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## ILIAS ALI Rab 'trying to find' him

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rapid Action Battalion yesterday said it tried to find BNP leader Ilias



Ali and is still helping his family in this regard.

Whenever Ilias' wife gave information about his possible whereabouts, Rab teams went there and tried to find him, Khandaker Al Moin, Rab's legal and media wing director, told a press conference yesterday.

Ilias has been missing since 2012.

"We have assisted her and we are still assisting her ... that is our duty as a law enforcement agency," he added.

The Rab official said the allegation of the force's involvement in Ilias' disappearance was "baseless".

"Rather, we want to say that we have extended the highest legal assistance to his wife since Ilias Ali went missing," Moin said.

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A little tern shows off its catch from the Padma in Rajshahi, while another waits to hunt. According to experts, this seabird started breeding on the Padma char over the last couple of years. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO COURTESY: MOSABBER HOSSAIN RIBON

## GLOBAL FOOD CRISIS The World Bank warns of 'human catastrophe'

AGENCIES

The world is facing a "human catastrophe" from soaring food prices following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, warned the president of the World Bank, David Malpass.

In an interview with the BBC, he said that record rises in food prices would push hundreds of millions people into poverty and lower nutrition, if the crisis continues.

The World Bank calculates there could be a "huge" 37% jump in food prices.

This would hit the poor hardest, who will "eat less and have less money for anything else such as schooling".

Malpass, who leads the institution charged with global alleviation of poverty, said the impact on the poor made it "an unfair kind of crisis... that was true also of Covid".

"It's a human catastrophe, meaning nutrition goes down. But then it also becomes a political challenge for governments who can't do anything about it, they didn't cause it and they see the prices going up," he said on the sidelines of the IMF World Bank meetings in Washington on Wednesday.

The price rises are broad and deep, he said: "It's affecting food of all different kinds oils, grains, and then it gets into other crops, corn crops, because they go up when wheat goes up".

Malpass called for the release of food from large global stockpiles to help address the

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## Another dead in 'shootout' with Rab

Second such death since US slapped sanctions on the force

STAR REPORT

A man was killed in what the Rab claimed was a gunfight with the law enforcers in Manikganj early yesterday.

The dead, identified as Kawser Ali Mondal, 45, from Joypurhat's Panchbibi upazila, was an accused in at least 12 robbery cases, claimed the Rab.

Just four days ago, Raju, 35, an accused in a murder case, was shot dead in a "shootout" with Rab members in Cumilla.

Raju's death was the first such incident since the US imposed sanctions on Rab for rights violations on December 10, 2021.

Khandaker Al Moin, Rab's Legal and Media wing director, said the "gunfight" in Manikganj also left two Rab members with injuries as some armed miscreants opened fire at their microbus on Singair-Hemayetpur regional highway. A window of Rab's microbus was shattered, and a tire burst, in the alleged gunfight.

The law enforcers retaliated, leaving Kawser dead, he said, adding that the injured officials were taken to Combined Military Hospital in Dhaka.

An attempt to murder case was filed by Rab-4 against the victim while a murder case was filed as well against

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## 'Seal off last fighters of Mariupol'

Putin tells forces; US announces \$800m military aid for Kyiv

AGENCIES

Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday claimed the "liberation" of the flattened city of Mariupol after nearly two months of fighting, but signalled he would forgo a final bloody offensive against beleaguered Ukrainian defenders there.

The fate of the besieged port has become totemic as Russia battles to complete a land bridge covering territories of Ukraine already under its control, including Crimea.

"Mariupol has been liberated," Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu told Putin during a televised meeting. "The remaining nationalist formations took refuge in the industrial zone of the Azovstal plant."

Shoigu said around 2,000 Ukrainian soldiers remained inside the giant steel plant, where the last pocket of Ukrainian resistance has been sheltering in a network of underground tunnels.

Putin said the "liberation" of Mariupol was a "success" for Russian forces but ordered Shoigu to call off the planned

storming of the industrial area, dismissing it as "impractical".

"There is no need to climb into these catacombs and crawl underground through these industrial facilities. Block off this industrial area so that not even a fly can escape," Putin said.

The Ukrainian defenders said they were refusing to surrender but appealed for security guarantees.

Meanwhile, the West staged another show of support for Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky with a visit to Kyiv by the Spanish and Danish prime ministers, a day after European Council leader Charles Michel came and vowed the EU would do "everything possible" to help Ukraine win the war.

Zelensky said Ukraine still did not have enough weapons, despite billions in Western military aid that has forced Russia to re-focus its offensive away from Kyiv and towards the east of the country.

In morgues around the capital, the bodies of some 1,020 civilians are being stored after Russian troops withdrew from the region,

Deputy Prime Minister Olga Stefanishyna told AFP.

While the West remains nervous about igniting a direct conflict with nuclear-armed Russia, US President Joe Biden said he was "amazed" by Ukrainian resistance since the invasion began on February 24.

Biden said yesterday he had authorised another \$800 million in military aid for Ukraine, citing a "critical window" in the conflict. He also announced the United States will ban Russian-affiliated ships from American ports, joining Canada and European nations.

Turkey on Wednesday accused some of its Nato allies of wanting the war in Ukraine to last longer in order to weaken Russia.

"There are countries within Nato who want the war to continue," Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told CNN Turk in an interview.

Russia's international isolation has also deepened. At a meeting of G20 finance ministers in Washington, the United States led a walkout of Western allies as Russian officials spoke.

## Prehistoric people created art by flickering firelight

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Prehistoric people created art by the fire where it may have appeared to move and flicker in the firelight, a new study has suggested.

Researchers examined 50 stones unearthed in France that were engraved with artistic designs around 15,000 years ago and have patterns of heat damage.

The damage suggests the stones, referred to as plaquettes, were carved close to the flickering light of a fire.

Lead author of the study, Dr Andy Needham from the department of

archaeology at the University of York and co-director of the York Experimental Archaeology Research Centre, said: "It has previously been assumed that the heat damage visible on some plaquettes was likely to have been caused by accident, but experiments with replica plaquettes showed the damage was more consistent with being purposefully positioned close to a fire.

"...We now know that people 15,000 years ago were creating art around a fire at night, with flickering shapes and shadows."



## FLOOD-HIT FARMERS IN HAORS

# Combine harvesters saving grace for some

DWOHA CHOWDHURY, Sylhet

As most crop protection levees are on the verge of collapse due to flash floods, haor farmers in the north-eastern districts are harvesting ripe and half-ripe Boro paddy with combine harvesters.

The machine is becoming popular as there is a shortage of labourer. Farmers say the harvesters are more cost-effective and faster than having the job done by labourers.

Farmer Jyotimohon Das of Dosmontopur village in Sunamganj's Jamalganj, said, "For years, we have been facing labour crisis during the harvest season and due to flash floods, the number of labourers coming from other districts dropped significantly."

"For this, the labour cost has become almost double which we cannot afford," he added.

"The flood situation is worsening and that's why the demand for combine

harvesters is skyrocketing," said owner of a combine harvester Atiqul Islam, of Sunamganj's Tahirpur.

In seven districts in the north-eastern region, 1,507 combine harvesters are currently being used to reap Boro paddy, according to the district offices of the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE).

Of them, 535 machines are in Sunamganj, 330 in Netrakona, 237 in Kishoreganj, 170 in Habiganj, 65 in Sylhet, 65 in Moulvibazar and 105 in Brahmanbaria.

However, the DAE in a press release yesterday said 1,700 harvesters are working in the districts.

According to combine harvester owners, farmers pay Tk 2,500-4,500 per acre depending on the cropland's condition and possible yield.

Abdus Sobhan, a farmer and a combine harvester owner of Sunamganj's

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Farmers reap Boro paddy with a combine harvester in Toakul Union of Sylhet's Gowainghat yesterday. The demand for such machines has increased as farmers in haor areas are harvesting half-ripe paddy fearing flash floods, which have already damaged crops in many areas. Farmers say the machines save them time and money.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASIR