



**P3** Pantha Kunja Park lies neglected



**P5** Khulna Public Library overlooked, ignored



**P6** UK, India to step up defence co-op



**WR1** Are we doing enough over climate change?



**BACK IN BUSINESS...** The Dhaka New Market is back to its usual self after an abrupt two-day closure. It is packed with Eid shoppers on the weekend yesterday as they go from one shop to another in search of dresses, footwear and ornaments. The market remained shut Tuesday and Wednesday following clashes between shopkeepers and Dhaka College students.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

**CHOLERA IN CAPITAL**

**Vaccination drive to start next month**  
 Move comes amid spike in patients

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Health Minister Zahid Maleque yesterday said the government would start administering oral cholera vaccines in the capital from next month. "Inoculation will begin in areas prone to cholera and diarrhoea," he said, adding that the health department has a plan to widen the vaccination programme in future. The minister was speaking to journalists after visiting Government Titumir College in the capital, where the entrance test for the Bachelor of Dental Surgery (BDS) course applicants took place. Addressing a briefing on April 13, health directorate spokesperson Nazmul Islam said a total of 2.3 million people, aged one year and above, will get oral cholera vaccines from next month in five diarrhoea-prone areas in the capital. Expectant mothers will not be included in the campaign to be held in Jatrabari, Dakshinkhan, Mirpur, Mohammadpur and Sabujbagh areas. In 2020, the health directorate vaccinated 12 lakh people in six areas of the city with the first dose of cholera vaccines. Due to the Covid-19 emergency, the

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**NEW MARKET CLASHES**

**BNP leader arrested for inciting violence**

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday arrested BNP leader Mokbul Hossain for instigating the clashes between shopkeepers and Dhaka College students in the capital's New Market area that left two persons dead and scores others wounded. AKM Hafiz Akhter, additional commissioner of Detective Branch of Dhaka Metropolitan Police, told The Daily Star that he was the prime accused in the case filed by police on Wednesday. Mokbul, former New Market thana BNP president and current member of the party's Dhaka South unit convening committee, was held from his Dhanmondi home and was being interrogated at the DB office on Minto Road, the police official said. He owns two shops in the New Market. The deadly clash ensued after a worker of one of



**Mokbul**

Mokbul's shops called in some Dhaka College students to "punish" the employee of the other shop following a brawl between the two. That spilled over into daylong pitched battles between Dhaka College students and shopkeepers the following day. On Thursday, Mokbul told The Daily Star that one of the shops he owns in New Market is run by his brother and the other by his cousin. "I have not even gone to New Market area in the last four months. Instead of filing the case against the real culprits, police filed a politically motivated case against leaders of the BNP and its affiliated organisations," he had said. Yamin Kabir, inspector (investigation) of New Market Police Station, filed one of the cases that named 24 people for obstructing police from discharging duties, assaulting law enforcement officers, and damaging properties. Twelve of the 24,

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**Tourism to see a turnaround after 2 years**  
 Huge rush expected during Eid holidays

RASHIDUL HASAN

The tourism industry is set to rebound during the Eid vacation after two years of slump amid the pandemic. Thousands of people are likely to make trips to domestic and foreign tourist destinations during the Eid vacation, said the leaders of Tour Operators Association of Bangladesh (Toab), adding that the number of such trips fell significantly due to Covid in 2020 and 2021. It has already become difficult to get air tickets for the domestic and foreign tourist destinations, thanks to the rush of holidaymakers. Officials of all three airlines of the country -- Biman, US Bangla and Novoair -- told The Daily Star that the demand for tickets to two popular destinations, Cox's Bazar and Sylhet, was very high from May 2. Eid is likely to fall on May 2 or 3. US Bangla Airlines has already sold almost 80 percent of the Dhaka-Cox's Bazar tickets for flights in the first week of May, said its spokesperson Kamrul Islam. Towards the end of 2020, the tourism industry tried to recover from losses, but the slump caused by the second and third wave of coronavirus forced many tour operators to leave the business, Toab leaders said. Forty lakh people are currently employed in the tourism sector that added 4.4 percent to the GDP in 2019, said Toab President Rafeuzzaman. Toab includes 700 tour operators, travel agencies, hotels, motels, resorts, airlines, and transport companies. In a recent study, Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies (BIDS) said the hospitality industry lost around Tk 60,000 crore in 2020. The study released earlier this month said 1.1 lakh people lost their jobs amid the pandemic. "We hope that domestic tourism will rebound centring the Eid. We are expecting that over 1.5 million holidaymakers will make trips to domestic and outbound destinations this Eid," Rafeuzzaman, also a member of the governing body of Bangladesh Tourism Board, told The Daily Star. Mohammad Iqbal Mahmood, president of Bangladesh Outbound Tour Operators Association, said six-seven lakh people are likely to travel to different destinations outside the country during the vacation. India alone will see almost five lakh visitors from Bangladesh. US Bangla's Kamrul said demands for tickets of Dhaka-Kolkata and Dhaka-Male flights were very high with most of the tickets already sold, causing the prices of remaining Dhaka-Kolkata tickets to skyrocket. Tickets for flights to Nepal, Turkey, Thailand, the Maldives, Bangkok, Malaysia and Dubai are also in high demand. Between April 20 and May 7, many people in Bangladesh will have just one work day on May 5. Former Toab director Taslim Amin said all the resorts in and around Dhaka were fully booked for three days from Eid while the rooms in good hotels, motels and resorts in Cox's Bazar and Sylhet were booked for a week after Eid. The situation will be almost similar in Rangamati and

**TOURISM SECTOR**

- ▲ Tk 60,000cr lost due to pandemic
- ▲ 40 lakh people involved in the sector
- ▲ 1.1 lakh lost jobs
- ▲ 15 lakh to make domestic, foreign trips this Eid

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

**Eighth grader holds senior officer's post**

Ministry, BPC sit on audit objections to recruitment anomalies at SAOCL

MOHAMMAD SUMAN

Shahidul Islam landed a job in Standard Asiatic Oil Company Limited (SAOCL), a partner company of state-run Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation (BPC), as a senior officer (maintenance) in 2015. He got the highly technical, first-class government job without any written test or viva, with a class VIII certificate. There was no circular for the position either. An equivalent post in similar companies requires at least a BSC degree, BPC sources said. Like him, 13 other people were recruited to fill in different vital posts between 2012 and 2019 without any circular and competitive examinations in violation of government recruitment policies. Nearly one and a half years after the government's own auditors raised objections against these "illegal recruitments", the power and energy ministry or the BPC is yet to take any action, and all the 14 are serving in the positions. Narayan Chandra Saha, chief accounts and finance officer at the Department of Internal Resources of power and energy

ministry, submitted the audit report to the director general of the Directorate of Power and Energy Audit in December 2020. Chattogram-based SAOCL is jointly owned by Asiatic Industries Ltd, a private company, and BPC, each having 50 percent of the shares. Its recruitments are done by a Management Advisory Committee with approval of the company Board. The BPC chairman is the Board chair. In the case of the 14 recruits, however, the Management Advisory Committee headed by Asiatic Chairman Moinuddin Ahmed did not take the Board's approval, the audit report said. All of them are known to be close to Moinuddin Ahmed and former company general manager Mohammad Shahed, it added. The power and energy ministry did not respond to our calls and text messages on Thursday. Current BPC chairman said they launched a fresh investigation into the matter, and would take actions accordingly once the investigation completed.

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Jaywalkers, including one with two children, squeeze through a gap in the railing on the central reservation of Mirpur Road. Such pedestrians dodge vehicles while darting across busy roads, putting themselves and motorists in harm's way. The photo was taken in the capital's Nur Jahan Super Market area yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN





Once a comfort zone for pedestrians and locals, Pantha Kunja Park has now turned into an abandoned broken space. It all started when renovations were initiated back in 2018 and halted right after. For three years, the park has been in such condition. DSCC has finally taken another initiative to renovate the park with changes in the original design. The photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Once a place of comfort, now lies abandoned

Renovation work of Pantha Kunja Park remains halted for three years

DIPAN NANDY

On hot summer days, when the scorching heat would leave pedestrians exhausted, the park would serve as a resting place. Mornings would see clusters of people belonging to different age groups flocking for routine workouts. In the golden hours of the afternoons, the triangular park became a place for light chats.

However, the scenes drastically changed for Pantha Kunja Park at Karwan Bazar intersection when Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC) took the initiative to revamp it in 2018.

The initiative was taken to beautify the park under the "Various Infrastructure Development of Dhaka South City Corporation" project. The allocation for this was about Tk

19.20 crore.

In September that year, renovation works started by covering the entire periphery with tin. A few days later, it was found that two to three pillars of the Dhaka Elevated Expressway project are expected to stand in the areas of the park.



The renovation works were halted immediately. The entire scenery changed, turning the once calm and peaceful park into an abandoned spot.

Even after three years since the halt, works on the expressway have not yet started in the area. On the other hand, DSCC has barred public entrance to the park.

Pantha Kunja is not what it used to be. It has turned into a criminal den, with hijackers and drug dealers taking over the area, according to locals.

When this correspondent visited the park recently, it was observed that the tin fence around the park was being removed.

Some cleaning inside the park also took place, but it's still too little.

This has been made possible under DSCC's recent initiative to renovate the park again. However, many changes are expected to be made to the previous design, considering the elevated expressway's construction.

First things first, the park is being cleaned to make it suitable once again for the residents of the city.

A DSCC source said as per the earlier plan, several components of modernisation are expected to be introduced, including the construction of multi-storied buildings. However, the new plan has reduced the use of brick and concrete in the park, which will also have a walking path, seating and lights.

In this regard, DSCC superintendent engineer Munsif Md Abul Hasem told this correspondent that since the expressway would go through the park, the renovation work was halted. "We are planning to create a new design and make this park open to the public once again," he said.

When asked when the work will be completed, he said the architectural firm is expected to make the designs as they made them previously.

"After the designs are done, works will ensue. The park is expected to be open for all by June 2023."

## US envoy meets info minister

UNB, Dhaka

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Peter Haas has met Information and Broadcasting Minister Hasan Mahmud and discussed the importance of a free and independent media as the bedrock of democracy.

The ambassador and the information minister also discussed international concerns about provisions of the Digital Security Act and the proposed regulations for digital, social media, and streaming platforms, said the US Embassy in Dhaka on Thursday.

In the next 50 years and beyond, the United States looks forward to working with Bangladesh to advance common interests in freedom, prosperity, peace, and dignity, according to a message shared on the verified Facebook page of the embassy.

# Subway not viable

Experts tell virtual dialogue, criticise govt move to construct underground railway

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

City planners and transport experts in a virtual dialogue yesterday termed the move to construct subways a disaster as it will not bring any positive changes in the capital's traffic situation.

Rather, it would prove to be a burden considering its physical, socio-economic and environmental impact, they said.

They suggested that the government cancel the move and take low-cost projects such as improving footpaths and ensuring public transport for all.

The dialogue was organised by Institute for Planning and Development (IPD).

Though Dhaka has enough population for a subway, the project is not viable for its high construction and maintenance cost, said IPD Executive Director Dr Adil Mohammad Khan, while presenting the keynote speech.

The government has already carried out a feasibility study for a 238km subway network and made a preliminary design for 90km at the cost of Tk 321 crore under a 35-month project.

In the draft feasibility study, submitted on March 15 last year, they proposed a 258km subway network consisting of 11 routes.

**"The government should have spent the budget allocated for the feasibility study on purchasing 1,000 quality buses for the city, which would prove more effective in reducing traffic congestion."**

DR SM SALEHUDDIN  
Transport Expert

### REASONS

- High construction, maintenance cost
- Socio-economic, environmental impact
- Not included in Strategic Transport Plan

### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Focus more on low-cost projects
- Improve footpaths, make them pedestrian-friendly
- Ensure public transport for all

Adil said for Dhaka's sustainable development, the Strategic Transport Plan (STP) was prepared in 2005.

Following the transport plan, several projects, including the metro rail, expressway, and the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), are now being implemented in the capital.

New routes of the metro rail are being constructed following the STP's revision in 2016.

"But the government has taken the plan to construct the subway or underground railway, which was not included in the STP or RSTP," said Adil.

IPD executive director also mentioned that the feasibility study ignored the socio-economic and environmental impact of the project.

"Underground railways were constructed in a limited number of cities in high-income countries. But the wealthiest countries of the world are not willing to construct subways nowadays due to its high cost," added Adil.

Sheikh Muhammad Mehedi Ahsan,

general secretary of Bangladesh Institute of Planners, said this can be a burden on the country considering its development budget.

"The government did not take any expert's opinion in this regard," he further said.

Transport expert Dr SM Salehuddin said the government should have spent the budget allocated for the feasibility study on purchasing 1,000 quality buses for the city.

This would prove more effective in reducing traffic congestion, he added.

He emphasised the implementation of the bus route rationalisation system as early as possible and making the city pedestrian-friendly.

"If the government fully implement all the 70 policies in the STP, no new studies would be required in this regard," he added.

Md Maruf Hossain, joint secretary of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon (Bapa), termed the underground railway project a "white elephant".

"If we fail to make a coordination among different government organisations and fail to assign certain responsibilities to certain organisations, such devoid-of-coordination initiative and wastage of funds will continue," the Bapa joint secretary said.

Md Ashrafur Islam, project director of Rajuk's "Detailed Area Plan", said the soil condition of central Dhaka is suitable for the underground railway.

However, its peripheral areas are not appropriate, which will increase the costs further, the project director added.

"To make the transport system sustainable, it is necessary to make footpaths more pedestrian-friendly, constructing ring roads, radial roads, circular railways and ensuring public buses," he said.

## PRAYER TIMING

APRIL 23

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-11	12-45	4-45	6-27	8-00
JAMAAT 4-21	1-15	5-00	6-37	8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## SEHRI, IFTAR TIMING

RAMADAN	APRIL	SEHRI	IFTAR
21	23		6:27
22	24	4:05	6:28
23	25	4:05	6:28

## MOSQUITO MENACE

# Rain brings fresh concerns

UNB, Dhaka

The density of Aedes mosquitoes in the capital is more than the previous year, which may increase further during the upcoming monsoon, leading to a spread of dengue.

Researchers at the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) feared that rainfall in the city may be followed by an alarming rise in mosquito-borne diseases like dengue and malaria.

An outbreak of dengue fever last year claimed 105 lives and sent 28,429 patients to hospitals, most of them in the capital, according to DGHS.

National Malaria Elimination and Aedes Transmission Disease Control Programme of DGHS, has found the dire situation in a recent survey. The 10-day entomological survey was conducted at

100 sites of 98 wards under Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) and Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC).

According to the DGHS, a 21-member team visited around 3,000 houses under the city corporations to complete the survey. It found Aedes mosquito's larvae in 150 houses, which is 4.25 percent of the total figure.

The DGHS said it will complete Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping by the density of mosquitoes after conducting research by the Institute of Epidemiology Disease Control and Research (IEDCR) to know the region-based density of the insect in Dhaka.

DGHS suggested that two city corporations in Dhaka should operate special drives right now to control mosquitoes and curb the menace. City

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6



Ignoring a "no parking" sign, motorcycles park illegally on Ring Road in the capital's Mohammadpur area. These vehicles not only obstruct traffic flow but also cause gridlocks. This photo was taken on Thursday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Eighth grader holds senior

FROM PAGE 1  
He did not give a timeline, but said he expected the probe to end soon.

**THE AUDIT OBJECTIONS**  
These 14 people – 13 of them first class officers – were hired simply based on their applications, according to the audit report.

According to SAOCL's own recruitment policy, no recruitments can be done without circulars and the Board's approval.

But the company did not follow these rules or the general rules of the BPC when hiring these 13 officers and one office assistant, the audit report said.

For example, at the time of recruitment, Senior Officer (Maintenance) Shahidul Islam was 50-year-old, when the age limit for any first class job is 30.

In response to the audit objections, the company had submitted a written reply, saying it was not possible to get the Board's approval and follow other recruitment rules as they needed to fill in these positions due to increased business activities.

The audit team termed this argument "irrelevant".

Apart from Shahidul Islam, the 13 others are Accounts Officer Fakhru Islam Bhuiyan, Technical Officers Anwar Zahid and Mohammad Anisur Rahman, Assistant Manager (Engineering) Proloy Chakraborty, Junior Sales Officer Mohammad Shahadat Hossain, Deputy Manager Mohammad Mokarram Hossain and Mohammad Mahmudul Haque, Junior Officer (Operations) Mohammad Shamim Shahid, Officer (HR) Abdullah Al Mamun, Officer (Sales) Mohammad Mir Hossain, Manager (Production & Operations) Siddiqur Rahman, Junior Officer (Technical) Durjoy Dey and Office Assistant Ashraf Uddin.

SAOCL sources have told The Daily Star that Moinuddin Ahmed and Mohammad Shahid hired these people to "embezzle company funds" without raising any questions.

A separate BPC audit in 2019 found that Moinuddin and Shahid embezzled over Tk 134 crore by transferring the money to three companies they have

shares in.

Although this money was earned from the sale of oil from 2011-19, it was not shown in the company's financial records, according to the BPC audit.

In December 2019, the then BPC chairman Shamsur Rahman wrote to the power and energy ministry recommending actions against the two officials, but the ministry is yet to take any step.

Md Mahmud Hossain, senior secretary of the power and energy ministry, did not respond to this correspondent's calls and text messages requesting his comment on Thursday.

Incumbent BPC Chairman ABM Azad told The Daily Star on April 6, "There is no such irregularity after I took office. These irregularities happened a few years ago and I heard that these appointments were made without the permission of the former [BPC] chairman and other members of the board."

Former general manager Mohammad Shahid died in 2020. Moinuddin Ahmed and two of the recruits Shahidul Islam and Durjoy

Dey did not pick up the calls despite repeated attempts.

Mohammad Shamim Shahid, who got appointed as junior officer (operations), claimed he was recruited through a viva following a circular.

Technical Officer Anwar Zahid said, "Not only the 14 of us, 90 percent of the employees have been recruited without any circular or written test."

Accounts Officer Fakhru Islam, a cousin of the then general manager Shahid, said he got the job through an oral test like others.

The rest of the 14 recruits could not be contacted for comments.

**ACC INVESTIGATION**  
In a separate investigation, the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) found evidence that Moinuddin and Shahid embezzled Tk 57 crore in January 2019.

The ACC report said Tk 43 crore was transferred illegally from an SAOCL account to Pyramid Exim and Asiatic Oil Company Ltd between 2015 and 2018 and Tk 14 crore to Goodwin Power between 2015 and 2016.

Shahid, despite being on government payroll, was a director at Goodwin Power and Pyramid Exim while Moinuddin has shares in Pyramid Exim and Asiatic Oil Company Ltd.

On Thursday, ACC Deputy Director Mahamudur Rahman said they already filed a case against Moinuddin Ahmed in January 2021 over money laundering, dropping Shahid from the case as he died.

A separate case will be filed against Moinuddin and several others over the alleged irregularities in recruitment, he said.

## Indian lawmaker arrested over tweet criticising Modi

AFP, Guwahati

A state lawmaker in India was arrested for criticising Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a tweet, officials said yesterday, raising concerns over freedom of speech in the world's largest democracy.

Jignesh Mevani, a prominent campaigner for India's marginalised low-caste Dalit community, accused the Hindu nationalist leader of idolising Nathuram Godse, the assassin of India's independence icon Mahatma Gandhi.

Some fringes of the Indian right wing rever Godse as a hero for killing the man they blame for the partition of India and Pakistan – comments that Modi himself has criticised in the past. But Mevani wrote in a tweet earlier this week that Modi "worships and considers 'Godse' as God", accusing the PM of fomenting religious division.

He also demanded that Modi apologise for communal violence in Gujarat, where Mevani is a member of the state legislature. He was arrested Thursday on accusations of attempting to disturb "public tranquility and peace", the police told AFP.

He was taken across the country to Assam, where the complaint had been filed, and a court in Kokrajhar denied him bail, ordering him to be held in custody for three days.

## A field bereft

FROM PAGE 5  
Doubhakhola union parishad, said he also talked with different authorities about the matter, but it is yet to be addressed.

Denying the allegations of inaction, the RE said

he has not been informed in writing yet. The poles belong to the project department of PDB, he said.

Contacted, Raihan, executive engineer of PDB in Mymensingh city, said

he was informed about the matter recently. Necessary steps will be taken to shift the poles as early as possible.

He, however, did not say why the poles were left on the field for so many years.

## Rain brings fresh

FROM PAGE 3  
Government, Rural Development and Co-operative (LGRD) Minister Md Tazul Islam said his ministry will instruct the two city corporations to operate cleaning drives and spray pesticides in the mosquito prone areas, though mosquitoes are relatively low now.

He said two city corporations have to be aware of water stagnation in the upcoming monsoon and launch a special awareness programme to keep the houses and yards clean.

The minister said under construction and abandoned buildings in the city are the breeding grounds of mosquitoes.

Punitive actions will be imposed as per the law against owners of buildings if Aedes mosquito larvae are found in any public or private buildings in the capital, he warned.

"We have already instructed two city corporations about the matter. The necessary

number of magistrates will be posted to conduct pesticides, logging machines, and mobile courts."

Contacted, DNCC Mayor Atiqul Islam said they have already started work to curb mosquito breeding by identifying mosquito hotspots.

"We have taken a work plan targeting the upcoming rainy season. None will be spared if mosquito larvae are found in the houses and offices. We will take headline in this regard. Residents will have to cooperate with the corporation to control mosquito menace."

DSCC Mayor Sheikh Fazle Noor Taposh said, "We emphasise stopping mosquito breeding during the rainy season. We have formed teams in every ward to curb mosquitoes. Once again, a mobile court will be conducted to bring the situation under control. Besides, we will increase the monitoring system in every ward in the city."

Talking in a similar tone, Shaiful Islam, a resident of Jatrabari under DSCC, said, "We use aerosol and coil daily. But these do not work in the face of mosquito invasion."

Contacted, Local

**Civil Aviation Authority, Bangladesh**  
Office of the Executive Director, CEMSU, Kurmitola, Dhaka  
[www.caab.gov.bd](http://www.caab.gov.bd)

Memo No: 30.31.0000.186.07.04.21/289 Dated: 20/04/2022

**e-GP Tender Notice**

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>). Package information is available in tender notice under e-GP system portal.

This is online tender where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches. Detailed of the Goods listed below:

No.	Name of Goods	Package No.	e-GP Tender ID	Last Selling Date and Time	Closing Date and Time
01.	Supply, Installation, commissioning of 14 Nos. Dual View Cabin Baggage Scanning (CBS) Machine with LEDS Facilities for Different Airports.	30.31.0000.121.07.028.21.10 Date: 26/01/2022.	688537	25-May-2022 at 10:00 Hrs	25-May-2022 at 12:30 Hrs

Further information and guidelines is available in the e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd))

Md. Mohsin  
Executive Director, CEMSU  
CAAB, Kurmitola, Dhaka-1229  
Email: [edcemsu@caab.gov.bd](mailto:edcemsu@caab.gov.bd)

## The unwelcoming

FROM PAGE 5  
only the construction work started late, it was also halted just after 80 percent completion.

Humayun Kabir, a resident of Rupatali, complained that once wood and bamboo fell from the under-construction gate, but no action was taken.

Mukul Mukherjee,

another resident of the area, said nothing has been built there in the last five years except two pillars.

BCC Chief Executive Officer Syed Farooq Ahmed said they have now proposed to increase the size of the city. Apart from this, due to lack of funds, no allocation is being provided for this project at present.

According to sources, BCC now plans to build the city gates elsewhere.

Professor Shah Sajeda, convener of Sacheton Nagorik Committee, said it was important to get public consensus before taking up such projects. This is just a waste of public funds.

Rafiqul Alam, Barisal divisional coordinator of Bangladesh Paribesh Andolon, echoed the same.

**GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF BANGLADESH**  
Prime Minister's Education Assistance Trust (PMEAT)  
Improving Access & Retention through Harmonized Stipend Program  
House 44, Road-12/A, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1209.

**Invitation for Tender**  
Procurement of Lot-1: Desktop Computer, Laptop, Printer & Scanner  
Lot-2: 2ton Inverter split AC for HSP

No.	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Education, Secondary and Higher Education Division
1	Ministry/Division	Ministry of Education, Secondary and Higher Education Division
2	Agency	Prime Minister's Education Assistance Trust (PMEAT)
3	Procuring Entity Name	Scheme Director
4	Procuring Entity	Scheme Director, Improving Access & Retention Through Harmonized Stipend Program
5	Procuring Entity District	Dhaka
6	Invitation for	Goods
7	Invitation Ref No & Date	hsp/Microbus Hiring/129/2021/177; Date: 21.04.2022
<b>KEY INFORMATION</b>		
8	Procurement Method	Open Tendering Method (National)
<b>FUNDING INFORMATION</b>		
9	Budget and Source of Funds	GOB
<b>PARTICULAR INFORMATION</b>		
10	Tender Package No.	G1/2022
11	Tender Package Name	Procurement of Lot-1: Desktop Computer, Laptop, Printer & Scanner Lot-2: 2 ton Inverter split AC for HSP
12	Tender Publication Date	23.04.2022
13	Tender Last Selling Date and Time	11.05.2022; Time: 01:00 PM
14	Tender Closing Date and Time	11.05.2022; Time: 02:00 PM
15	Tender Opening Date and Time	11.05.2022; Time: 02:30 PM
16	Name & Address of the office(s)	<b>Address</b> Selling, Receiving & Opening Tender Document Prime Minister's Education Assistance Trust (PMEAT) Improving Access & Retention Through Harmonized Stipend Program House 44, Road-12/A, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1209.
<b>INFORMATION FOR TENDERER</b>		
17	Eligibility of Tenderer	Mentioned in the tender document
18	Brief Description of Goods	Lot-1: Desktop Computer-08, Laptop-13, Printer-10 & Scanner-03 Lot-2: 2 ton Inverter split AC-10
19	Price of Tender Document (Tk)	A non-refundable amount of taka 1,000.00 (One Thousand) Only. Deposited through treasury challan. 1-2711-0000-2366 code.
20	Item No.	Identification of Lot
	1.	Lot-1: Desktop Computer, Laptop, Printer & Scanner
	2.	Lot-2: 2 ton Inverter split AC
		Location
		Improving Access & Retention Through Harmonized Stipend Program, House 44, Road-12/A, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1209
		Tender Security Amount (Tk)
		BDT 50,000/- (Fifty Thousand)
		BDT 50,000/- (Fifty Thousand)
		Completion Time in Weeks/Months
		Delivery must be completed within 3 weeks from the date of signing the contract agreement.
<b>PROCURING ENTITY DETAILS</b>		
21	Designation of Official Inviting Tender	Scheme Director
22	Address of Official Inviting Tender	House 44, Road-12/A, Dhanmondi, Dhaka-1209
23	Contact details	Phone 02-55002073, <a href="http://www.pmeat.gov.bd">www.pmeat.gov.bd</a> , Email: <a href="mailto:hsp@pmeat.gov.bd">hsp@pmeat.gov.bd</a>

The procuring entity reserves the right to reject all tenders or annul the tender proceedings.

Scheme Director  
Improving Access & Retention Through Harmonized Stipend Program

GD-813

**Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh**  
Office of the Executive Engineer, RHD  
Jamalpur Road Division  
Telephone: 0981-64826  
Fax: 0981-63691  
E-mail: [eejam@rhd.gov.bd](mailto:eejam@rhd.gov.bd)

স্মারক নং-৩৫.০১.৩৯৩৬.৪৩০.০০.০০৩.২২-১৩৭৬ তারিখঃ- ২১/৪/২০২২

**e-Tender Notice**

These are online Tenders, where only e-Tender will be accepted in e-GP portal and no off line/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP system Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

e-Tenders are invited in e-GP system Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by the Executive Engineer, RHD, Jamalpur Road Division, Jamalpur for the procurement of below mentioned work:

SI No.	Name of work	Particular Information
01.	Repair of Damaged Pavement Surface & Rain cut of Road Shoulder and Embankment by Repair of Potholes, Aggregate Base Type-I, Carpeting, Seal Coat, Sand bag filling & Earthwork at 38 <sup>th</sup> (p) & 39 <sup>th</sup> km of Jamalpur-Islampur-Dewangonj (Z-4021) Road under Jamalpur Road Division during the year 2021-2022.	e-Tender details can be downloaded from 21-04-2022 to 10-05-2022 17:00 on e-GP system Portal ( <a href="http://www.eprocure.gov.bd">http://www.eprocure.gov.bd</a> ) for pursue.  e-Tenders will be accepted only upto 11-05-2022, 13:00. Accepted tenders will be opened online immediately after 11-05-2022, 13:00.

Package No e-GP-40/JRD/2021-2022

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**Dhaka South City Corporation**  
Office Of The Executive Engineer  
Zone-02 (Khilgaon), Dhaka.  
Ref No: 46.207.014.24.02.09.2021

**Re-Tender Notice**

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S.L No	Tender ID, Ref No & package No	Name of works	Last Selling date and Time	Tender Closing date & Time
01	Re-Tender ID-676595 Ref No: 46.207.014.24.02.078.2021 Date: 25.10.2021 Package No- egpdscc/z2/w01graveyard	Development work of Khilgaon Graveyard under word no 01 of zone 02 DSCC	10-May-2022 17:00	11-May-2022 12:00

This is an online Tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, please register on e-GP system portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>).

(Saiful Islam)  
Executive Engineer  
Engineering Division, Zone-02,  
Dhaka South City Corporation  
e-mail: [eng.zone2dsc@gmail.com](mailto:eng.zone2dsc@gmail.com)

ডিএসসিসি/পিআরডি/২২৯/২০২১-২০২২  
GD-812



PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

## Pages turning to dust

### Khulna Public Library overlooked, ignored

DIPANKAR ROY, *Khulna*

A library of almost six decades, with a collection of 1,27,000 books. An average of 150 readers every day, intently studying with pin-drop silence in the spacious reading room.

But what are they reading? That is where the shock comes in. A divisional library so rich, but readers are only there to study job guides – revealed a recent visit by this correspondent to Khulna Divisional Government Public Library.

Immamul Haque Masuk, a BL College graduate and job-seeker, goes to the library to prepare for job examinations. He is accompanied by his 10 friends from Mujgunni area every day.



"It's not possible for us to buy all the job-help books. So, coming to the library is always the better option. I can also read several magazines," said Masuk.

Labonno Mondal, also a BL College graduate and job-seeker, who has been visiting the library regularly for one and a half years, echoed him.

The library – a two-storied building of 31,000 square feet – stands at the corner of Boyra College intersection on the city's Upper Jashore Road.

Established in 1964 and upgraded to the status of a divisional public library in 1982, the establishment's catalogue shows that it currently has 87,000 Bangla and 38,000 English books in stock.



However, 14,000 of them are missing, and 8,000 are severely damaged.

The number of general readers has dropped to a great extent, which made way for job-seekers to come and fulfil their purpose in the library. The library has 210 registered members who are authorised to take books home.

Not even one reader on average has done that in quite a while.

The library authorities too are stocking different job examination books to accommodate this, as confirmed by Md Ahsan Ullah, principal librarian and deputy director.

"Otherwise, we'll lose the remaining readers as well. Job-seekers are currently the main beneficiaries of the establishment," he said.

Anwarul Kadir, former professor of Government Sundarban Adarsha College and a civil society leader, told this correspondent about the library building's dilapidated condition, with no foreseeable effort of renovation.

"The window glasses are shattering. The roof leaks when it rains."

"The building was declared risky 10 years ago by the public works department. The design doesn't allow a vertical extension. The authority has to come up with a solution,"

added Kadir.

The crises don't just end here. The library is severely understaffed. Thirteen out of 28 posts of officers and library staffers are currently vacant. There is no proper server network for its operations, coupled with poor internet connection. Scanners and copy machines are also out of order, making the entire establishment almost dysfunctional.

Meanwhile, the original rich collection continues to rot away.

The books are not stored properly, making way for chances of damage. During the visit to the library, this correspondent found piles of books stacked messily, with a thick layer of dust on top.

This correspondent saw hundreds of torn books scattered on the floor, while writings of many books almost faded away.

A book titled "Baruni Baran" was seen in the middle of a book shelf, completely unreadable. As this correspondent tried to make sense of the book, it was seen that the book was published in 1964 from Kolkata.

Another book, "Baspio Baborohider Protii Upodesh", was at least over a century old.

"We have repeatedly informed the higher authorities about the problems. They are considering demolishing the old building and constructing a new nine-storey building with modern facilities," said Ahsan Ullah.

## Once again, trees fall victim to dev

### RHD cutting down 622 trees for road expansion



ARUN BIKASH DEY, *City*

More than one hundred trees have already been cut down and several hundred more are in the process to embrace the same fate. It is the situation of a portion of Chattogram-Cox's Bazar highway.

The Roads and Highway Department have been cutting the trees to expand the road from Shikalbaha Y Junction to Patiya Bypass stretching around 20 kilometres.

During a recent visit, it was seen that the workers were busy cutting trees in Shikalbaha, Manasa Intersection and Badamtol Intersection in Patiya upazila. Mainly rain trees were dominating among the other trees.

However, locals are not happy with these activities. They said cutting down trees started around one month ago. Over 100 trees have already been cut down in a five-kilometre area between Shikalbaha and Badamtol.

Abdur Rahim, a local in the Manasa area, said many of the trees cut down were 50 to 60 years old.

"These trees give us shade and wind and make the environment of the area cool and calm," he added. "Hundreds of birds have made their nests in those trees for years and as the trees are being cut down, the birds are also losing their shelters," he said.

Mizanur Rahman of Badamtol area echoed him.

According to sources, a Tk 65-crore project started in March this year and is scheduled to be completed in March next year. The two-lane road would be expanded from the present 18 feet width to 38 feet. To start the work of the project, RHD applied to the forest department for cutting down a total of 1,084 trees in the project area.

Contacted, Shafiqul Islam, divisional forest officer of Chattogram (south zone), said RHD did not seek any permission from them for cutting down the trees initially.

According to Forest Materials Transport (Control) Rules 2011, taking permission from the forest department is a must for cutting trees, said Shafiqul. "When we informed them, they sought permission to cut down a total of 1,084 trees in the area last month."

"As it is a development project related to public interest, we have given them the permission to cut down the trees on the condition that they would plant trees on both sides of the road once the works of the project are completed," he said.

Suman Singha, executive engineer of RHD (Dohazari subdivision) in Chattogram, said it was necessary to cut down trees for the expansion of the road. "Initially we thought to cut down 1,084 trees but now we have decided to cut down 622 trees," the official added.

"We will plant trees three times more than the number of fallen trees on both sides of the road once the works of the project are completed," he said, answering to a question on the adverse impact on the environment due to the cutting down of trees.

Asked, environmentalist Prof Dr Idris Ali said cutting down this many trees altogether would have an adverse impact on nature, especially in balancing the ratio of O<sub>2</sub> and CO<sub>2</sub> in the area.

Steps should have been taken to balance the development project and conserving the environment at the same time as per the guideline of experts, he said.

**The crises don't just end here. The library is severely understaffed. Thirteen out of 28 posts of officers and library staffers are currently vacant. There is no proper server network for its operations, coupled with poor internet connection. Scanners and copy machines are also out of order, making the entire establishment almost dysfunctional.**

## The unwelcoming gates of Barishal

### Construction of city gates left incomplete for 7 years

SUSHANTA GHOSH

The unfinished city gates at the two ends of Barishal city have been around for a long time as a symbol of the authority's unplanned constructions.

These gates also pose an obstacle for the expanded Barishal-Dhaka highway if vehicle traffic increases after the inauguration of Padma Bridge.

According to the engineering department of Barishal City Corporation, on June 11, 2015, a work order was given for construction of the gates in Goriarpur and Shaheed Abdur Rob Sernbiabat Bridge areas of the city.

A construction company was given the job at a cost of Tk 2.74 crore for the Goriarpur area. The work was supposed to be completed in March 2018. But the construction work stopped only after 33 percent completion.

On the other hand, approximately Tk 2.36 crore was allocated for the other gate's construction on the slope of Shaheed Abdur Rob Sernbiabat bridge. Not



PHOTO: TITU DAS

It has been seven years since the construction work of the two gates at the entrance and exit of Barishal city has been left incomplete. Meanwhile, authorities continue to blame lack of funds as the reason for the delay. This photo was taken in Barishal's Goriarpur area yesterday.

## A field bereft of its purpose

OUR CORRESPONDENT, *Mymensingh*

For the last three years, a field in Ruknakanda in Mymensingh's Gouripur upazila has remained completely unusable, denying children the opportunity to play.

Moreover, concrete electric poles, meant for infrastructural development of the locality, have been kept piled up on it all these years.

Locals have long been demanding removal of poles, but to no avail.

They said almost 200 electric poles were kept on the Ruknakanda ground beside Mymensingh-Kishoreganj road for three years now.

"Till this date, locals are unaware of who is responsible for this incident," said Abdul Kalam Azad, secretary of

Sramik League, Douhakhola union unit.

Md Habibur Rahman, ward secretary of Awami League's Douhakhola union unit, said, "Now bushes have grown up making the ground unfit for use."

Locals also alleged that they informed Abdullah Al Noman, the residential engineer (RE) of the Power Development Board (PDB) in Gouripur, but no action has been taken yet.

As the field is next to the mosque, locals used to perform their Eid prayers there. They said with Eid approaching, they have no choice but to perform prayers blocking the Mymensingh-Kishoreganj road to accommodate such a large congregation.

Md Abdul Qaiyum, chairman of



**JOHNSON-MODI MEET IN DELHI**  
UK, India to step up trade, defence co-operation

AGENCIES

The United Kingdom and India have agreed to step up defence and business cooperation, with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson indicating a bilateral free-trade deal could be wrapped up by October this year.

On his first visit to the Indian capital since taking office in 2019, Johnson held talks with his Indian counterpart, Narendra Modi, on ways to boost security ties between London and New Delhi, which buys more than half of its military hardware from Russia.

"We had wonderful talks that have strengthened our relationship in every way," Johnson told a joint news briefing with Modi yesterday, at the end of his two-day trip.

"We have agreed a new and expanded defence and security partnership, a decades-long commitment that will not only forge tighter bonds between us, but support your goal of 'Make in India'," he added, referring to the Indian premier's domestic manufacturing push.

Modi, meanwhile, hailed Johnson's visit - which came as India marks its 75th year of independence - as "historic", reports Al Jazeera online.

"We discussed several regional and international developments and stressed a free, open, inclusive and rule-based order in the Indo-Pacific," he said.



Britain's Prime Minister Boris Johnson (L) shakes hands with his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi before their meeting at the Hyderabad House in New Delhi, India yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

**Health crisis looms in Sri Lanka**

Hospitals, drug stores running out of essential medicines as economic crisis bites

AFP, Colombo

By the time he reached a third Colombo pharmacy out of stock of the drug his cancer-stricken wife desperately needs, Dawood Mohamed Ghany was distraught.

Sri Lanka has run out of dollars to procure vital imports of food and fuel, triggering weeks of demonstrations demanding the government step down.

But it is in the health sector that the consequences of the crisis are most visceral.

Ghany, 63, was trying to secure supplies of pertuzumab, the monoclonal antibody used to treat breast cancer.

"This is the first time during her cancer treatment that I have not been able to find

her medicine," he said, breaking down.

His 55-year-old wife was "very sick", he told AFP. "What do I do? I am helpless. But I will do whatever I can to save her."

Sri Lanka used to import around 85 percent of its pharmaceuticals but is suffering its worst economic crisis since 1948.

Multiple health workers told AFP that hospitals and chemist stores across the country were running out of essential medicines.

Viraj Jayasinghe, consultant paediatrician at Lady Ridgeway Hospital for Children, a state facility in Colombo, said his department normally maintains as much as six months worth of stocks.

"Right now, we are really in short

supply," he told AFP. "And we are worried about patient safety in the future."

He is among hundreds of doctors and health workers who have joined protests demanding urgent deliveries of drugs and medical equipment, including endotracheal tubes to help babies breathe.

Public appeals for help have brought in donations from individuals and organisations, but the Sri Lankan medical fraternity says it is not enough. Jayasinghe said single-patient nebuliser kits were being washed and reused in his department instead of being discarded as normal, raising the possibility of disease transmission. A nationwide group of private hospitals said yesterday that 70 vital drugs were in short supply, including anaesthetics.

**Putin to meet with UN chief in Russia Tuesday**

AFP, Moscow

Russian President Vladimir Putin will hold talks with United Nations Secretary General Antonio Guterres in Russia on Tuesday, the Kremlin said yesterday. The announcement was made on the 58th day of Moscow's military campaign in Ukraine, with thousands killed and more than 12 million displaced people, in Europe's worst refugee crisis since World War II. UN confirmed that the secretary-general will meet with Putin in Moscow next week. Guterres also wants to meet Ukrainian leader and seeks to spur dialogue to end the conflict, the UN said. Putin has not taken Guterres's phone calls, or had any contact with him, since the UN chief stated that Russia's military campaign violated the UN charter.

**EU eyes deal to tame internet 'Wild West'**

AFP, Brussels

The European Union yesterday homed in on new regulation to require Big Tech to remove harmful online content, the bloc's latest move to rein in the world's online giants. The Digital Services Act (DSA) - the second part of a massive project to regulate tech companies - aims to ensure tougher consequences for platforms and websites that violate a long list of banned content ranging from hate speech to disinformation and paedophilia images. EU officials and parliament members started talks in Brussels to hammer out the deal, hoping to reach an agreement later in the day on legislation in the works since 2020. The text is the companion to the Digital Markets Act (DMA), which targeted anti-competitive practices among tech behemoths like Google and Facebook. The legislation has faced lobbying from the tech companies and intense debate over the extent of freedom of speech. "What's forbidden offline must be forbidden online," tweeted EU internal markets commissioner Thierry Breton, who has previously described the internet as the "Wild West".



**'Feast' ends, now it's time for action**

FROM PAGE 12

The US report does not reflect the facts and the ministry will also seek explanation on the "discrepancy" of information.

Following a four-day visit to Bangladesh on April 20, US Ambassador at Large for Religious Freedom Rashad Hussain expressed concern over violence against the Hindu community late last year, though he said by and large there is religious harmony here.

Foreign policy analysts say whether Dhaka likes it or not, the recent engagement between Dhaka and Washington clearly suggests that human rights, labour rights and democracy will continue to remain an important agenda for the US in the coming days.

Prof Shahab Enam Khan of Jahangirnagar University's international relations department said the Biden administration will also keep a watch on the national elections next year and the authorities need to take note of it.

"With regard to investments from the US, transparency and accountability are critical. We need more investments and will have more of those when we have a well-governed system and transparency," he added.

Diplomatic sources said Washington asked Dhaka to be careful about the projects being funded by China and Russia.

Dhaka maintains there are a number of mega projects with assistance

from the two countries and those need to be completed before considering any other options.

Bangladesh has a historic relationship with Russia while China is a major development financier and the largest source of military hardware.

Foreign policy analysts say it is clear that Washington wants Bangladesh to move away from the influence of China and Russia. Bangladesh is also a signatory to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

During the April 4 meeting, Blinken sought Bangladesh's partnership to implement its Indo-Pacific Strategy, which analysts say is aimed at countering China. Dhaka invited Washington to invest in the

blue economy and assured of working together for a free, open, inclusive and secure Indo-Pacific.

Since 2019, the US has been seeking to sign two defence deals with Bangladesh - the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) and the Acquisition Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) - to enhance opportunities for defence trade, information sharing, and military-to-military cooperation between the two countries.

About the outcome of the security dialogue on April 6, Foreign Secretary Masud said Dhaka will try to complete the formalities of GSOMIA before the security dialogue next year, but signing ACSA is not a

priority for it now.

"Signing GSOMIA does not mean we are immediately buying defence equipment, but only when we need it in our national interests," he told reporters at the foreign ministry recently.

Prof Shahab said signing defence deals with the US and working together in the Indo-Pacific is more a political decision than diplomatic, and it will have geostrategic implications.

Former foreign secretary Shahidul Haque said when there is a gap in communication, there is a chance of misunderstanding. Now the dialogue began between Dhaka and Washington, and this is the right thing that will help recalibrate

the relationship.

He said Bangladesh maintains a neutral foreign policy and there should not be any problem in signing defence deals with the US as Bangladesh also buys defence equipment from other countries including China and Russia.

Shahidul, also Bangabandhu chair at Delhi University, however, said maintaining balance in diplomacy has become far more difficult now given the new global polarisation.

"It is like sailing a ship in the turbulent water. What we need now is a very strong diplomacy. The Westerners want transparency. We need to say that we will have to maintain relationships with others in our national interests," he said.

**Fearing reprisal**

FROM PAGE 12

fell to the ground and lost consciousness after a policeman kicked him in the crotch around 10:00pm, an eyewitness earlier told this correspondent.

According to documents at Lalmonirhat Sadar Hospital, doctors declared Rabiul dead after he was taken to the hospital around 11:45pm.

Demanding justice, locals blocked the Lalmonirhat Burimari highway's Mahendranagar point for an hour the next day.

They withdrew it after Sub-Inspector Halimur Rahman of Lalmonirhat Sadar Police Station, who led the police team, was closed and attached to the district Police Lines.

Talking to this

newspaper on Thursday, local lawmaker GM Quader, also Jatiya Party chairman, who visited the spot on Monday, said an attempt was made to cover up the incident, but it was foiled as people took to the streets.

"There should be a judicial enquiry into the incident to reveal the truth."

Meanwhile, after visiting the spot on Wednesday, Walid Hossain, additional deputy inspector general of police (Rangpur range), who is leading a three-member probe body, said they started talking to locals, witnesses and family members of the victim.

"We will prepare the probe report shortly and submit it before our higher authorities concerned."

**Astronomers find**

FROM PAGE 12

entire surface blows up and tiny compared to a supernova that occurs during the death throes of some giant stars.

Micronovae are observed from Earth as bursts of light lasting about 10 hours.

They were documented on three white dwarfs - one 1,680 light years away from Earth, one 3,720 light years away and one 4,900 light years away. A light year is the distance light travels in a year, 5.9 trillion miles.

**UN voices concern**

FROM PAGE 12

month of deadly violence, as the Jewish festival of Passover overlaps with the holy Muslim fasting month of Ramadan.

The violence has sparked international fears of conflict, one year on since similar unrest led

to an 11-day war between Israel and militants in Gaza.

This week, Palestinian groups in the Gaza Strip have fired rockets at Israel, which has responded by sending warplanes to strike the blockaded and impoverished territory.

**Blast rips thru**

FROM PAGE 12

"The sight at the mosque was horrifying. All those who were worshipping inside the mosque were either injured or killed," Mohammad Esah, a shopkeeper who helped ferry victims to the district hospital, told AFP.

"I saw 20 to 30 bodies," another local resident said.

Relatives of victims were arriving at hospital to look for their loved ones.

"My son is martyred,"

screamed a man, while a woman accompanied by her four children searched for her husband.

Kunduz police said they were investigating the type of explosion.

Yesterday's blast was one of the biggest attacks since the Taliban seized power in August last year.

In October, a suicide attack at a Shia mosque, also in Kunduz, killed at least 55 people and wounded scores - an attack also claimed by IS.

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নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলীর কার্যালয়, সওজ  
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Tender/Proposal ID	Name of work
Tender ID-687668 e-GP/66/EE/CRD/RHD/2021-2022	Supply of Materials for Routine Maintenance works of Different Road of Chattogram Road Sub-Division under Chattogram Road Division during the year 2021-2022.
Tender ID-687692 e-GP/67/EE/CRD/RHD/2021-2022	Construction of the Fair held on 17-23 March, 2022 on the occasion of "Muktir Utsob and Subarno Jayanti Mela-2022" at the Chattogram Outer Stadium Ground in Chattogram District under Chattogram Road Division during the year 2021-2022.
Tender ID-689433 e-GP/70/EE/CRD/RHD/2021-2022	Supplying of Asphalt Materials for Routine Maintenance Works at Different K.M of (1) Baraiahat-Jorargonj old Section Road (N-123), (2) Mithachara old Section Road (N-124), (3) Mirsarai-Fatikchhari Road (Z-1021), (4) Komoldoha old Section Road (N-126), (5) Choto Darogarhat old Section Road (N-128) & (6) Kumira old Section Road (N-129) under Chattogram Road Division during the year 2021-2022.

রঞ্জন কুমার বিশ্বাস  
উপ-সহকারী প্রকৌশলী (অসহাঃ) সওজ  
চট্টগ্রাম সড়ক বিভাগ, চট্টগ্রাম

সেখন প্রসাদ বড়ুয়া  
পরিচিতি নং-৬০২০৭০  
সহকারী প্রকৌশলী (চ.দা.) সওজ  
চট্টগ্রাম সড়ক বিভাগ, চট্টগ্রাম

পিটু চাকমা  
পরিচিতি নং-৬০২২১৯  
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ  
চট্টগ্রাম সড়ক বিভাগ, চট্টগ্রাম

ক্রিঃ-১১৭

# Is the sun setting over Bollywood?

## South Indian films hike higher on the Indian box office

**Some tend to say that the fire ignited against nepotism forced the Hindi-speaking spectators to repel mainstream Hindi films.**

ASHLEY SHOPTORSHI SAMADDAR

The breath-taking success of "Pushpa: The Rise" (the biggest hit in 2021) outshone the Akshay Kumar-starrer "Sooryavanshi", with a box office collection of Rs 234 crores by its second week. South Indian productions have landed back-to-back chartbusters, currently reigning over the audience usually captured by the Bollywood demographic.

After the pandemic, the last few months have been a treat for

despite lingering on a notably smaller budget.

Despite such high-budget Bollywood productions, SS Rajmouli directorial blockbuster "RRR" worked against all odds as it broke all records after securing over Rs 1000 crores worldwide upon release. The epic period drama, featuring N T Rama Rao Jr, Ram Charan and Alia Bhatt, is said to best even "Bahubali" when it comes to achieving realistic perfection in crafting its VFX.

already collected Rs 138 crore on its opening day, is set to beat its previous records, only rivalled Thalapaty Vijay's "Beast".

While these box office whoopers are garnering much appreciation for their production quality, acting performances, and even music, fans have also been waiting eagerly for the Hindi remakes of south-based productions. Shahid Kapoor's sports drama "Jersey",

appreciated south productions.

However, the special mention goes to the portrayal of strong female characters on the screen. With item number like "Oo Antava", which itself revolts against the male chauvinistic society that objectifies women for commercial cinematic success, recent South Indian productions often seem to challenge gender stereotypes.

Nevertheless, the

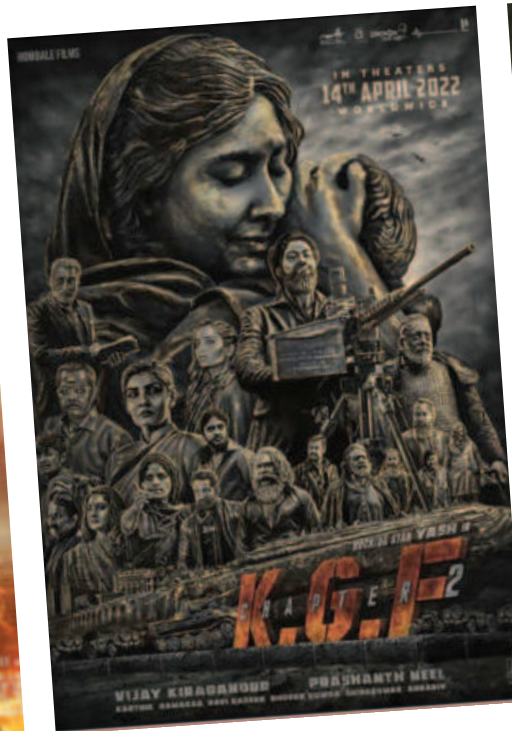
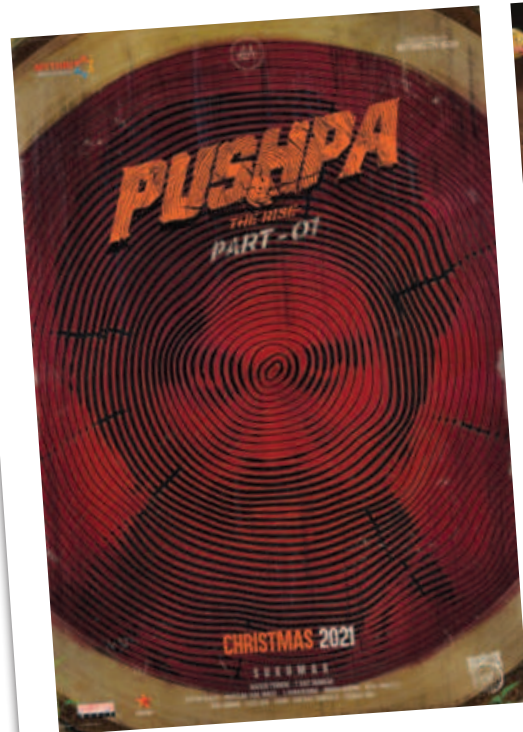
experience for the audience.

Some tend to say that the fire ignited against nepotism forced the Hindi-speaking spectators to repel mainstream Hindi films. There is no doubt that Kannada, Tamil, Telugu, and Malayalam productions leave no stone unturned when it comes to plot construction, production, and acting quality, or simply the essence of showcasing characters that are larger than life. The recent trends in Indian silver screens indicate that there has been a shift in the preference of the audience.

Be it the "Rocky" (KGF), Pushpa (Allu Arjun), or "Bheem" (RRR), the characters are seen to possess massive physical strength. Paired with style and swagger, the South Indian actors are seen to perform brilliantly on screen. While these actors were 'unfit' to meet the beauty standards set by Bollywood, their performance seem to build heavy leverage on Bollywood superstars these days.

Looking back into its history and heritage, Bollywood, which borrowed the core of its existence from Hollywood, an actual film city located in the States, the Mumbai-based film city seems more like the syndicate of some of the most powerful names in the history of Indian cinema. While products of nepotism have always received a warm welcome into this industry, South-stars, except for a few like Rajinikanth and Nagarjuna, have never managed to survive the drill, until the coin was flipped.

Looking at the current upsurge, it seems like the South Indian makers, actors, and production teams have now pledged to deliver nothing but brilliance for their viewers. That leaves us with the question: Will Bollywood be able to step up its pace and leave behind its old ways or will the South keep ruling over the Bollywood audience, leaving them with no space to breathe or rebuild?



cinema goes, as much-awaited productions such as the Sanjay Leela Bhansali directorial biographical crime drama "Gangubai Kathiawadi" and Sajid Nadiadwala's action-comedy "Bachchan Paandey", graced the silver screen. Among all others, "Kashmir Files" stole the show with an unexpected box office collection,

Not only did the film trend in theatres located in the southern part of India, but it ruled over silver screens worldwide.

Riding along this high tide, the second installment of Prashanth Neel's widely awaited sequel "KGF: Chapter 2" is also looking forward to a massive box office collection in the following weeks. The Yash-starrer, which has

which is a remake of the Nani-starrer production of the same name, and Pushkar-Gayathri's neo-noir action-thriller "Vikram Vedha", featuring Saif Ali Khan, Hrithik Roshan, Radhika Apte, are also waiting for a theatrical release.

In fact, some of the biggest Bollywood blockbusters, such as "Wanted", "Kabir Singh", and "Drishyam", are remakes of much

most impactful strategy that has brought about the South Indian productions to the audience is the process of proper dubbing in Hindi and other languages. While previously, the films were dubbed in Hindi after being released in Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, or Malayalam, the Hindi versions are now released nationwide, simultaneously. Even some of the actors have stepped up to dub the Hindi versions in their own voices to deliver an authentic

## I hope I can serve the censor board well

ROZINA

SHAH ALAM SHAZU

National Film Award-winning actress Rozina has etched her name in the golden years of Bangladeshi cinema with her powerful performances. The veteran artiste, who has worked in more than 300 movies, became a member of the Bangladesh Film Censor Board recently.

In a chat with the Daily Star, Rozina talks about her illustrious career, and more.

**You have been in the industry for more than**

**"I didn't have a god-father, or anyone to guide me in the industry. There was an instance where I signed up for a film, but later, the makers replaced me with another actress. However, I didn't lose hope and I was adamant about becoming a successful actress on my own and prove everyone wrong."**

**three decades. Which film do you think was a turning point in your career?**

"Rajmahal" came as a blessing to my life. Directed by F Kabir Chowdhury, the super hit movie transformed my career and made me one of the biggest stars of the industry. It was

screened in theatres for several months.

**How do you look back on your struggles in the industry?**

My initial days were full of struggles. I was a simple girl, who had dreams of making it big in films. I didn't have a god-father, or anyone to guide me in the industry. There was an instance where I signed up for a film, but later, the makers replaced me with another actress. However, I didn't lose hope and I was adamant about becoming a successful actress on my own and prove everyone wrong.

**Do you have any regrets as an actress?**

Regrets and disappointment have no place in my life as I am very happy with all my work. That being said, I think literary adaptations would have brought me more acclaim than commercial films.

**You have recently built a mosque in Rajbari under your mother's name. What drives towards such social work?**

I am passionate about social work. Now that there is a mosque under my mother's name in Rajbari, I am also planning to build a hospital there. We can be immortalised through our good deeds. I want to help the society and make it a better place for everyone.

**How do you feel about becoming a member of the Bangladesh Film Censor Board?**

This industry has given me everything. I have been a part of the censor board before, and I am very happy to be joining them this year. I hope to serve the board well, and fulfill my responsibilities as a member to the best of my abilities.



PHOTO: STAR

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# The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

## A platform for the systematically abused

### It's high time we started addressing the plight of female migrant workers

IT is an unfortunate truth that female migrant workers are some of the most vulnerable people in Bangladesh, systematically subjected to harassment and abuse by recruiters and traffickers in the country, and mistreatment and violence by their employers overseas. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), 70 percent of female migrant workers are abused and beaten by their employers, with their mobility restricted and wages withheld. We are all too aware of the horrific stories of trafficking where women and girls, who dare to dream of a better life for themselves and their families, are tricked by unscrupulous recruiting agents and brokers into modern-day slavery. And even those who make it abroad through formal channels are left in vulnerable conditions, without anyone to register their complaints or protect their rights.

Despite the alarming plight of women migrant workers, there seems to be no sustained effort by the government to bring about systemic changes for safer workplaces abroad. In an overwhelming majority of cases, Bangladeshi embassies in the host countries are unable or unwilling to address the human rights abuse of our female migrants in a timely and effective manner, leaving them helpless in a foreign land where they don't know anyone or even its language. When asked about the syndicates that are preying on economically and socially vulnerable women and girls, the relevant ministries' stock response is to blame the victims and their "greed."

Given these dire circumstances, we welcome the initiative to form a national alliance on women migrant workers. The Alliance for Women Migrant Voices (AWMV), consisting currently of 22 members—seven national level and 15 local NGOs—aims to strengthen networking among women's rights organisations for taking a proactive role in ensuring safe female migration and addressing issues of discrimination and violence in their workplaces. It will also advocate for new migrant-friendly laws and policies and build the capacity to voice their needs and demands.

The alliance, we hope, will work closely with women and girls to raise awareness about the dangers of going through informal recruitment channels, build their skills so that they can get better-paid and more secure jobs abroad, and ensure that once in the host country, they have a communication channel with the Bangladesh embassy in the concerned country as well as with an alliance member. It also must put pressure on relevant stakeholders to prioritise women workers' rights over remittances.

We urge the government to utilise the network to identify the key challenges faced by female migrants and actually implement the recommendations put forward by the alliance in the future. It is, after all, in everyone's best interests to ensure a safe future for our remittance warriors.

## Are we to face a global food crisis now?

### Govt must work on stabilising food prices immediately

THE United Nations, only some days ago, had solemnly hinted at a worldwide food crisis following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and now the World Bank has spelled it out distinctly that the world is facing a "human catastrophe" from soaring food and energy prices because of the war.

It is alarming that food prices all over the world, including in Bangladesh, are on the rise. It's a major cause for concern for the governments in most countries because, at the end of the day, people need food on their plates. The World Bank president predicts that the Ukraine war would eventually push hundreds of millions of people into poverty, unless it can be stopped immediately.

Even setting aside the prediction that there could be a 37 percent jump in food prices, people in Bangladesh will still have to deal with the recently increased (and increasing) prices of essentials amid their struggle to recover from the pandemic. Already, a report by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) late last year stated that, in 2020, there were at least 52 million Bangladeshis without food security, 2.4 percent higher than the number in 2018. It seems even the basic need of affordable nutrition is to escape further and further from our grasp, unless world leaders act now.

It will be difficult for most developing countries to keep the wheels of their economies running in the midst of the food and energy crisis caused by the Ukraine war. Additionally, the fallout of the war has left as many as 60 percent of the poorest countries either in debt distress or at high risks of being in debt distress.

While the World Bank has suggested a release of food from large global stockpiles to deal with the crisis, Bangladesh must also work on reducing its dependency on imports as well as take urgent and responsible policies to address inflationary pressures in the economy. Meanwhile, it should purchase necessary commodities from the global market quickly and at competitive prices and distribute these items at reduced prices through open market sales to reduce the burden on ordinary people. Market monitoring is crucial to ensure that unscrupulous businessmen do not hike prices of imported items further, as has been the case for soy bean oil.

Bangladeshis have already been burdened for months by increasing prices of diesel, edible oil and grains, among other things. A global food crisis may be the nail in the coffin. We believe those at the helm of the Russia-Ukraine war must be responsive to the plight of millions of poor families and allow shipment of food grains from Ukrainian and other Russian ports to stave off the imminent global crisis.

# The playbook of student politics needs an overhaul



Dr Manzoor Ahmed is professor emeritus at Brac University, chair of Bangladesh ECD Network (BEN), and vice chair of Campaign for Popular Education (CAMPE). Views expressed in this article are his own.

MANZOOR AHMED

THE tragedy of two innocent by-standers' lives squandered, hundreds injured, shops damaged and burnt, and business worth crores of taka during the festival season lost from a night and a whole day of pitched battle between Dhaka College students and shop owners in the New Market area once again raise the question: Why has this kind of shameful spectacle been allowed to go on? Can nothing be done about it?

Media reports suggest that a dispute between two staff members of fast food stalls led to a brawl, but it escalated when one of them got some student leaders from Dhaka College to come in a group to his support. The students were chased away by shop owners and workers. However, the students came back reinforcing their number and equipping themselves with rods, sticks and machetes. Police intervened with tear gas—it is alleged after some delay—to bring the night battle to an end.

But then, the next morning, students came back to demonstrate, complaining about rude behaviour of the shop owners and their staff to students and customers. The shop owners, in response, rallied to protest *chandabazi* (extortion) and special favours demanded by "student leaders" as well as local political hacks. Again, throwing of bricks and chase and counter-chase followed. Police eventually restored calm after several hours.

The two unfortunate by-standers—Nahid Mia, a deliveryman of a computer shop, and Morsalin, a small shopkeeper—were caught in the battle. Nahid had gotten married seven months ago. Morsalin, the only bread-earner in his family, had two young children. A social media video showed incredible cruelty—Nahid lying motionless on the street face down while a helmet-wearing "student" struck him with a machete.

The media reports suggested and the director general of an education department mentioned that "third parties" had instigated the trouble. Police also said they were proceeding with investigation following this line of argument. Who could be the third parties? Apparently, a local political mini-leader has taken over the extortion ring, and many deprived ones are aggrieved, including some of the "student leaders," as speculated by the media.

An uneasy calm has returned, and the shops have reopened. Cases have been filed over the deaths, injuries, arson and use of explosives, naming over 1,200 unknown perpetrators, with only around two dozen mentioned by name. Perhaps a few will be actually identified and punished, and a few students may even be expelled from the college. This may again spark protests and demonstrations. The uneasy accommodation of extortion and control

will continue, until another incident escalates into violence with one or another aggrieved party reacting too strongly. Two lives lost and the families' tragedy cannot be redeemed.

Should it not be asked how these kinds of mayhem keep happening, and why these cannot be stopped? How is it that there is so often an adversarial interaction between the "town" and the "gown"? With

outlet for cultural, social and even political activities in an orderly way, is another consequence.

The "student politics" we see today in institutions as appendages of political parties, overwhelmingly dominated by the party in power, is a distorted and destructive version of what it is meant to be. It is a tragic irony that student politics has lost its way, especially since



FILE PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

any dispute between a customer and a small shop or food-stall owner, or a bus conductor and a passenger, students find it necessary to react aggressively as a group and take law into their own hands. What about an institutional code of conduct for students, what ethics and values they acquire in their education, and what do they learn from their teachers? Do students know that in a public institution like Dhaka College or any public university, the bulk of the cost of their education is borne by the taxpayers, the citizens, and that the students owe a debt to society? Should a student of a higher educational institution not be expected to live by a degree of civility in their interaction with others? It is, of course, unfair to blame only the students for the lack of these qualities, or for what happened around Dhaka College, and what may very well happen again.

There is no doubt that the "third party" instigation and the control and extortion rings are ingredients in the mess. But this is not a secret. Should this continue to be acceptable? Should the underlying causes—the nature of student politics today and the larger political culture that allows and encourages these to flourish—not be re-examined?

What has happened in the New Market area is not a rare and isolated situation; it is of a piece with similar misconduct of some students, mafia-like behaviour of some student leaders, and bizarre ways of exercising control and power by them. The loss of control of residential halls at universities by the respective administrations is an outcome. Not holding student union elections for over three decades in universities and colleges, which would have allowed students a normal

the restoration of democracy in 1990. The movement against the military-backed autocratic rule was the last hurrah of real student politics. The Shahbagh movement of 2013 and the recent road safety campaign are only infrequent reminders of the glorious tradition.

In 2010, as the new national education policy was being formulated, five most distinguished and respected educationists of Bangladesh expressed their concern about the state of our education and the need for restoring the environment for academic pursuits in educational institutions. The first of their nine recommendations was: "In order to keep students and youth away from mal-politics and maintain the academic environment on campus, direct and indirect links between Awami League and Chhatra League should be severed. At the same time, heads of all institutions and the local administration should be directed to strictly control all criminal and irregular activities by students and non-students, and the administration should be assured of full support from the government for this purpose. These measures are indispensable to restore the glorious tradition of student politics."

The signatories of the joint statement published in July 2010 were Prof Kabir Chowdhury, Prof Anisuzzaman, Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury, Prof Zillur Rahman Siddiqui, and Prof Jamal Nazrul Islam. Only Prof Serajul Islam Chowdhury is with us today; the others are no more.

It is never too late to heed this wise counsel. Even from a realpolitik calculus of electoral politics, looking ahead to the parliamentary election in two years, such a move would be of benefit to the nation, and thus to the ruling party.

**The uneasy accommodation of extortion and control will continue, until another incident escalates into violence with one or another aggrieved party reacting too strongly. Two lives lost and the families' tragedy cannot be redeemed.**

## PROJECT ■ SYNDICATE

# Are the kids leaning right?



Michael Broning, an author and the director of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung office in New York, US, serves on the basic value commission of Germany's Social Democratic Party.

MICHAEL BRONING

FOR decades, young people's leftward leanings were considered an iron law of politics. "If people are not conservative at 40, they have no head," Winston Churchill probably never said, "but if they are not liberal at 20, they have no heart." From John F Kennedy, Bill Clinton, and Tony Blair to Barack Obama and Jacinda Ardern, the leading lights of the left have regularly built political careers on the promise of youthful progressivism.

This pattern is so culturally ingrained that it is largely taken for granted. But electoral outcomes in many Western democracies have begun to suggest a very different dynamic. In the first round of the French presidential elections this month, Emmanuel Macron achieved only a narrow victory (27.85 percent) over the right-wing populist Marine Le Pen (23.15 percent). His success was based not so much on the fervour of the young as on the caution—and alarm—of older voters.

Post-election studies show that Macron carried only one age group comfortably: voters aged 65 and older. Le Pen outperformed him among those aged 25-49. And while the far-left candidate, Jean-Luc Melenchon, gained slightly more than one-third of the youth vote, Le Pen and the

other far-right candidate, Eric Zemmour, received the combined support of an unprecedented 22 percent of first-time voters. Among voters between the ages of 25 and 34, the far right's support increased to more than 35 percent. In France, it seems, the kids are not *d'accord*.

A similar trend appears to be unfolding across southern Europe, with young voters in Italy and Spain also tilting dramatically to the right. Vox, the Spanish right-wing populist party, has quickly emerged as the country's third largest political force, owing to the support it has received not so much from stereotypical stick-in-the-mud septuagenarians as from disgruntled, predominantly male, and less educated younger voters.

Recent polls in Sweden show "no clear differences in terms of age" among those supporting the far-right Sweden Democrats, meaning that younger voters are as likely as the older ones to cast a ballot for the party. While the Sweden Democrats have always had their share of mainly young male voters, their support among voters aged 18-24 increased from seven percent in 2014 to 11.8 percent in November 2021.

Similarly, in Germany's federal elections last year, the pro-business Free Democratic Party was the surprising top choice for first-time voters, even beating out the Greens. And in recent state elections in eastern Germany, the far-right Alternative für Deutschland gained unparalleled support from young people. In Saxony-Anhalt, the party gained the largest share of votes among the under-30s, as well as among those aged 30-44.

To be sure, this pattern of young people

turning away from the left is not universal—yet. In the UK and the US, younger voters remain committed to progressive parties overall. The Democrats are expected to keep a firm hold on younger voters in the US midterm elections this autumn. Whereas half of the voters aged 65 and older support the Republican candidate in their respective district, this level drops to a mere 29 percent among voters under 30.

Younger American voters' enduring alliance with the Democrats may be due in part to policies specifically tailored to their economic interests. Leading Democratic politicians have run on proposals to cancel student debt and pursue more robust forms of redistribution to reduce economic inequality.

But while progressive parties around the world should take note of this achievement, that doesn't mean they can ignore the lessons from recent elections elsewhere. Although progressives still generally outperform the right in many Western democracies, the momentum is shifting. Current trends are a stark reminder that success at the polls is not demographically predetermined.

Like their older counterparts, young voters will ultimately support the candidates who offer convincing solutions to the problems that are most pressing in their own lives. If progressive political movements fail to meet this basic condition, they may well lose their longstanding advantage among this electoral cohort. The notion that young people will always go for progressives will become a myth, rather than a reliable model.

**Like their older counterparts, young voters will ultimately support the candidates who offer convincing solutions to the problems that are most pressing in their own lives.**



ANTI-DISCRIMINATION BILL 2022

# Can it give hope for a just society?



SHAHEEN ANAM

Shaheen Anam is the executive director of Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF).

THE much-awaited Anti-Discrimination Bill, 2022 was placed in parliament on April 5 by Law Minister Anisul Huq, which was then sent to the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, requesting a report within 30 days. The bill is in keeping with Clauses 27, 28 and 29 of the constitution, which prohibit discrimination on the basis of class, caste, gender and religion, ensuring respect for human entity, equality and dignity of every citizen of Bangladesh.

Even though delayed, this move by the government has been received positively by human rights organisations who have been demanding such a law since 2008. It may be noted that the present government has been responsible for enacting a number of progressive laws, such as the Right to Information (RTI) Act, 2009, the Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2010, and the Rights and Protection of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2013.

The anti-discrimination bill clearly states that no one in the country will be discriminated on the basis of their caste, religion, ethnicity, language, age, gender, place of birth, profession or "untouchability." It further states that citizens cannot be deprived from getting services from government offices, statutory bodies and non-government organisations, nor can anyone be denied employment based on the above.

The parliament passes several laws in every session, most of which are related to the functioning of the state or to tighten control over various segments of society. However, a number of laws have been enacted in the last 15 years that are, in spirit, aimed at empowering the people of the country or protecting their human and fundamental rights, as enshrined in our constitution. The enactment of each of these laws has been preceded by active participation of citizens in raising demand and consistent advocacy by civil society organisations. The same is true for the anti-discrimination law. Human rights organisations and activists have been lobbying for its enactment since 2008, using various advocacy and policy influencing strategies.

The need for such a law arose through working directly with the Dalit and Harijan communities who, involved mostly with the profession of cleaning, are categorised by their low caste as "untouchables." Through the process of evidence-gathering and research, their powerlessness and the daily discrimination they face came

workers, and transgender people.

Even though rights activists have greeted the government move positively, there remain a few areas of concern. For example, although the proposed law recognises different forms of discrimination, the remedial aspects are missing or too complicated to access. Moreover, it does not have any provisions

that this law will likely meet the same fate as many other progressive laws. While certain laws get implemented in a hurry—even go beyond their mandates—laws that protect human and fundamental rights, those that empower citizens to demand transparency and accountability from the state, largely remain unimplemented. Same is the case with the international instruments and protocols that are signed with much enthusiasm but are often ignored or at best partially implemented.

The Domestic Violence (Prevention and Protection) Act, 2010 was the result of years of women's rights movement. Unfortunately, in the last 12 years, few victims of domestic violence have received justice or compensation based on the law. The RTI Act is implemented to a limited extent. While the poor do get information pertaining to their livelihood, the law has not been used to challenge larger governance deficits at national levels.

The main problem lies in the complete lack of accountability at every level of service delivery. Moreover, there is no punishment for not doing the job one is supposed to. The most glaring example of this is trying to get justice for the women who are victims of violence. Starting from filing an FIR to getting medical tests done to the time it takes for an investigation officer (IO) to submit a report—the entire process is a mockery of existing rules, policies and procedure.

Another important point to be made here is the failure of civil society to monitor law implementation. Somehow, the energy and enthusiasm evident while pushing for law enactment is missing when it comes to following up with the implementation. Often, activists turn to other pressing issues, thinking their job is done. It must be remembered that legislation is only the first step of a long road towards ensuring the rights of people, especially those who are traditionally marginalised and powerless.

Finally, a law is only one of the tools to ensure rights. A much stronger commitment has to be made to build a discrimination-free, exploitation-free society where everyone has the same right to live in freedom, dignity and security. No law can ensure that unless we as a society work on issues of social harmony, social justice, celebration of diversity and acceptance of difference. We still don't know if the anti-discrimination law will fulfil the aspiration of millions of people who face discrimination every day. But this is only the first step; the rest will depend on our vision of a humane and just society.



VISUAL: SUSHMITA S PREETHA

to light. From trying to get admission in educational institutions to eating at a restaurant to attempting to find employment outside their cleaning profession, they are shunned, ostracised and humiliated, with no option to seek legal remedy.

A number of organisations such as Nagorik Uddyog, Manusher Jonno Foundation, Research Initiatives, Bangladesh, and Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST) as well as the leaders of Dalit community took it upon themselves to create public opinion in favour for the law, which included countrywide consultations, mass mobilisation, signature campaign, media engagement, lobbying with policymakers, etc. In 2013, a draft was submitted to the Law Commission and the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), to be sent to the law ministry. Meanwhile there was a general consensus that the scope of the law should be broadened to include all segments of society facing systemic discrimination, such as persons with disabilities, religious and ethnic minorities, sex

for punishment as discrimination has not been criminalised. What it offers is more like an alternative dispute resolution, which will not serve the purpose, given the extent of discrimination these marginalised communities face.

The structure suggested for monitoring the implementation of the law does not give much assurance that an aggrieved person facing discrimination will get redressal. A national monitoring committee has been proposed, to be headed by a minister, comprising 15 secretaries or joint secretaries and three to four civil society members. Moreover, there is no representation from the communities who have most at stake. It is feared that this will end up becoming another top-heavy, ineffective bureaucratic structure. The parliamentary standing committee is urged to review these anomalies and consider the recommendations submitted by human rights organisations.

Any law is as good as its implementation, and therein lies the greatest challenge. There is little doubt

**The structure suggested for monitoring the implementation of the law does not give much assurance that an aggrieved person facing discrimination will get redressal.**

## Make our dark world bright

TALUKDER RIFAT PASHA

Talukder Rifat Pasha is assistant policy officer at the Institute of Wellbeing, Bangladesh.

I became blind when I was eight years old. Until that time, my life was full of joy and happiness; like other children my age, I played with friends, made new discoveries daily, and thoroughly enjoyed the adventures and excitement of a dawning life. After my blindness, darkness crept into my life. Due not just to my blindness, but to the blindness of others about the needs of those of us with disabilities, I could not go to the playground or read my favourite colourful books. Having a visual disability is always difficult; being blind in Bangladesh is even worse. Blind people are deprived of many basic rights such as proper healthcare, recreation and the ability to earn a living. Most of the people with visual impairment belong to poor families, who are hardly able to overcome these obstacles.

Off already to a bad start in life, my educational journey was even more difficult. A little-known deprivation of people who are visually impaired is inaccessible books. When I was in secondary school, I constantly faced book scarcity because my school, run by an NGO, needed to take special permission to convert textbooks into braille. The simple solution was to deny me books. My book scarcity degenerated into book famine when I was at the college and university levels.

And yet, I was actually lucky compared to others. My family and friends helped me to make accessible books. Sometimes, my mother or friends read the books out loud and I recorded them. This way, I completed graduation. My educational journey ended about a decade ago, but I see very little improvement in the availability of accessible books today. The Bangladesh government is providing books at the primary and secondary levels, while college and university students still struggle to obtain accessible books. They still must rely upon the voice recorder and class lectures, unable to pore over textbooks when they need to.

Due to the improvement of web accessibility, some countries are providing fiction and nonfiction books—braille, large print, or audio books—for people

with visual impairment. For example, the US Department of Education supports a special online library called Bookshare for people with visual impairment. Unfortunately, there are very few Bangla books, and Bangladeshi visually-impaired people cannot access many titles.

At this point, you may be thinking that the reason that visually-impaired people cannot get books in a usable format is that accessible books are very expensive or that sophisticated machines are needed to make these books. In reality, the problem is not fiscal, but legal. A simple law could solve all these problems. Concerned about book scarcity for the visually impaired, the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) promulgated the Marrakesh Treaty in 2013. The aim of the treaty is to ensure accessible books for people who cannot read regular printed books. According to the copyrights act, an organisation or publisher needs to take permission to convert printed books into braille, large print, or audio format. The Marrakesh Treaty gives the freedom to a publisher or any third party to make accessible books without prior permission from the author or publisher of a book. To date, 102 countries have ratified the treaty, including the US, Canada, and all the European countries. Even Afghanistan has ratified the treaty, but Bangladesh has not yet signed it.

Many countries have successfully implemented the treaty; there are no reports of copyright abuse. The treaty not only serves a humanitarian purpose, but also conveys economic benefits. Over the last several years, Disabled People's Organisations have been printing braille books for the Bangladesh textbook authority; many visually-impaired people are working as proofreaders, binders or braille machine operators. Greater availability of accessible books would translate into more jobs for those in greatest need.

A blind person cannot see sunshine, blue skies or the ocean. But a blind person could broaden their horizons and escape to faraway lands by reading a novel. They could find inspiration by reading a memoir or gain useful knowledge for life. A signature and an affirmation at parliament could make our dark world bright.

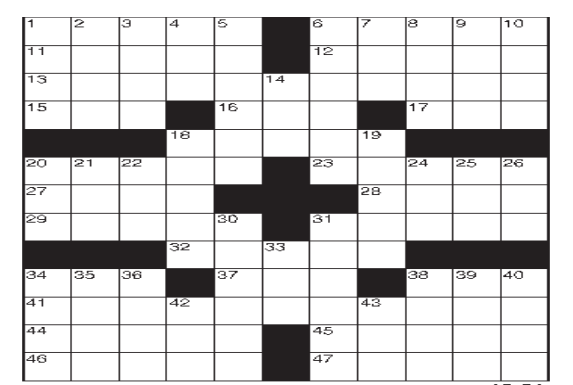
Making books accessible for visually impaired people in Bangladesh is the need of the hour.

PHOTO: FREEPIK



CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Cupboard part
  - 6 One of the Obama daughters
  - 11 Western, in slang
  - 12 Fall flower
  - 13 Crop planted late in the year
  - 15 Gun owner's org.
  - 16 Lobed organ
  - 17 Peaks: Abbr.
  - 18 Ancient Mexican
  - 20 Put a stop to
  - 23 Bank subtraction
  - 27 French friends
  - 28 Copenhagen native
  - 29 Like some bears
  - 31 Winter coat
  - 32 Poet's concern
  - 34 Commercials
  - 37 Simple card game
  - 38 Reindeer's kin
  - 41 Honeydew, e.g.
  - 44 Steer clear of
  - 45 Snow house
  - 46 Signs of boredom
  - 47 Breakfast bread
  - DOWN**
  - 1 Planted
  - 2 Locks
  - 3 Sicilian volcano
  - 4 Rent out
  - 5 Turn to ice
  - 6 Became furious
  - 7 Fireplace waste
  - 8 Goblet part
  - 9 Warm up
  - 10 Newspaper section
  - 14 Mouse's cousin
  - 18 Tea-growing region
  - 19 Fragrant wood
  - 20 Santa suit part
  - 21 Moody music
  - 22 Feel poorly
  - 24 Saloon
  - 25 Pen fill
  - 26 Earl Grey, e.g.
  - 30 Marries again
  - 31 Allow
  - 33 Black goo
  - 34 Traveling
  - 35 Singing star
  - 36 Winter blanket
  - 38 Singer Fitzgerald
  - 39 Writer Anita
  - 40 Showlace problem
  - 42 Light metal
  - 43 Sense of self



YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS



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## 'Sis made me support Arsenal'

REUTERS, Imola

Lewis Hamilton spoke on Friday of his excitement in joining a bid to buy Premier League side Chelsea, saying he was a lifelong soccer fan who had once wanted to be a professional player and whose sister forced him to support Arsenal as a kid.

The seven-times Formula One world champion told reporters that he had wanted to try out for fourth tier side Stevenage Borough before motor racing took over his life.

The Briton and tennis great Serena Williams have joined former Liverpool chairman Martin



Regarded as a fertile ground for spinners, especially the left-arm ones, Bangladesh have of late found a pace battery which has been impressive both at home as well as away from home. However, injuries to key pacers, including the latest one to Ebadot Hossain, will certainly get the management thinking ahead of a two-match Test series against Sri Lanka next month. PHOTO: STAR FILE



Broughton's consortium, which also includes World Athletics President Sebastian Coe and other wealthy investors, in bidding for the West Londoners.

Hamilton said it was "one of the greatest opportunities" and he wanted to help Chelsea and the local community move on from years of ownership by now-sanctioned Russian billionaire Roman Abramovich.

"When I was young, around the corner from where I lived I used to play football with all the kids and I really wanted to fit in," said the Mercedes driver. "I remember switching between the teams and getting it wrong, and my sister Sam punching me several times in the arm, basically beating me and saying you have to support Arsenal."

Hamilton's interest in Chelsea was mocked on Thursday by Red Bull's reigning world champion Max Verstappen, who found it a strange move for an Arsenal supporter.

"Ultimately I'm a sporting fan," said Hamilton, who was at school with former Manchester United defender Ashley Young.

"It's the biggest sport in the world and Chelsea is one of the biggest clubs and most successful."

## The dilemma over pinning hopes on spin

SPORTS REPORTER

Historically, Bangladesh have had a difficult time in taking advantage of the home conditions where they base their strategies upon. In home Tests against the West Indies and Pakistan last year, the surfaces provided a good deal of assistance for the spinners but while West Indies' Rameez Khan took advantage and Pakistan's Sajid Khan tormented Bangladesh in those surfaces, Bangladesh lacked the application to counter the opposition spinners effectively.

The recent tour of South Africa further showcased Bangladesh's tentativeness in appropriating an approach that is effective against spinners. However, with Taijul Islam and Mehedi Miraz now growing into the mould of both attacking and defending with spin, the return of ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan has meant that Bangladesh could bank again on playing three spinners.

Taskin Ahmed is all but certainly ruled out of the upcoming Test series, having suffered back injury during the South Africa tour, while Shoriful Islam, who recovered from the ankle injury that saw him miss the Test series in South Africa, will be unavailable for the first Test on May 15.

"Shoriful has recovered from the ankle injury. However, he will need a small surgery on a non-sports related issue. We will try to have that surgery done by the end of this month," the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) chief physician Debashish Chowdhury told The Daily Star earlier.

With the two key pacers out, Bangladesh were also initially sweating out on other key pacer Ebadot Hossain after



he incurred an injury to the webbing of his right hand. However, Debashish later informed that the injury was superficial. A week's rest will see Ebadot return to the field and be available for the series against Sri Lanka.

Chief selector Minhajul Abedin informed The Daily Star yesterday that they have already formed the side and is waiting for BCB president Nazmul

Hassan's approval. The team will likely be announced in a day or two.

"We have tried to form a balanced side and have already given our directives regarding the team. Taskin will not be available for the upcoming series against Sri Lanka but he will return for the series against West Indies. Shoriful will be undergoing a surgery but he is expected to join the team for the second Test," the chief selector said yesterday.

In April-May, the wickets in Bangladesh provide the least help for the pacers. However, the Tigers will be keen to continue their trend of giving pacers belief and it was learned that along with Shohidul Islam, pacer Rejaur Rahman may likely be added to the squad. With Khaled Ahmed and Ebadot available, it provides the balance the selectors may be looking at.

Time will tell what strategy may be the best but given that the home conditions favour spin, it would not be very out of place for the Tigers to bank on spin. However, Sri Lanka's ability to counter Bangladesh's spin threat has already been showcased during Bangladesh's last tour of the island nation. Without a sporting track, any idea could easily backfire if the side is either pace heavy or spin heavy. While talking to reporters yesterday during an event, Shakib perhaps hinted the same thing regarding the conditions.

"I think there is a good deal of chance of us doing well. Although the conditions of the two countries are pretty similar, I'm hopeful we can win the series," Shakib said.

Bangladesh would be wary of Sri Lankan spin getting in their way. Thus, balance in the end will be the key.

## Asian Games faces 'possibility' of postponement

AFP, Kuwait City

The 2022 Asian Games in China is facing the "possibility" of being postponed, a senior official told AFP on Thursday, after a rumour that it would be moved to next year.

The event is scheduled to be held in September in Hangzhou near Shanghai, which is grappling with a major coronavirus emergency.

"No official decision has been taken by the committee until now, but there is a possibility that it will be postponed," said Kuwait's Husain Al-Musallam, director-general of the Olympic Council of Asia, the Games' governing body.

Most international sports events have been on hold in China since the Covid-19 pandemic, although Beijing hosted the Winter Olympics in a strict bio-bubble in February. Shanghai has witnessed the country's worst Covid outbreak in two years, with weeks-long restrictions keeping most of its 25 million inhabitants confined to their homes.

All 56 competition venues for the Games have already been completed, Chinese organisers said this month, promising to publish a virus control plan that takes its cue from the Winter Olympics.

"We're now just making a few final adjustments and improvements to the facilities," Lu Chunjiang, an official in charge of operations at Hangzhou Olympic Sports Centre, told state broadcaster CCTV.

Hangzhou is scheduled to hold the Games from September 10-25.



## Joaquin looking to retire in style

REUTERS, Seville

When Real Betis winger Joaquin announced last November that this would be his final season after 21 consecutive years of top-flight football, he would not have dared to dream that he would have the chance to sign off by lifting the Copa del Rey.

"Sacrifice and effort lead to glory," an emotional Joaquin, 40, told his teammates after Betis eliminated Rayo Vallecano in the semifinals last month to advance to Saturday's decider against Valencia in his hometown Seville.

"Our fans have been suffering for years and I learned from my uncle that there is nothing more beautiful than making others happy. So let's make it happen."

Joaquin was referring to Betis's 17-year trophy drought. Their last piece of silverware was Joaquin's first, the 2005 Copa del Rey.

"I've already won a Cup with Betis and another with Valencia, and played a cup final with Fiorentina... I love a cup," said Joaquin, regarded as one of the greatest characters in Spanish football, with talents stretching beyond the pitch.

## Title race heats up as Arsenal eye top-four bid

AFP, London

Premier League leaders Manchester City and their relentless challengers Liverpool will expect to stay neck and neck in the title race after this weekend's matches. In the battle for top four places, Arsenal can deliver a hammer blow to Manchester United's hopes, while Chelsea can't avoid another slip against West Ham.

**No margin for error in title race**

Pep Guardiola believes Manchester City will have to hold off one of the best teams ever if they are to pip Liverpool to the title.

Guardiola's side are one point clear of second-placed Liverpool after both teams won comfortably in midweek.

With six games left, it will likely take just one slip from either team to decide the enthralling race.

If it would be a major surprise if that happens this weekend as City host second-bottom Watford on Saturday, while Liverpool play fourth-bottom Everton in Sunday's Merseyside derby at Anfield.

Guardiola has acknowledged City will have to win all their remaining matches to be sure of lifting the trophy, and that is a fitting tribute to the quality of quadruple chasers Liverpool.

"Liverpool are one of the best sides in the whole of football history, we are facing one of the best teams ever," Guardiola said this week.

"They have everything, that's why being there with them means a lot. The players know it. They've faced them and they know

"We don't have any chance to drop anything, but we have been in this position and played with this pressure."

**Arsenal can increase Man Utd's woes**

Manchester United's decision to announce the long-awaited appointment of Ajax boss Erik ten Hag as their new manager from next season came just two days after the Dutch coach was given a stark reminder of the massive task he faces at Old Trafford.

United's wretched display in Tuesday's 4-0 defeat at Liverpool underlined just how far they have fallen since Alex Ferguson led them to their last Premier League title in 2013.

Languishing in sixth place -- 23 points behind Manchester City -- United have been reduced to scrapping for a top four finish and even that goal could well be beyond them.

United head to Arsenal on Saturday trailing both the fifth-placed Gunners and fourth-placed Tottenham by three points.

Defeat against a direct rival for the Champions League places would be a fatal blow for interim boss Ralf Rangnick and his side, who were rocked by the bomb threat received by out-of-form captain Harry Maguire on Thursday.

Arsenal, behind Tottenham on goal difference, go into the clash boosted by Wednesday's 4-2 win at Chelsea, a vital success that ended their run of three consecutive defeats.

"I said to the players, if you want to be playing Champions League football, you have to beat the top teams," Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta said.



Following the tragic death of his newborn son last week, Cristiano Ronaldo is back in the fold for Manchester United's Premier League fixture away to Arsenal today. Ronaldo missed the 4-0 defeat at Liverpool while on compassionate leave but returned to training on Wednesday. PHOTO: TWITTER

# SPORT



**"If you want to win the Champions League, you have to have talent, good players, luck in the draw, and, in certain moments, the right referee."**



Former coach JUPP HEYNCKES, who led Bayern Munich to the UEFA Champions League victory in 2012-13.

## BENZEMA with the Midas touch

ASHEFAQ UL MUSHFIQ

After a decade of being the main striker of the European powerhouse Real Madrid, Karim Benzema is probably having the season of his career at the age of 34. "When everything is on the line, Karim Benzema keeps scoring!" TV commentator Alejandro Moreno aptly described the Frenchman, who is the frontrunner to bag this season's Pichichi [Spanish league's top goal-scorer of the season award] with Los Blancos having one hand their 35th La Liga trophy.

Let's rewind to see how the number nine carried the giant Madrid side almost entirely on his shoulder and into the Champions League's final-four hurdle.

**Five fired in the group stage: a forewarning** Benzema scored five of Real's 14 goals in the group stage as the Los Blancos progressed as group leaders, ahead of Inter Milan, FC Sheriff Tiraspol and Shakhtar Donetsk. Having remained goalless in the opener against the Italian champions, Benzema opened his mark with a penalty against Sheriff but ended on the losing side. Later, his last-minute slicer in the 5-0 thrashing of Shakhtar and a brace in the returning leg cemented Real's position on top of their group. Against Sheriff, his screamer from outside the box, in hindsight, was only a sign of things to come.

**Cometh the hour, cometh the man: Paris humbled**

In the first leg of the round of sixteen, home side Paris Saint-Germain were all over Real, who would have been happy to come away with a 1-0 defeat. And when Kylian Mbappe scored again at the return leg, minutes before halftime, it all seemed too daunting of a task for Benzema and Co.

However, "Ninety minutes at the Bernabeu is a very long time," is a popular saying amongst the Madridistas [fans of Real Madrid] and Benzema was adamant to reinforce that belief and came out all guns blazing in the second half. Right past the hour mark, his tireless pressing forced the Paris keeper into a blunder, and the home side capitalised with Benzema completing the formalities. 15 minutes later, stardust flew all over the Bernabeu as the Frenchman netted twice in two minutes. His hat-trick on the night was enough to propel Real through to the quarters.

**King Karim had arrived: unstoppable against Chelsea** Following the PSG parade, it was time for the thirteen-time European Champions to face the defending champions, who had enjoyed an unbeaten run against Madrid until then. The day before the start of what would set the course for a Champions League classic, English legend Alan Shearer warned the London side about the Madrid talisman in his article at The Athletic.

"It goes without saying that Chelsea's main task in their Champions League quarter-final starting at Stamford Bridge tomorrow is to stop him [Benzema] – but that's easier said than done."

Shearer knew it, being a phenomenal striker himself, and Chelsea knew it, being the experienced European campaigners in the last couple of decades. And yet, Benzema slotted two sumptuous headers home in the first half on a rainy night at Stamford Bridge. It never rains but it pours, as the saying goes, and Chelsea had to suffer further. Typically, when a ball is passed back to the goalkeeper, an average striker would stop for a moment to recover breath. But Benzema is far from being one, someone with an apparent knack of forcing goalkeepers into their worst nightmare. Like how PSG's keeper suffered earlier, Chelsea shot-stopper Edouard Mendy fumbled 30 yards away from the net. Benzema, of course, was there to finish what he triggered to strike a consecutive UCL hat-trick as the first leg ended 3-1 with Real on cloud nine.

At the return leg in the Bernabeu, however, Chelsea manager Thomas Tuchel exploited Real's defensive weaknesses and Madrid were down 3-0 with 15 minutes left on the clock. Fortunately, a moment of magic from Luka Modric dragged the game towards extra time.

And of course, it was Benzema who had to seal the tie with a header in the extra time as Real were through to the penultimate round despite losing the second leg 3-2.

Ever since the departure of Cristiano Ronaldo in 2018, Los Blancos are yet to win the most elite trophy of club football after winning it three on the trot. However, a change of script looks like in store, as legendary commentator Martin Tyler said, "Everything Karim Benzema touches, turns to gold."



# FOUR EYES on one prize

**In the other semifinal, the biggest question may be which version of Real Madrid will show up. Will it be the team that was thoroughly outclassed in the first leg of their last-16 tie in Paris, surviving three disallowed goals from Kylian Mbappe and losing 1-0?**

SAMAMA RAHMAN

With the stage set for the Champions League semifinals, the destiny of the title has been split between four coaches.

The first match-up will see Pep Guardiola, one of the most decorated managers in recent times, line up his Manchester City side against the wiles of veteran coach Carlo Ancelotti and Real Madrid. The duo are among the few to have won Europe's elite competition more than once, although the Italian has the edge with three titles as manager to Guardiola's two.

The second semifinal will see Jürgen Klopp's Liverpool, perhaps the best team in Europe based on current form, take on the only remaining underdogs, Unai Emery's Villarreal.

Although Emery is no stranger to success in Europe, this will be his first semifinal in Europe's elite competition in a managerial career spanning 18 seasons and eight clubs. He may also argue that the Champions League has not been kind to him.

In two years at Paris Saint-Germain, he won seven of the 10 trophies, but was eliminated in the Champions League last 16. The first season, his side faced that famous 'remontada' after winning the first leg 4-0 before a 6-1 defeat at the Nou Camp and in his second season they fell short against Real Madrid.

At Sevilla, he engineered a machine that was the face of the Europa League, winning three consecutive titles but never making the grade in the Champions League. In his debut season at Villarreal last year, he brought the club's first final in its 98-year history, where they dispatched Manchester United after penalties to claim a first-ever trophy.

The fact that he has overseen the dismantling of European giants Juventus and Bayern Munich in this Champions League campaign should bolster the wind in Villarreal's sail further and in Liverpool they have an opponent with a similar style to Bayern.

Against the German giants, Villarreal were far from timid. After pummeling Bayern in Spain but only getting a 1-0 win to show for it, Emery's men were gallant in the away leg,

making it a point from the get-go to control the tempo. They played out patiently from the back, absorbing a high press by stringing together intricate passes that saw them keep possession.

Liverpool are almost certain to use a similar high-pressing approach, a hallmark of Klopp's rock-and-roll style of football, but they will know that the obsessive Emery, who claimed to have watched 17 Manchester United games to prepare for last season's Europa League final, will be just as meticulous in preparing against that.

There will be little given in defence and Liverpool will need all the firepower that Sadio Mane, Mohamed Salah, Roberto

Chelsea in the return leg.

But despite raising their game at the right time on each occasion and pulling through, their up-and-down performances have left the impression of frailty. It will be nigh impossible to find any such leeway against Manchester City if they let their levels drop, but perhaps a team that has made semifinals in 10 of the last 12 seasons does not need to worry about nerves at this stage.

Perhaps those nerves should be reserved for a team such as Manchester City, who have desperately sought but never won Europe's top prize, coming closest when they finished runners-up last season.

For Guardiola, the quarter-final against Atletico Madrid, particularly the second leg at the Wanda Metropolitano in Madrid, served as a sort of exorcism and could give them the mental edge that such an upcoming encounter requires.

Tormented for years by teams setting up in doggedly defensive shapes – such as the '5-5-0' that he claimed Diego Simeone's men had adopted at times in the first leg – he turned the tables in the second leg.

It was the Manchester City players that were killing time, defending deep and urging Atletico to bring the attack to them, all the while winding them up any chance they got. The frustration on the face of Simeone as he protested such tactics and the meltdown his players had in the tunnel after the game was a joy to see for fans of any team that have had to line up against Atletico over the years, but perhaps all the sweeter for Guardiola.

There is little chance that he will set up his team like that again, but knowing that they can dig in to such an extent will be a confidence boost going into their marquee tie against Real Madrid, who themselves are masters of getting under the opponent's skin.

### CHAMPIONS LEAGUE SEMI-FINALS

Manchester City vs Real Madrid (27 April & 5 May)

Liverpool vs Villarreal (28 April & 4 May)

Firmino, Luis Diaz and Diogo Jota can muster if they are to break through. It is certainly not an insurmountable task for a team that are still chasing a quadruple and have already won the Champions League under Klopp. But it will be one of their more daunting challenges, as Juventus and Bayern can attest.

In the other semifinal, the biggest question may be which version of Real Madrid will show up.

Will it be the team that was thoroughly outclassed in the first leg of their last-16 tie in Paris, surviving three disallowed goals from Kylian Mbappe and losing 1-0? Or will it be the team that overturned that deficit with a Karim Benzema hat-trick in the second leg? Will it be the team that was demolished 4-0 at home by Barcelona in La Liga? Or the side that bounced back from that to defeat Chelsea 3-1 in the first leg of the quarterfinals of the Champions League?

Madrid have not played well throughout any of those games, but in each there were moments when they seized the initiative, especially after going down 3-0 against



#### MANCHESTER CITY

Record vs Real Madrid: P6 W2 D2 L2

UEFA ranking: 2

Tournament best: Runners-up, 1 (2020/21)

#### THIS SEASON

Record: W6 D2 L2 G24/10

Top scorer: Riyad Mahrez (6)



#### LIVERPOOL

Record vs Villarreal: P2 W1 D0 L1

UEFA ranking: 3

Tournament best: Winners, 6 (1976/77, 1977/78, 1980/81, 1983/84, 2004/05, 2018/19)

#### THIS SEASON

Record: W8 D1 L1 G25/11

Top scorer: Mohamed Salah (8)



#### REAL MADRID

Record vs Man City: P6 W2 D2 L2

UEFA ranking: 5

Tournament best: Winners, 13 (1955/56, 1956/57, 1957/58, 1958/59, 1959/60, 1965/66, 1997/98, 1999/2000, 2001/02, 2013/14, 2015/16, 2016/17, 2017/18)

#### THIS SEASON

Record: W7 D0 L3 G22/9

Top scorer: Karim Benzema (12)

#### VILLARREAL

Record vs Liverpool: Liverpool P2

W1 D0 L1

UEFA ranking: 18

Tournament best: Semi-finals, 2 (2005/06, 2021/22)

#### THIS SEASON

Record: W5 D3 L2 G18/11

Top scorer: Arnaut Danjuma (6)





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## Blast rips thru Afghan mosque, kills 33

Children among the dead; dozens hurt

AFP, Kunduz

A blast ripped through a mosque during Friday prayers in northern Afghanistan, killing 33 people and wounding 43 more, a Taliban spokesman said, just a day after the Islamic State group claimed two separate deadly attacks.

Since Taliban fighters seized control of Afghanistan last year after ousting the US-backed government, the number of bombings has fallen but the jihadist and Sunni IS has continued with attacks against targets they see as heretical.

A string of bombings rocked the country this week, with deadly attacks targeting a school and a mosque in Shia neighbourhoods.

Taliban government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid tweeted that children were among the 33 dead in the blast on Friday at a mosque in the northern province of Kunduz.

"We condemn this crime... and express our deepest sympathies to the bereaved," he said, adding 43 more were wounded.

Images posted to social media -- which could not be immediately verified -- showed holes blown through the walls of the Mawlawi Sikandar mosque, popular with Sufis in the Imam Sahib district, north of Kunduz city.

Jihadist groups such as IS bear a deep hatred for Sufis who they view as heretics and accuse them of polytheism -- the greatest sin in Islam -- for seeking the intercession of dead saints.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



A boy performs a flawless high jump over the hurdle two of his friends have formed by linking their toes and fingers together at a homestead in Barishal yesterday. As school was closed on the weekly holiday, children were free to enjoy their games to their hearts' content.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

## Shazneen's 24th death anniversary today



STAR REPORT

Today is the 24th death anniversary of Shazneen Tasnim Rahman.

On this day in 1998, 15-year-old Shazneen was raped and brutally murdered in a premeditated manner at her home in Gulshan.

She was the daughter of late Latifur Rahman, former chairman of Transcom Group, and Shahnaz Rahman, current chairman of the group. Shazneen was the youngest among four siblings. Her elder sister Simeen Rahman is the group chief executive officer of Transcom Ltd.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

## 9 more lives lost to road crashes

STAR REPORT

At least nine people, including a woman, died in separate road accidents in Habiganj, Noakhali, Laxmipur and Faridpur in the last two days.

Of them, three died as an auto-rickshaw collided head-on with a covered van in Shayestaganj upazila's Sutang area in Habiganj Thursday night.

The victims are Khokon Mia, 22, Rahim, 20, of Shayestaganj upazila, and Tolai, 25, of Chunarughat upazila.

All of them were passengers of the auto-rickshaw that was heading towards Shayestaganj upazila town from Sutang around 8:30pm, said police and locals.

At the same time, a covered van coming from the opposite direction collided head-on with the auto-rickshaw leaving five of its passengers injured.

Locals rushed them to Habiganj Sadar Hospital where the on-duty doctors declared Khokon and Jafu dead.

Hours later, Rahim was rushed to Sylhet MAG Medical College Hospital where he succumbed to his injuries around 11:30pm, said police.

Police seized the covered van and arrested its driver, said Saleh Ahmed, officer-in-charge of Shayestaganj Highway Police Station.

Meanwhile, in Noakhali, three people died after a power tiller fell into a roadside ditch in Hatiya upazila's Bejugolia area Thursday afternoon.

The dead are Belal Hossain, 26, Mohammad Rubel, 25, and Delwar Hossain, 15, of Tomuruddi union in the same upazila.

Locals and witnesses said the power tiller was heading towards Ochkhali Bazar from Tomuruddi.

As the power tiller reached Bejugolia area around

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1

### DHAKA-WASHINGTON TIES

# 'Feast' ends, now it's time for action

PORIMOL PALMA

After over two years of pause, Dhaka and Washington engaged in a series of dialogues early April when the two countries celebrated half a century of diplomatic relationship -- both promising to deepen the bond in the next 50 years.

Following the 8th Partnership Dialogue in Dhaka on March 20, US Undersecretary for Political Affairs Victoria Nuland said it was just an appetiser for the "feast to come". And it was a feast indeed, beginning on April 4.

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen held meetings with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, USAID Administrator Samantha Power, a few congressmen and senators.

On April 6, Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen led the US-Bangladesh Security Dialogue and met US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman.

The discussions took place when the global geopolitics was shifting with the emergence of China and more so with the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and

the US making clear distinction between the world's democracies and autocracies.

Washington is giving more importance to its ties with Dhaka because of Bangladesh's socio-economic progress and role in the international forums. Reflecting this, the back-to-back dialogues discussed the achievements while issues of

### NEWS ANALYSIS

concern were also put on the table.

Momen requested Blinken to withdraw the sanctions on the Rapid Action Battalion and seven of its present and former officials, arguing the force's role in counterterrorism. Washington recognised these points but made it clear that the withdrawal is a process and will take time.

The foreign minister called for the reinstatement of the generalised system

of preferences (GSP) for Bangladesh, which was suspended in 2013 following the Rana Plaza collapse, on the grounds of labour standards and workplace safety. The US imports apparels worth \$8 billion a year from Bangladesh.

A significant part of the Momen-Blinken meeting on April 4 was discussions on democracy and the human rights situation in Bangladesh.

The US was critical of the 2014 and 2018 elections. It also did not invite Bangladesh to the Democracy Summit last year. US officials said dropping Dhaka from the list of invitees may also be related to governance issues.

The US Human Rights Report 2021 published on April 13 highlighted the issues of human rights, democracy, good governance, labour rights, religious freedom and rights of marginal communities. It specifically spoke of widespread impunity for security force abuses.

On April 17, State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam said much of the information in

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

## RABIUL'S DEATH IN CUSTODY Fearing reprisal, family hesitates to file case

Demands judicial probe

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Family members of Rabiul Islam, who was beaten to death allegedly by police personnel in Lalmonirhat on April 14, are hesitant to file any case against the suspects as they fear reprisals.



They are now demanding a judicial enquiry into the incident.

"Many people in our village suggest that we should not file the case against police personnel saying that if we do so, we may be harassed by them. We are now in fear,"

Dulal Khan, father of Rabiul, told The Daily Star. "As we are helpless, we demand a judicial enquiry into my son's death."

Victim's wife Monira Begum, 20, "We all know that my husband died in police torture. But we have neither enough courage nor strength to continue any legal battle against police. We are scared."

Rabiul, 26, of Kazir Chawra village in Lalmonirhat Sadar, got into an argument with officers when a police team detained him on suspicion of being a gambler at a Baishakhi Mela, a traditional event celebrating the first day of the Bangla new year, on April 14 night.

Police personnel then beat him up. Rabiul

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The headlights were turned on earlier than usual on Dhaka streets yesterday as a nor'wester soaked the city in the afternoon, providing relief from the heat while also leading to traffic jams amid the busy shopping season. The photo was taken from Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue in Farmgate.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

## AL-AQSA MOSQUE UN voices concern as new clashes hurt dozens

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli police clashed with Palestinian protesters yesterday in the latest violence at Jerusalem's flashpoint Al-Aqsa mosque compound, as the United Nations voiced deep concern at spiralling unrest.

The Palestinian Red Crescent said that 57 people were wounded, including 14 Palestinians taken to hospital, one of them in a serious condition, after police stormed the compound in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem's Old City.

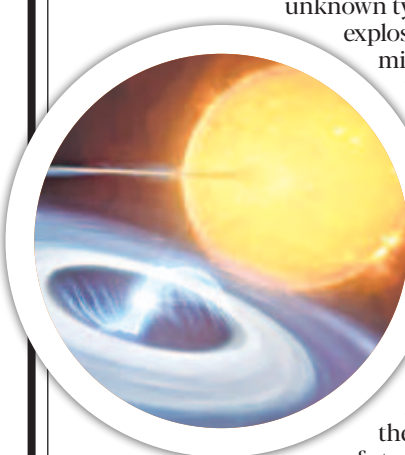
The clashes come after a

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

## Astronomers find new type of star explosion

REUTERS, Washington

Astronomers have detected a previously unknown type of stellar explosion called a micronova involving thermonuclear blasts at the polar regions of a type of burned-out star called a white dwarf after it has siphoned material from a companion star.



The researchers said on Wednesday a micronova is by far the least powerful type of star explosions now known -- less energetic than a blast called a nova in which a white dwarf's

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

## CLIMATE CHANGE

# Are we doing enough?

**Fossil fuel companies and their bankers have spent lavishly for decades to capture the policy-making process in key countries and to cynically lie to the public about the climate crisis... This moment in time should be — and can be — an epiphany for our global civilisation.**

Al Gore  
Former US vice president

The world on Friday observed Earth Day celebrating environmental diversity of Earth and highlighting ways of protecting our habitat, the only place in the known universe where life can survive.

But are we doing enough to save our home? Are the governments keeping their pledges, which they made at the 2015 landmark Paris climate summit and, more recently, at the Glasgow climate summit?

The latest UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report doesn't suggest that.

The world's nations, 278 top climate experts said, are taking our future right to the wire.

The 2,800-page report — by far the most comprehensive assessment of how to halt global heating ever produced — documents "a litany of broken climate promises", said UN chief Antonio Guterres in a blistering judgement of governments and industries.

"Some government and business leaders are saying one thing — but doing another. Simply put, they are lying. And the results will be catastrophic," Guterres said.

Two related reports from the IPCC, released last August and earlier this year, offered a bleak vision of what that warmer world would look like.

Human carbon pollution has already pushed the planet into unprecedented territory, ravaging ecosystems, raising sea levels and exposing millions of people to new weather extremes. But the reports said the worst is yet to come.

Collapsing ice sheets would raise sea levels at rates not seen in human history. Coral reefs could vanish, along with

Despite pledges, the governments, influenced by businesses, are still investing in projects contributing to global warming. Financial institutions still fund fossil fuel projects more than renewable energy. And the media — both traditional news outlets and newer social media companies — have provided platforms for climate disinformation and presented "both sides" of debates long after the scientific consensus was unequivocal, the IPCC added.

The IPCC said humanity has less than three years to halt the rise of planet-warming carbon emissions and less than a decade to slash them by nearly half.

This means coal use needs to be almost eliminated within 30 years. Gas dependence should be reduced by 45 percent, oil use

transform so quickly, given the history of the past 30 years.

"That's the problem," she said. "And it's depressing."

But the report also says that daunting task is still — only just — possible. Whether humanity can change course is largely a question of collective resolve, according to the report.

The report details how coordinated efforts to scale up renewable energy sources, overhaul transportation systems, restructure cities, improve agriculture and pull carbon from the air could put the planet on a more sustainable path while improving living standards around the globe.

The report finds other good news from the world of climate policy: Some 56



must fall 60 percent by the middle of the century and humans must find near-term ways to slash emissions of potent, planet-heating methane. Some existing fossil fuel infrastructure will have to be decommissioned early or used at less than full capacity.

But cutting emissions is no longer enough, the IPCC said. Technologies to suck CO2 out of the atmosphere — not yet operating to scale — will need to be ramped up enormously.

This change won't come cheaply, the report found. Abandoning coal power plants and leaving gas resources unburned could cost trillions of dollars. Achieving necessary shifts in the electricity sector will require about \$2.3 trillion per year between 2023 and 2052.



After a year of reduced emissions due to Covid pandemic, global emissions hit record high in 2021

UN report says governments are not doing enough to curb emissions

For a "liveable future", humanity must halt the rise of planet-warming carbon emissions by 2025

World has to cut emissions by 43 percent by 2030 and 84 percent by mid-century from 2019 levels to give us a shot at capping global warming at 1.5 degrees Celsius

Cutting emissions is no longer enough. Technologies to suck CO2 out of the atmosphere will need to be ramped up enormously

Any rise above 1.5C risks the collapse of ecosystems and the triggering of irreversible shifts in the climate system (melting of icecaps, Carbon-absorbing Amazon forest becoming carbon emitter etc.)

The IPCC contributing author Dana Fisher, a sociologist at the University of Maryland who has studied the environmental movement since the 1990s, said it is "unfathomable" that governments and other institutions will

countries that generate more than half of global carbon pollution have enacted legislation aimed at reducing greenhouse gases. And more than 10,500 cities and nearly 250 regions that are home to more than 2 billion people have made voluntary climate pledges.

These commitments have not yet translated into emissions cuts on a global scale. But at least 18 countries have managed to reduce their carbon pollution for at least 10 years while their economies continued to grow. This proves that the world doesn't have to choose between development and sustainability, said Patricia Romero Lankao, an environmental sociologist and lead author of the report.

While government policies, investments and regulations will propel emissions cuts, the IPCC made clear that individuals can also make a big difference.

Cutting back on long-haul flights, switching to plant-based diets, climate-proofing buildings and other ways of cutting the consumption that drives energy demand could reduce greenhouse gas emissions 40 to 70 percent by 2050.

However, in chapter after chapter, the IPCC underscored that addressing climate change was not simply about replacing coal power with solar panels or exchanging an internal combustion engine car for an electric vehicle. It entails coordinated, comprehensive "societal transformation," the authors said.

"Individual behavioral change is insufficient" to alter the world's warming trajectory, the report said, unless laws, institutions and cultural norms also shift. The report recommends passing "policy packages" aimed at wide swaths of the economy that can be more effective, enhancing cooperation between countries to help spread new technologies and protecting the most vulnerable people and places on the planet.

At COP26, the US and China — countries responsible for 43 percent of CO2 emissions — signed an unexpected joint declaration promising to boost climate cooperation over the next decade. But the recent developments and tensions among the superpowers have put serious question marks on the cooperation that is vital for achieving global climate goals.

We hope world leaders would see beyond their short time goals. And how they will react to the climate warnings will be reflected in the negotiations at COP 27 which will be held in Egypt in November.

### INTERNATIONAL DESK

### AGENCIES



## REDUCING GLOBAL WARMING Low cost ways

Not only do we have the tools to slash emissions and curb global warming by 2030, but half of available carbon-cutting options are cost-free or very cheap, UN climate experts say.

### WIND AND SOLAR

In 2019, total emissions were 59 billion tonnes, or gigatonnes, of CO2 or its equivalent in other greenhouse gases. The range of options identified by UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) would enable a reduction in emissions of 31 to 44 gigatonnes by 2030. There are four key areas where the total potential for carbon reduction is highest between now and the end of the decade — solar and wind energy, reductions in deforestation, and restoration of forests and other ecosystems. Of those, solar and wind are also among the cheapest options available thanks to the steep drop in the unit costs of these technologies — down 85 and 55 percent respectively between 2010 and 2019, according to the report. More investment in solar could see an emissions reduction of between two and seven gigatonnes of CO2 equivalent by 2030. Wind energy could save between 2.1 and 5.6 gigatonnes. Most of that potential, according to the report, would have essentially negative lifetime costs because they are cheaper than fossil fuel alternatives. Other energy generation options have a lower overall potential, with a higher cost, such as nuclear power and hydroelectricity.



### FOOD AND FORESTS

Protecting and restoring natural habitats is the second most significant area for reducing CO2 emissions. Forests are crucial for absorbing CO2 generated by human activities, and the IPCC found that limiting deforestation and the destruction of grasslands could reduce net emissions between three and almost eight gigatonnes, largely at a low cost. Restoring these types of ecosystems would save one to five gigatonnes. But action in this category would be at the more expensive end of the range considered by the IPCC. Shifting to "sustainable" diets and reducing waste food could save more than two gigatonnes, the IPCC said, but it did not give a cost estimate because of wide global variability and a lack of data.

### TRANSPORT AND CONSTRUCTIONS

Electric vehicles (EVs) are the fastest-growing part of the automobile industry and if these cars and trucks are charged with low-carbon electricity they can significantly reduce emissions.



Changes how we travel — switching to public transport and bicycles — can also help. Electrification of global shipping and aviation sectors are also possible. Most industrial processes in general can be decarbonised through a combination of technology using electricity and hydrogen, carbon capture and innovation in the circular use of materials (i.e. recycling and reusing). It is possible to make existing and new buildings in all parts of the world either nearly zero-energy or low-energy. The construction of new highly energy efficient buildings have the greatest potential (between less than one and more than two gigatonnes), although costs are towards the higher end. In industry, meanwhile, most of the options — beyond improving energy efficiency and cutting other greenhouse gas emissions — are associated with higher costs. But the sector still has significant potential for reducing emissions, in particular the switch to less carbon-intensive energy sources.



Developed countries are the source of 57 percent of all greenhouse gases emitted by humans since 1850, while the least developed countries account for just 0.4 percent of total planet-warming pollution

Globally, the richest 10 percent of households generate as much as 45 percent of emissions

Industry accounts for 34 percent of human-caused greenhouse gas emissions; agriculture, forestry and land use was 22 percent; transport 15 percent; buildings 16 percent; and the energy supply sector 12 percent.

a growing number of animal species. Intensified disasters would wreak deadly chaos, especially in the poorest and most vulnerable communities. Parts of the Earth that currently slow the pace of warming — such as oceans that absorb excess heat — would become less able to help. Carbon-absorber rain forests like Amazon would become carbon emitters. The scarcity of resources would give rise to more conflicts and sufferings.

After decades of watching their warnings go unheeded, some experts wondered how the world would respond to the latest alarm bell, particularly as other urgent problems occupy world leader's attention: the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, economic instability that has raised prices on consumer goods, and a brutal war in Ukraine that has upended the international order.

Despite pledging in the 2015 Paris agreement to limit warming to "well below" 2 degrees Celsius, with an aspiration of not exceeding 1.5C, few nations have yet enacted the policies needed to actually meet those targets.

And countries are not legally bound to honour those pledges.

If the world remains on its current track, global average temperatures are projected to rise 3.2 degrees Celsius (5.8 degrees Fahrenheit) above preindustrial levels by the end of the century. The consequences of such scenario is simply catastrophic, IPCC said.

The world's continued emissions, even in the face of overwhelming scientific evidence about the costs of climate change, are "to a large degree rooted in the underlying structural features of societies," the IPCC wrote.



LAW REFORM

# To improve ADR system under the labour law in Bangladesh

**An independent ADR center may be established with powers, functions and necessary technological supports to deal with labour disputes. The proposed center, to be equipped with the right personnel and technology, should have the means and jurisdictions to dispose of all workplace disputes both in virtual and in-person modes considering complexities and intricacies involved in each case.**

KAMAL HOSSAIN MEAHZI

For dispute resolution through alternative methods, prior to making a claim in courts, Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 (herein after 'the Act') has provided for two mechanisms, one is available under section 33 of the Act (a complaint in writing to the employer) and the other is accessible only when it is an industrial dispute and raised by a collective bargaining agent or employer within the meaning of section 2(62) read with section 209 of the Act.

Sections 209-212 under Chapter XIV of the Act deal with ADR providing multi-step procedures with arbitration as the last step. If, an industrial dispute is likely to arise, one party shall communicate it to the other party. Upon receiving communication, a meeting shall be arranged for discussion with a view to reaching an agreement. It shall be the negotiation stage. If negotiation is not fruitful then the matter shall be referred to the conciliator who is appointed by the government. This is the beginning of a conciliation proceeding with the assistance of a third party. At this stage, if the parties fail to settle the dispute between them and arrive at an agreement in conciliation proceeding, the conciliator shall try to convince the parties to agree to settle the dispute through arbitration. If they go to the arbitration the arbitrator shall give a binding decision. If they do not refer the matter to the arbitrator, one party giving required notice to the other party may start strike or lock-out under section 211 of the Act and the party raising industrial dispute may make an application to a competent labour court for adjudication of the same.

It means that ADR is a mandatory first step before litigation for resolution of a dispute when the same is an 'industrial dispute' and raised by a Collective Bargaining Agent (CBA) or an employer. A CBA is an agent of workers, and it works as a representative to raise voice on behalf of the workers. Unless a dispute affects collective interest of workers, it remains untouched by a CBA. For example, CBAs hardly take it into account when an individual employee is unfairly treated in an annual performance appraisal. A CBA is reluctant to express its concern if an employee is bullied or harassed by a co-

worker, if overtime is unfairly allocated to a worker, if a worker is asked to complete his work at an unreasonable speed, if he is punished for an alleged misconduct by suspension, reducing him to a lower rank, stopping his promotion, withholding his increment for a certain period. It does not concern a CBA when an individual worker is laid-off or retrenched, discharged, terminated, or dismissed on the ground of misconduct. In all these instances, an aggrieved worker either accepts it in fear of losing his job or attempts to remedy some of his grievances by filing a case under section 33 or 213 of the Act of 2006.



It may be argued that under section 33 of the Act, there exists a mechanism for settlement of a dispute before making any application to the court. As per the said section, a worker (after lay-off, retrenchment, discharge, termination, and dismissal) has statutory right to send his complaint in writing to the employer. It is a statutory obligation for an employer to dispose of any such complaint by affording the concerned worker an opportunity of being heard. However, in rare case, this mechanism results in success. In practice, upon receiving such complaint, the employer generally disposes of the same in a slipshod manner without giving due regard to the grievances of the concerned worker.

If an employer remains silent about the complaint and gives no decision or the concerned worker is dissatisfied with the decision when any such decision is given pursuant to a complaint, in both cases the only option available in law is to take the matter to courts for redress. More so, the out of court settlement procedures under this section is available only in a few specific situations. For numerous workplace conflicts, the court is the only resort.

In many instances, even a genuine industrial dispute does not receive proper importance. The concerned CBA often overlooks many such disputes to

and Rajshahi. For a sixty million labour force, the number of courts situated in a few major districts are far less than the necessity compared to the number of disputes and volume of cases. In most of the cases, an aggrieved employee has to travel far, sometimes hundreds of miles, to file a complaint before the labour court. Apart from lawyer's fees, court expenses, he needs to incur additional expenses for traveling to initiate a proceeding and, thereafter, pursue the same on regular basis.

In the light of the above discussion, it is imaginable how long it takes and how much it costs to resolve a labour dispute, even if it involves a trivial issue, by using the usual court system. Given the situation, the Bangladesh Labour Act, 2006 needs to introduce a fair and an efficient dispute resolution system for speedy disposal of cases through alternative means other than litigations. A fair and transparent procedure should be in place to enable an individual worker to resolve any workplace conflict and get the same heard by employers. Failing which, the law should provide means to penalise the employers.

An independent ADR center may be established with powers, functions and necessary technological supports to deal with labour disputes. The proposed center, to be equipped with the right personnel and technology, should have the means and jurisdictions to dispose of all workplace disputes both in virtual and in-person modes considering complexities and intricacies involved in each case.

In many countries, ADR is a mandatory first step for resolution of employment disputes that arise in workplace. Germany, France, Switzerland, Spain and the UK all have necessary law providing compulsory mediation or conciliation prior to making an employment tribunal or labour court claim, along with the possibility of conciliation and/or judicial mediation during the litigation. Bangladesh needs similar law to deal with labour disputes effectively, prior to making a claim to labour courts.

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serve interest of the vested quarters. In Bangladesh perspective, CBAs, known as trade unions, in many instances, are found to be involved in a close relationship with the management or maintaining a close link with the political parties disregarding interest of workers. As a result, the grievances of workers, their collective interests or any grievance of an individual worker are hardly represented in the settlement with the employers. The only forum for an affected worker to remedy his grievances is the labour court.

Under the law, only seven labour courts have been established so far with powers, functions and jurisdictions to adjudicate the labour cases, three in Dhaka, two in Chittagong, and one each in Khulna

RIGHTS ADVOCACY

# Effectiveness of 'local settlement' practice for protection of Rohingyas



PHOTO CREDIT: HRW.ORG

SAKHAWAT SAJJAT SEJAN

Since 2020, the Government of Bangladesh has been relocating the Rohingyas to Bhashan Char. The UN and other agencies initially criticised the relocation process. However, after agreement with the Bangladesh Government, the UN is all set to monitor the relocated Rohingyas in Bhashan Char. The UN agreed to do so after getting the Bangladesh Government's assurance of providing education,

medical services and income generating activities to the Rohingyas. Bangladesh's move is defined as "local settlement" in the language of international refugee law. Local settlement practice is basically a temporary solution provided by the host country. It is also known as a follow up process after mass refugee influxes to handle the crisis immediately. The Organization of African Unity Refugee Convention 1967 introduced the practice in refugee protection worldwide. This practice is also considered as the

temporary version of local integration.

This underdeveloped practice of the UNHCR resembles the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) of the European Union (EU). The TPD solicits to provide temporary protection to the incoming refugees in European countries after large influxes. The EU introduced it during the Balkan crisis of 1990. It generally gives protection to the refugee for a definite time frame to create a sense of belongingness and security among the refugees. Article 4 of the Directive permits the refugees to stay for one year in the respective asylum-giving countries. The Directive has settled three separate criteria to invoke the protection mechanism, i.e., (i) there must be an armed conflict in the country of origin; (ii) the conflict disturbs the process of return; and (iii) an asylum seeker must remain within the borders of the EU countries. Activation of the TPD for Ukrainian refugees after Russian aggression on Ukraine is pursuant to these three standards.

**Local settlement does not follow any limitation of time or ask for residence permit for the refugees. However, article 6 of the TPD prescribes a certain time limit to bring an end to temporary protection. And article 8 of the Directive provides residence permit to the asylum seekers for a definite time frame.**

Simultaneously, the Rohingyas' local settlement to Bhashan char is bringing coherence to the EU's TPD. After applying the customary principle of non-refoulement, local settlement or TPD is the most convenient way for comprehensive protection of the refugees. But strategically, TPD is more accurate comparing to local settlement. There are two distinct reasons for that, (a) firstly, local settlement did not receive written acceptance as a solution under the UN Refugee Convention or by the UNHCR; and (b) secondly, the TPD is an approved form of protection among the EU countries. The UN Refugee Convention itself created the gap by clustering the means of solution only as 'permanent solution'. Also, international refugee law scheme ingeniously undervalued temporary solutions of

refugee protection and that diluted the importance of 'local settlement' practice. The practice remained irregular without getting recognition as a principle of international refugee law. At the same time, recognition of this practice as customary principle is undesirable, when every state is not a party to the Refugee Convention. The EU's assertion on similar type of principle should influence the global refugee protection mechanism. It will benefit both refugees and the host countries.

Local settlement practice does not follow any limitation of time or ask for residence permit for the refugees. However, article 6 of the TPD prescribes a certain time limit to bring an end to temporary protection. And article 8 of the Directive provides residence permit to the asylum seekers for a definite time frame. The TPD in terms of protection is more comprehensive than local settlement despite their similar nature. As a result, in pursuance to the Directive, the UNHCR has adopted a guideline in 2013 for temporary protection named as 'Temporary Protection or Stay Arrangements'. However, there is a dilemma between the two alternatives when there is a massive influx.

To end this dilemma, the TPD/TPSA might go hand in hand with local settlement. Local settlement being a temporary solution in contrast to local integration connects to the TPD/TPSA in various aspects. The UNHCR might cohere to these two principles aligning with the principle of non-refoulement. This will open a new era of protection mechanism for refugees. Additionally, local settlement might achieve the comprehensiveness of local integration in terms of providing temporary solution to a crisis.

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# Humayun Kabir, Men and Rivers, and Faridpur

MD. MAHMUDUL HASAN

Writer, statesman and educationalist Humayun Kabir (1906-69) was born in Komarpur near Faridpur town. The childhood of this cosmopolitan intellectual was spent in a rural culture. He chose India as his home at the 1947 Partition and later became a minister in the Indian government, holding the portfolios of scientific research and cultural affairs and education. Because of his birth and upbringing in what is now Bangladesh, we consider him a Bangladeshi writer. For the same reason, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain and Nirad C. Chaudhuri are also regarded as Bangladeshis. Accordingly, dubbed as the national encyclopaedia of Bangladesh, *Banglapedia* has entries on all these three writers.

Like that of most other Bangladeshi Anglophone writers, Kabir's remarkable literary career was apparently inspired by his education in English literature.

He completed his first degrees in English at the University of Calcutta with distinction before studying Modern Greats (Philosophy, Politics and Economics) at Oxford where he obtained the first rank in the Honours Examination.

Furthermore, as the formative period of his life coincided with the British colonial presence in South Asia, conceivably, his Anglophone writing practice was also stirred by his interactions with Anglo-Indians living in the region.

At Oxford, Kabir was deeply involved in organisational and literary activities.

Following the model of the Cambridge Union (est. 1815) and the Oxford Union (est. 1823), students from British India at Cambridge and Oxford Universities formed the Cambridge Majlis (est. 1891) and the Oxford Majlis (est. 1896), respectively. Again, patterning upon the practice adopted in the Cambridge and Oxford Unions, Indian students of the Cambridge Majlis and the Oxford Majlis organised weekly debates. Kabir was active in both the Oxford Union and the Oxford Majlis.

The writer Dosoo Framjee Karaka (1911-74) went to Oxford in 1930, two years after Kabir, and later became the first Oxford Union President of South Asian origin. In his book *I Go West* (1938), Karaka regards Kabir as "one of the greatest products of modern Oxford" and states:

But the power behind us all was Humayun Kabir ... marred though his success was by his misfortune to miss the Presidency of the Union by the narrow margin of four votes. I have always felt that he was more deserving of that office than a great many of us who succeeded... I remember Kabir that night at the Majlis dinner. Seldom have I seen anyone speak with such sincerity.

Kabir was intensely involved in English writing and editing during his Oxford years (1928-1931). He wrote a book of poetry which was later published under the title of *Poems* (1932); he was involved in Oxford magazines the *Isis* and the *Cherwell* as well as *Bharat*, the official outlet of the Oxford Majlis.

In his writings, Kabir largely focused on the problems of his birthplace (Bangladesh) and country of adoption (India). His English writings include *Men and Rivers* (1945), *Science, Democracy and Islam: And Other Essays* (1955), *Rabindranath Tagore* (1962), *The Bengali Novel* (1968) and *Education for Tomorrow* (1969). Congress President Maulana Abul Kalam Azad dictated in Urdu and Kabir wrote in English the monumental work *India Wins Freedom* (1959).

Kabir self-translated *Men and Rivers* into Bangla under the title of *Nadi O Nari*. In this he followed the example of Rokeya who wrote *Sultana's Dream* (1905) in English and then self-translated it into Bangla.

In the history of South Asian literature in English, *Men and Rivers* is the third fictional work written by a Muslim author after Rokeya's *Sultana's Dream* and Ahmed Ali's *Twilight in Delhi* (1940). *Men and Rivers* is a literary work of great merit though more research needs to be conducted on the work to appreciate its value by examining various thematic and stylistic features.

*Men and Rivers* is a realist regional novel. Its setting and characters are completely rural. All the place names in the novel are real and geographically definable. Characters in the novel originate from Katihar in the Indian state of Bihar and settle down in Faridpur. The tragic climax of the story - characterised by extreme drought and Padma-induced flood - is set in Rahimpur in Faridpur. After the flood, the surviving characters migrate to a far-off island named Byanchar at the mouth of the Bay of Bengal.

There is a clear connection between the Padma and its riverbank district Faridpur and the novel. Places in Faridpur such as Dhuldi, Rahimpur and Gazir Tek mentioned in the text are real. As Scotland, Wessex and Lafayette (fictionalised as Yoknapatawpha) are



▲ Homestead of the author in Faridpur

identifiable in the writings of, respectively, Walter Scott, Thomas Hardy and William Faulkner, so is Faridpur in Kabir's *Men and Rivers*.

All the three important characteristics - "locality, reality and democracy" - that Phyllis Bentley in *The English Regional* attaches to the genre of the regional novel are present in *Men and Rivers*. It depicts the life, and articulates the experiences, of the peasantry in Faridpur who live on the banks of the Padma River and are vulnerable to its weather conditions. A similar work is Manik Bandyopadhyay's *Padma Nadir Majhi*. However, the setting of *Padma Nadir Majhi* is imaginary though the novel presents familiar, recognisable themes and depicts a discernible riverine rural world encroached upon by colonial capitalism.

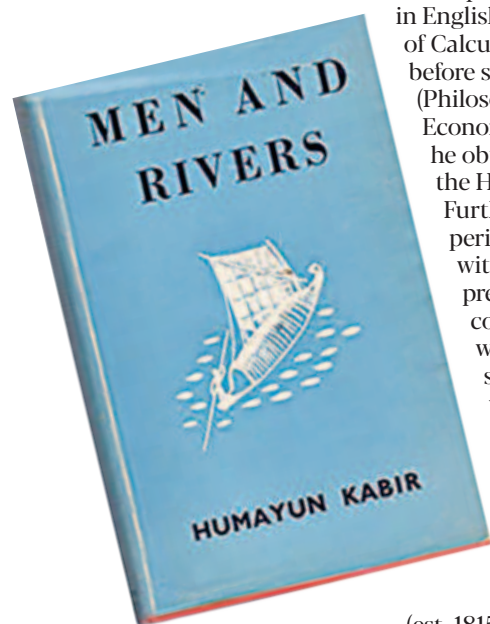
Given that all other place names in the novel are real, it is unlikely that Kabir used a fictional name in the case of Byanchar. Among the major coastal islands near the Bay of Bengal within Bangladesh are Rabipur in Barisal district; Bhola, Char Fasson, Manpura and Sona Char in Bhola district; Char Montaz and Rangabali in Patuakhali district; Hatiya, Bhasan Char and Nijhum Dwip in Noakhali district; and Sandwip in Chattagram district. However, no known island in that region is now called Byanchar though there is one named Boyarchar (also spelt as Boyerchar) situated between Hatiya in Noakhali and Ramgati in Laxmipur. However, Boyarchar may not have existed during the temporal setting of *Men and Rivers*, as it is relatively a new char where human habitation started only in the 1990s.

As regards Byanchar, one of the following possibilities or a combination thereof is most likely the case. Perhaps, it was an area that no longer exists, as such islands are dynamic landforms that evolve and undergo physical adjustments or migrate through erosion; and some of them disappear as time progresses. That is to say, "emergence, submergence, re-emergence and re-submergence" are a continuous feature of charlands, and this triggers "settlement-displacement-re-settlement-re-displacement" of their inhabitants. Or, Byanchar has thus far assumed a different name. Nijhum Dwip in Noakhali was previously called Baluarchar and Char Osman. Therefore, it may be the case that Byanchar still exists, but under a different name.

That said, as mentioned earlier, the spatial setting of *Men and Rivers* stretches - along the course of the river system - hundreds of kilometres from Katihar in India through Faridpur to Byanchar near the Bay of Bengal. However, Faridpur is the setting of the climax of the story that involves "the great havoc of the drought and the flood."

Thus, through *Men and Rivers*, Hamayun Kabir conferred on Faridpur literary immortality. I believe the novel will continue to make the district memorable and special to its readers for a very long time.

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**Kabir self-translated *Men and Rivers* into Bangla under the title of *Nadi O Nari*. In this he followed the example of Rokeya who wrote *Sultana's Dream* (1905) in English and then self-translated it into Bangla.**

## Parallel Realities, Peripheral Existences: Saikat Majumdar's *The Middle Finger*

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REVIEWED BY SOHANA MANZOOR

The intriguing image of a woman's eye peering through a hole cut into the glossy book jacket suggests that there is more to Saikat Majumdar's *The Middle Finger* than meets the eye. It is a novel about the peripheral and parallel spaces and existences that we tend to deny. It is also about opening one's eyes to the most important things in life, which may not be in the accustomed structures that we tend to take as the absolute truth.

At the centre of *The Middle Finger* stands Megha Mansukhani, a graduate student at Princeton who leaves the programme in the middle of her dissertation because she cannot connect with her studies. The reality that hits her is terrifying: "The world didn't give out jobs to people who had thrown their dissertations away. Her advisors were real about these things, they didn't want to keep illusions scattered."

Megha's plight is cushioned by a one-year fellowship at Princeton, but the fear of being jobless or tackling adjunct teaching at best looms right behind it. The perks of her lonely life are getting published in literary journals and going grocery shopping - one gives her a sense of belonging and the other freedom. She takes comfort in her sparsely furnished, windowless basement apartment in New Brunswick because it's a far cry from the "violent silence" of her perfect and cold childhood home in Alipore, Calcutta. That she works well in vacant apartments reflects the emptiness of her typically fragmented modern life - the intense focus on work that wipes out everything else. In such a competitive and goal-oriented existence, people

learn to disregard matters that are personal and meaningful.

But *The Middle Finger* is also a poetic novel about a poet who cannot disregard the pains she sees around her. The suffering of others finds expression in Megha's writing, while she herself grapples with imposter syndrome: "It was like sleeping with someone and gossiping about the lives they had revealed under the blanket. It was cruel. Her words were cruel. The guilt



nudged her. She laughed them away. They nudged her again." Something is missing that makes her unable to connect with her life, and Megha's quest is to make sense of her own trajectory.

Spanning two continents and cultures, *The Middle Finger* brings together two different times and lives. When Megha returns to India to teach

**The imposter syndrome that Megha struggles with is nearly universal today, and we almost take it for granted.**

at an elite institution, she was only exploring an option of a different life and seeing if she could finish her discarded dissertation. Her western education sets her apart in Delhi and she exudes an elitism that she lacked many years ago when she lived in the same city with her divorced mother who could not earn respectability in spite of her well-paid job.

In her new role as a creative writing professor at Harappa University, Megha feels uneasy and conflicted. She enjoys performing in front of her students, but she's uncomfortable about the fact that this exclusive college costs far beyond what an average Indian student can afford. Most of her students are from rich, well-connected and influential families. Yet, when her domestic help Poonam asks her to teach English to the poor women at her local church, she declines. Poonam herself also asks to be Megha's pupil. Unconsciously, the class division is stark in Megha's mind: "She was not her student, she could never be. She was too far away." Megha might be angry and frustrated enough to tweet in the middle of her class when she hears of a black girl being shot by police in Atlanta, but she is not ready to take the step that can bridge her life and Poonam's.

This is where the story of Eklavya in the epic *Mahabharata* comes into play, alluded to by the novel's title. That story remains relevant even today for the Bheel and Bhilala archers of Alirajpur and elsewhere in India who use their middle fingers instead of their thumbs as a sign of respect to their ancestor Eklavya and as a symbolic protest against Drona and Arjuna. By alluding to Eklavya, Saikat Majumdar questions the authoritarian patriarchal setting

where fixed social status, caste and gender roles destroy or suppress human emotion and authenticity.

Poonam could have been just an ordinary domestic helper, but Megha unknowingly touches her life through her poetry. Poonam is able to deeply apprehend Megha's poetry and use it to enliven others in a way that the best of Megha's elite students cannot. Her story intersects the novel like the discordant cry of chickens being slaughtered in the Calcutta market where she grew up - and where she returns after Megha rejects her. Megha is able to connect with her only when she recognizes her own pain - the idyllic childhood she could have had in Calcutta if her parents had not divorced. She had been to the best schools, but she never recognized the void within her. Poonam appears in Megha's life like Eklavya, the "artless, honest, unsophisticated forest dweller," questioning the validity of the reality she had created for herself.

The imposter syndrome that Megha struggles with is nearly universal today, and we almost take it for granted. Early in the novel, Megha's friend Rory claims, "Literature sits uneasy in India." He further explains, "English is taught the way the British wanted it taught in the 19th century. But being a Bharatnatyam dancer has taught me whole new things about the life of words in the subcontinent." For me, *The Middle Finger* is like a carefully choreographed dance-drama where many lives and many worlds collide - a moving story of class, cultural and racial tension.

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# PEEK-ing the way to better citizenry

## LITTLE BROTHER

The country has reached a new stage of development as the entire machinery of the state -- from healthcare and law enforcement to sanitation -- has been deployed to cater to the wellbeing and protection of its citizens.

This has been made possible by the passing of the PEEK [Public Enhancement Engineering Karmasuchi] law in the Chapasthan parliament recently.

Under the law, CCTV cameras and microphones have been placed in all public and private spaces.

People of the country have already been helped by PEEK.

"Last week, I was telling my husband that I have had enough of his temper tantrums, which he embarks upon whenever I tell him that his gambling habit is getting in the way of us putting food on the table," said Anika (nowhere near her real name).

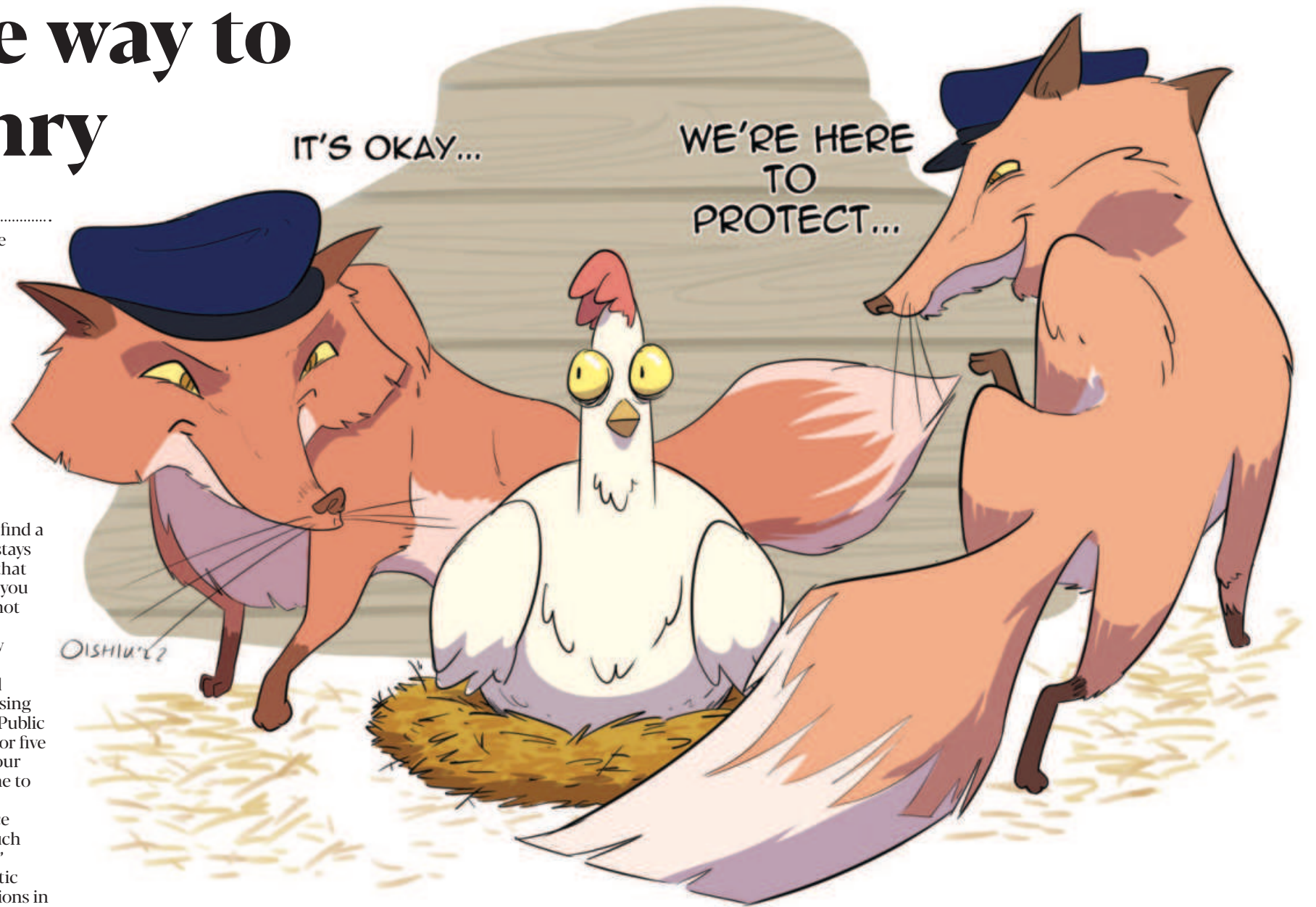
"Within 15 mins, I heard a knock on the door and opened it to find a police officer with a mattress and pillow standing there. He now stays with us to keep me safe from my husband's tantrums and to see that he doesn't gamble anymore. Yes, it is an extra mouth to feed, but you can't put a price on mental peace. It would be perfect if they did not spend the entire night playing cards."

Shimul Akram, who works as an office clerk, said the PEEK law has helped his wife Aziza deal with her anxiety.

"My wife has been very worried about the unsafe tap water and has long been badmouthing the administration, as well as organising locally to protest the government's inefficacy in bringing PISLA [Public Interest Supply of Liquids Authority] to task," Shimul said. "Four or five days after the CCTV cameras and microphones were installed in our home, a man visited us and told us he was a psychiatrist who came to help my wife with her obvious mental problems.

"He has her on a heavy dose of anti-depressants and visits twice a day to make sure she is taking them regularly," Shimul said. "Such dedication to her well-being is literally and figuratively touching."

The PEEK law has its limits, of course, as any law in a democratic country should. It prevents the state from looking into conversations in the virtual space, because those are truly private.



## THE CONSCIOUS CITIZEN

This art installation of a conscious citizen wearing a plastic stool on his head is a metaphor for wider society. There is a camera around his neck, which represents that conscious citizens remember all they see. The stool on top of the head says such citizens carry society's wellbeing on their shoulders. It can also protect from the rain and brickbats when conscious citizens see too much, but that rarely happens.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Is this 'satire'?



### KOUTUKMAN

The following is a summary of all the complaints about this page's content, mostly gleaned from social media, and a satire writer's foolhardy attempt to answer them.

#### THE COMPLAINTS

**Real or fake?:** Many articles on this page have confused us. Amid this epidemic of fake news and misinformation, you guys have tried to confuse us even further. Last week I read that it is illegal to criticize reverse sweeps, and I developed an ulcer trying to hold it in. Four days later, I found out it was "satire". Well, let me tell you this, the medical bills are pretty real. I wish I could tell the doctor that it was "satire", and I actually did, but she wasn't fooled. Is that what you are trying to do? Do you want to fool us?

**Not enough humour:** I have read many of your "satires" and I didn't laugh out loud. Not once. Where is the humour in the humour page? Have you seen Saturday Night Live? You could check that out once in a while.

**Not enough animals:** Also, have you read Animal Farm? Have you? That is satire, we don't know what you guys are up to. Use your imagination. Just using a fake country name does not cut it.

**Insensitive:** Our society has so many problems. Actual people suffer. It's not right to poke fun at those issues, but you do it week in, week out. We expect more responsibility from this page.

#### RESPONSE

Are we trying to fool you? Yes and no. Our real aim in writing "satire" is questioning and ridiculing the status quo. If the status quo is such that ridiculous articles can be taken seriously, then don't hate the player, hate the game. On a serious note, we regret that you ran up real medical bills. We could look at that if you write to [accounts@fakedomain.com](mailto:accounts@fakedomain.com).

About the humour part, all we can do is apologise. Our only defence is to say that there is so much dark humour doing the rounds in reality, that "satire pieces" and their attempt to ridicule the already ridiculous does not always cut it. Also, SNL has a budget and their writers work full-time.

The Animal Farm thing was also brought to our attention by a high official. We apologise for not being George Orwell. Also, maybe Google "allegory" and "satire".

About the insensitivity thing, our attempt has always been to make fun of others' insensitivities and those who cruelly take advantage of their privileges and others' weaknesses. We are also extremely hurt by the insensitivity you have displayed by questioning our sensitivities.

[Any resemblance of the above complaints to yours is purely coincidental, and like most things on this page, this piece is an attempt to fill up space]