asked how he and his team managed to maintain their concentration amid all the turmoil.



AGENCIES

Villarreal scored three late goals to secure a stunning 3-0 Champions League second-leg victory at Juventus on Wednesday, condemning the Serie A side to a 4-1 aggregate loss and a last-16 exit for the third successive season.

Penalties from Gerard Moreno and Arnaut Danjuma and Pau Torres's tap-in in the final quarter of an hour were enough for Unai Emery's well-organised side to see off the Italians at the Allianz Stadium and make Friday's last-eight draw.

"It's a magical night," said Moreno to Movistar+.

"We thought we could do it, we've always shown that in the big games we compete, the team gives its best... we all want to be in there with the best in Europe, we're going to keep dreaming and we're going to do it together."

Having fallen before the quarter-finals against Olympique Lyonnais and Porto in the previous two seasons, in-form Juventus, who had lost just once in their last 21 matches in all competitions, were firm favourites to progress.

Juve dominated the first half and were unfortunate not to go into the break in front after Dusan Vlahovic's brilliant flicked effort came back off the crossbar, but they could not keep up the pressure in the second period. Villarreal were content to

sit back and wait for their moment, which came in the 78th minute after the visitors were awarded a penalty following a VAR review, with substitute Gerard Moreno, who had only just come on, squeezing the spot kick home.

Juve threw on Argentine striker Paulo Dybala as they looked to level the tie, but goals down the other end from defender

Pau Torres and another penalty, this time converted by Arnaut Danjuma, completed a famous win for Unai Emery's team.

It is the first time Emery has progressed from a tie in the knockout stages of the Champions League, while Villarreal had not qualified for the quarter-finals of the competition since 2008-09.

'It's a magical night'



Villarreal players celebrate after a late show helped them stun Juventus 3-0 in the second-leg, condemning the Serie A side to a 4-1 aggregate loss and a last-16 exit from the Champions League for the third successive season.

PHOTO: REUTERS

SPORT



A chance to become the masters

OF THEIR OWN FATE

For one half, Liverpool's anxiety grew. Perhaps encumbered by the knowledge that they would need to win Thursday's clash to take control of their destiny in the title race, they allowed Arsenal to dictate proceedings at the Emirates Stadium. Jurgen Klopp exploded at the fourth official on the touchline before half time and the trend held for the 10 minutes after the break. Then, with one sweeping move 54 minutes into second half that led to Diego Jota's goal, followed eight minutes later by Roberto Firmino adding a second, the Reds irreversibly swung proceedings their way.

SAMAMA RAHMAN

The celebrations among the Reds stood in stark contrast to the body language of Manchester City at the final whistle against Crystal Palace on Tuesday, which, coupled with Liverpool's win, saw their lead at the top reduced to just one point.

Liverpool had done what champions often do. They weathered a proper storm away from home, during which time it looked almost certain they would concede. They did not, and instead sucker-punched the opposition before swiftly killing off the game.

City's clash against Palace was reminiscent of the scenario during their crunch game against Leicester City in the title run-in in May of 2019, when City needed a win to maintain their lead. Vincent Kompany had then unleashed all his fury into one shot -- against the vocal advice of teammates -- that all but decided the title, not in set-in-stone mathematical terms, but by swinging the pendulum at precisely the right moment. Manchester City would go on to win the title by just one point that season.

A goal against Palace would have had similar implications, but it

was not forthcoming. Instead, the draw tilted momentum further in Liverpool's direction.

In their last seven games, Manchester City have slowed down with two draws and one loss. That may not seem like much, but that accounts for half of their draws and a third of their losses this season. Two draws and one loss is exactly what Liverpool have recorded in their previous 16 games as well, but the wind in their sails is the fact that they are currently

City have no room for any further slip ups, given that they are on 70 points and have only 27 more to play for. But by winning the game against Arsenal, Liverpool wrestled control of their destiny. They no longer have to count on further slip-ups from City. Instead, they can seize pole position outright in the Premier League title's date with destiny on April 10.

on a seven-game unbeaten run.

In terms of what the remaining nine games can yield, Guardiola expressed a clear idea in early February.

"We have to win a lot, more than 90 points... 95, 96 to be champions." That means Manchester City have no room for any further slip ups, given that they are on 70 points and have only 27 more to play for.

But by winning the game against Arsenal, Liverpool wrestled control of their destiny. They no longer have to count on further slip-ups from Manchester City. Instead,

they can seize pole position outright in the Premier League title's date with destiny on April 10, when the two contenders clash at the Etihad.

That date and time may still change depending on Friday's Champions League draw, but it is a game that, sooner or later, must be played and one that has been set up to be more crucial than any other in the Premier League calendar this year. A win for Liverpool would see take command at the top of the table while a win for Pep's men would see them regain their cushion.

The good news for the Citizens is that their record against Liverpool at home should provide them some assurances, as should the fact that even a loss may be overcome given their run-in is slightly less tricky.

Jurgen Klopp's men will play five of their remaining eight fixtures -- the one against City notwithstanding -- against teams in the top half of the table, including top-four hopefuls Manchester United and Tottenham. City will play just three of their eight against top-half opposition.

Regardless of the strength of the opponents that comes next, that game will tilt things and, with the momentum it will give to the winning side, further results should come all that easier.

Of course, even a win in that game guarantees nothing. But, for the moment, it will provide the clearest picture and show which team has the mindset and credentials of champions, if not the crown outright.

"I like English football because you play all the games from the start of the Premier League to the very last game, always 100%. Even when squads in the last two or three games have just been relegated, they still play 100%."

Former Manchester City coach Roberto Mancini



» Manchester United midfielder Paul Pogba became only the seventh player to assist in four goals in a single Premier League game, doing so against Leeds United on 14 August 2021. The rest of the list is dominated by North Londoners, including Arsenal's Dennis Bergkamp, Jose Antonio Reyes, Cesc Fabregas and Santi Cazorla and Tottenham Hotspur's Emmanuel Adebayor and Harry Kane.

» Burnley striker Mark Wood scored the 30,000th goal in PL history against Leeds on 29 August 2021. Sheffield United striker Brian Deane netted the very first goal of the competition against Manchester United on 15 August 1992.

» Liverpool striker Sadio Mane became the first player in English top-flight history to score in nine consecutive matches against the same opponent when he scored against Crystal Palace on 18 September 2021. The Senegalese bettered Robin van Persie, who had found the net in eight PL matches in a row against Stoke City.

» On 24 February 2022, Liverpool's Mane and Mohamed Salah both netted in the same PL match for the 31st time against Norwich City, a mark that no other pair has managed in the competition's history.

» Tottenham's Kane and Son Heung-min smashed the record for most goal combinations as they combined for the 37th time against Leeds on 26 February 2022. They moved one clear of Chelsea greats Didier Drogba and Frank Lampard.

» Tottenham striker Kane, with 177 goals, broke into the list of top five goal-scorers in PL history on 12 March 2022 against Man United, leveling Lampard. Former England striker Alan Shearer, who played for Blackburn Rovers and Newcastle United, is at the top with 260 goals.



14 years later, result still the same

Manchester United forward Cristiano Ronaldo scored his second Premier League hat-trick on March 12, 2022 against Tottenham Hotspur. It was his first in England's top-flight since 2008. His two league trebles were separated by 14 years and 59 days, which is the longest gap between hat-tricks for a player in the league. The 37-year-old veteran became the second-oldest player to ever score a Premier League hat-trick and is just over 100 days behind the record. Interestingly, Teddy Sheringham, who played for both Manchester United and Tottenham throughout his career, holds that record.



Ederson to equal record or Alisson to turn around?

Manchester City goalkeeper Ederson is on course to grab a share of a Premier League record as he bids to win the Golden Glove award for a third season in a row. Leading the way with 16 shutouts, he can become

only the third man to win the award in three consecutive campaigns after Pepe Reina did so with Liverpool and Joe Hart with Man City. However, he faces tough competition from Liverpool goalkeeper Alisson Becker, who has kept clean sheets in 15 matches.



Can Salah be caught?

Mohamed Salah, with 20 goals, is in the driving seat to earn his third Golden Boot award as he leads the Premier League's top scorer chart by a clear margin. Over the course of the past four campaigns, he has averaged just under 24 league goals a season and will be hoping to surpass that this year. The Liverpool forward holds a seven-goal advantage over team-mate Diogo Jota. Manchester United's Cristiano Ronaldo, Tottenham's Harry Kane and another Liverpool player, Sadio Mane, are on 12 goals.



CAP 10 OF THE STEEL INDUSTRY

BSRM WINS THE BEST BRAND AWARD FOR THE 10TH TIME IN A ROW

COUNTRY'S NO. 1 STEEL EXPERT

BSRM building a safer nation

HIGHEST SELLING CEMENT for more than **15 years**

SHAH CEMENT



In this handout picture taken and released by the State Emergency Service of Ukraine yesterday, firemen work to extinguish a fire at an educational institution hit by shelling in the town of Merefa in the Kharkiv region.

PHOTO: AFP

BNP to wrap up councils by year-end

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

With the national election in mind, BNP has intensified its efforts to complete the district councils as soon as possible and beef up the party's organisational strength.

It has so far completed councils in three districts – Nilphamari, Manikganj and Rangamati. Four more districts are queued up for this month, party leaders said.

The party is looking to complete councils in all the 81 organisational districts by the end of this year so that it can hold the national council early next year.

"Now we are trying to wrap up the district councils in the shortest possible time ...," Ruhul Kabir Rizvi, senior joint secretary general of the party, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Party leaders said holding district councils is complex and time-consuming as there is a lot of going back and forth in forming complete committees.

Explaining the process, they said that first a Thana convener committee is formed, which then forms a union convening committee. The union convening committee then forms a complete ward committee.

After the ward committee, a union committee is formed and then a Thana committee.

The district committees formed after Thana, municipality, union and ward councils.

"It is a complex and democratic process. So, it

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

Star HEALTHLINE

How to prevent OSTEOPOROSIS?

STAR HEALTH DESK

Osteoporosis is a disease of the bones. The word means "porous bone". It weakens your bones and makes them more prone to fractures.

Bone is a kind of living tissue which gets broken down and replaced, and osteoporosis usually happens when formation of new bones happens slower than the loss of old bones.

Elderly people, especially women who are past menopause, are more prone to the disease.

If not managed, it can hamper the daily lives of patients. In the early stages, it is hard to detect. But once it advances, symptoms like back pain, loss of height, bones breaking easily are noticed.

Prevention of osteoporosis should be given more importance as its treatment can be tricky.

In order to prevent this disease, we need to be mindful of our bone health.

Good nutrition and exercise are necessary to keep bones healthy and strong.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



'The mother, not Napa syrup, killed the boys'

Says SP of Brahmanbaria

OUR CORRESPONDENT, B'baria

It wasn't the Napa syrup that killed the two children at Durgapur village, after all. It was their mother who had poisoned them so that she could marry her boyfriend.

"After a thorough investigation, we have found evidence that the mother in association with her boyfriend committed the killings," said Mohammad Anisur Rahman, superintendent of police (SP) of Brahmanbaria, at a press conference yesterday.

Their mother, Rima Begum, was having an extramarital affair with one Shafiullah, who she met while working at a rice mill in Bagoir area in Ashuganj upazila.

Shafiullah agreed to marry her on the condition that she leaves behind her children Yasin Khan, 7, and Morsalin Khan, 5.

They hatched the plan to kill the two boys. On the evening of March 10, Rima fed her two sons poisoned sweets provided by Shafiullah.

The boys fell sick and were initially taken to Ashuganj Upazila Health Complex. They were sent to the Brahmanbaria General Hospital. Curiously, the boys were not admitted to the hospital.

Yasin died on the way home from the hospital, while Mursalin breathed his last upon reaching home, Rahman said at the press conference.

Rima claimed to local journalists that her sons fell ill after consuming Napa syrup bought from a local pharmacy and started to vomit. Later, they died.

The children's death drew the attention of all concerned across the country.

The Directorate General of Health Services, the Directorate General of Drug Administration and Brahmanbaria General Hospital authorities formed three investigation committees to probe the deaths.

The drug administration authorities collected samples of Napa syrup of particular batches, including the one in question, and tested them in labs. But the authorities found no harmful ingredients.

Meanwhile, on Wednesday, the children's father Ismail Hossain Khan, who is visually impaired, filed a case against Rima and her 'boyfriend' Shafiullah.

The police investigated the thread further and found that Rima had called Shafiullah 15 times on the day the children died.

During the investigation, police found that the family took the boys to the Brahmanbaria General Hospital and bought a ticket for taking treatment in the emergency department. But they fled from the hospital without receiving treatment.

In the early hours of yesterday, police arrested Rima, who admitted to her crime in primary interrogation, Rahman said.

Yesterday, Rima was produced before the Chief Judicial Magistrate's Court of Brahmanbaria, where she also gave a confessional statement, said Kazi Dider Ul Alam, inspector of Brahmanbaria Court Police. Later, the court sent her to jail, he said.

Holy Shab-e-Barat tonight

BSS, Dhaka

The holy Shab-e-Barat, the night of fortune, will be observed tonight across the country with due religious fervour and devotion.

Muslims consider Shab-e-Barat as one of the three most sacred nights and believe that on this night Almighty Allah decides the fate of all human beings fixing their "rizq" (livelihood) for the next year.

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday greeted all Muslims of the country and elsewhere in the world on the occasion of the holy Shab-e-Barat.

In separate messages, they urged Muslim devotees to observe the holy Shab-e-Barat maintaining health guidelines and social distancing amid the pandemic.

Devotees would spend the night at mosques and homes offering prayers, reciting from the holy Quran and seeking blessings of Allah for long life, peace, progress and

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Howler monkeys play to reduce group tension

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Adult howler monkeys play to avoid conflict and reduce tension among group members, according to a new study which finds that the levels of play among the primates increase when they are faced with scarce resources.

The study, published on Wednesday in the journal Animal Behaviour, examined the activity of two

howler monkey subspecies – the Mexican howler (*Alouatta palliata* mexicana) and the golden-mantled howler (*Alouatta palliata palliata*).

Researchers, including those from Anglia Ruskin University (ARU) in the UK, assessed how play activities among monkeys vary with age.

They also measured the amount of time adults play with other adults as well as with juvenile monkeys within their groups.

Play activities involve individuals hanging from their tails and making facial expressions and

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THE KING RESTS ... A grey-headed fish eagle, perched on a tree branch, taking a break from hunting. These majestic birds of prey make use of tall trees to either rest or spot prey. Even though they are found in almost every district in Bangladesh, the birds are listed as 'near-threatened' by the IUCN, due to degradation of water bodies and human disturbance, among other issues. The photo was taken in Chapainawabganj's Kallyanpur area recently.

PHOTO: RABIUL HASAN



It's not a Berlin Wall – it is a Wall in central Europe between freedom and bondage and this Wall is growing bigger with every bomb. ... Dear Mr Scholz, tear down this Wall. Give Germany the leadership role that you in Germany deserve.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky tells German parliament

Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation (BJMC)
Ministry of Textiles and Jute

Time Extension of Expression of Interest (Eoi)

The submission date and time of "2nd Invitation for Expression of Interest (Eoi)" Ref. No. 24.04.0000.204.99.007.22-21, Date: 07.02.2022 for the award of lease of 13 state-owned Jute Mills of BJMC has been extended to 06 April, 2022; Time: 3.00pm (BST).

Opening date and time of Eoi has been fixed on 07 April, 2022; Time: 11.00am (BST).

Date: 16.03.2022

Muhammad Salehuddin
Chairman
Bangladesh Jute Mills Corporation

GD-525