



WR1 Ukraine War: How far it will go?



P5 Call it magic, call it miracle



P7 I did it for my fans: James



P10 Can't doctor pitches: Jamie Siddons



People returning to the capital in droves after celebrating Eid at their village homes. This photo shows a ferry crammed with holidaymakers and their motorcycles heading for Shimula of Munshiganj from Madaripur's Banglabazar. The picture was taken around 1:00pm yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

## VOLATILE SOYBEAN OIL MARKET

# Supply crunch still on

### STAR REPORT

Bottled and non-bottled soybean oil, which went out of stock at most shops about a week ago, remained unavailable in almost all the grocery stores yesterday, a day after the price of the essential cooking ingredient saw a record hike.

Only a few shops were selling the edible oil, but they took advantage of the crisis and charged more than the price the government had fixed, dealing another blow to the consumers who have been facing an unprecedented situation.

At kitchen markets in several districts, The Daily Star correspondents yesterday saw consumers going from one store to another in search of soybean oil. Very few could get it.

On Thursday, the government fixed the price of a litre of bottled soybean oil at Tk 198, a 23.75 percent hike from the previous

price of Tk 160; a litre of non-bottled soybean oil at Tk 180, an increase of 32.35 percent from Tk 136; and a five-litre container at Tk 985, up 29.60 percent from Tk 760.

Many consumers believe that the retailers and wholesalers hoarded soybean oil to put pressure on

**At kitchen markets in several districts, The Daily Star correspondents yesterday saw consumers going from one store to another in search of soybean oil. Very few could get it.**

the government. Now that the prices have increased, they would gradually start selling the oil.

In Chattogram, correspondents of this newspaper failed to find soybean oil in Kazir Dewri,

Andarkillah, Chawkbazar, Aturar Depot, and Hamzarbagh kitchen markets and three outlets of Shwapno.

Kafil Ahmed, a resident of Momenbagh, said, "I had no edible oil in my house in the last three days. I failed to find it today as well."

Mamun Ahmed, manager of Jonayed Departmental Store at Hamzarbagh, said, "We contacted the dealers after the government hiked the prices. They told us they would supply oil on Sunday or Monday." In the capital's Kawran Bazar, Anwar Hossain, manager of Prantika Traders, said, "I got a box of nine two-litre bottles in the morning. They were sold in just an hour."

The supply of soybean oil suffered major hiccups after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. But the situation took a turn for the worse on April 28 when Indonesia,

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## Vegetable oil prices drop 5.7pc in April

### Says FAO; food prices fall 0.8 percent

AFP, Paris

World food prices fell slightly last month after hitting a record in March, thanks to a 5.7 percent drop in vegetable oil prices, UN food agency said yesterday.

However, the Food and Agriculture Organization said that vegetable oil prices remain very high amid "uncertainties about export availabilities out of Indonesia, the world's leading palm oil exporter".

Indonesia's decision to suspend palm oil exports in the face of domestic shortages has pushed vegetable oil prices to new highs, further tightening a market already on edge due to the war in Ukraine and global warming.

International sanctions against Russia as well as export flow disruptions

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# Rail projects DERAILED

14 likely to miss deadline

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

The Bangladesh Railway will likely miss completion deadlines for 14 of the 20 projects scheduled to end this fiscal year.

Of the 14, deadlines for 13 have seen at least one revision already, and the authorities are seeking another extension from one to three years for each.

When completed, some of these projects would connect several economically important districts through rail lines and upgrade the existing tracks and services in equally important and busy business districts.

New rail tracks under construction include those from Akhaura to Agartala, Faridpur to Magura and Nilphamari's Chilahati to Chilahati border.

BR officials attributed the slow progress to delays in land acquisition, unavailability of foreign loans in time, shortage of manpower, and Covid-19 disruptions.



40 railway projects now under implementation



26 of them already revised, get new deadlines



20 scheduled for completion by this fiscal year



6 of them are set to be completed in time

### KEY REASONS FOR DELAY

- Delays in land acquisition
- Unavailability of foreign loans in time
- Shortage of manpower
- Covid-19 disruptions
- Poor planning
- Faulty feasibility studies

Poor planning, faulty feasibility studies and political influence to undertake premature projects are also to blame, transport sector experts said.

One of the 20 projects that were set for completion this fiscal year has been cancelled halfway. The five projects due to complete by June have also been revised, and their deadlines pushed several times.

The state-run transport agency is currently implementing 40 projects involving Tk 1,42,407 crore, with joint funding from the Bangladesh government, Asian Development Bank, India, and China, BR documents show.

Twenty-six of the projects had to be revised -- 19 of them last year -- mainly due to problems over land acquisition, unavailability of funds, shortage of required manpower and poorly done feasibility studies.

Thirteen other projects completed earlier in 2017-2018 also saw time extensions from five to seven years, according to a report by the Implementation Monitoring and Evaluation Division (IMED) of BR.

Each revision saw a hefty increase in the project cost except for eight projects, whose initial estimated cost substantially came down

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## JOURNEY BACK TO CITY Huge rush at ferry terminals

### STAR REPORT

With the Eid holidays ending, a large number of people returned to the capital yesterday after celebrating the festival with near and dear ones in their village homes.

Although the travellers did not have to endure gridlocks on highways, people from the southern districts had to wait for hours to board ferries to cross the Padma.

Throughout the day there was a huge rush of Dhaka-bound passengers on the Banglabazar-Shimulia ferry route -- considered the gateway to 21 southern districts. Banglabazar is located in Madaripur, while Shimulia is in Munshiganj.

Over 200 cars and minibuses and several thousand motorcycles were seen queueing up since morning to board ferries at the Banglabazar ferry terminal.

Apart from ferries, huge crowds were seen in launches and speedboats on the route.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Corporation (BIWTC), a government body under the Ministry of Shipping, operates the ferry services.

"As the rush of Dhaka-bound passengers gained momentum, it created a short queue of vehicles at Banglabazar point. But we are trying hard to smoothen the movement of ferries and vehicles," said Md Salauddin, manager of BIWTC.

Yesterday, traffic flow increased significantly on the Dhaka-Tangail highway and Bangabandhu Bridge, the gateway to northern districts.

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The Kutubkhali canal is filled up with waste, including discarded plastic bottles and polythene shopping bags. With the monsoon setting in, the garbage needs to be cleared to protect the area from waterlogging. The photo was taken in the capital's Jatrabari yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## NAHID MURDER Dhaka college student placed on remand

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday placed Dhaka College student Mahmudul Hasan Siyam on a three-day remand in a case filed over the death of Nahid Mia during a clash between students and shopkeepers in New Market area.

Rab arrested Siyam on Wednesday in connection with the killing of the delivery person on April 19.

Dhaka Metropolitan Magistrate Mosharraf Hossain passed the remand order after Inspector Tariqul Alam Jewel, who is investigating the case, sought a seven-day remand.

The court also placed Mehedi Hasan Bappi and Moazzam Hossain Sajeeb, former employees of Welcome Fast Food at New Market, on a three-day remand each in a case filed over the assault on policemen during the clashes.

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## PAYRA BRIDGE 10 injured as MP's relatives clash with toll plaza staffers

OUR CORRESPONDENT,  
Patauakhali

At least 10 people were injured as Payra Bridge toll collectors and a local lawmaker's relatives clashed at the toll plaza in Patauakhali on Thursday.

The relatives of Kazi Kaniz Sultana Helen, a lawmaker from a reserved seat for women in parliament, were crossing the toll plaza after attending the marriage ceremony of her eldest son.

Asaduzzaman, manager of the toll collection company, said the toll collectors asked the motorcade to pay tolls.

Immediately, a man got off one of the cars and claimed that they were

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## FACEBOOK COMMENT Public admin ministry scolds sr assist secy

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The public administration ministry has reprimanded Senior Assistant Secretary Sarwoer Alam as a minor punishment for making a comment on Facebook after not being promoted to deputy secretary.

The ministry issued a notification in this regard on April 21.

Sarwoer, a former Rab magistrate, had earned plaudits for leading drives of the elite force. An officer of the 27th BCS administration cadre, he is currently serving at the expatriates' welfare and overseas employment ministry.

In March last year, the government promoted 337 officials, mostly of the 27th Bangladesh Civil Service batch, to deputy secretary from senior assistant

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Protestors participate in an ongoing anti-government demonstration outside the President's Office in Colombo, Sri Lanka yesterday, following general strike called by trade unions demanding the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa over the country's crippling economic crisis.

PHOTO: AFP

# Anti-govt strike grips Lanka

Police fire tear gas, water cannon at students; schools, businesses remain shut

AGENCIES

Police fired tear gas and water cannon at students trying to storm Sri Lanka's parliament yesterday as the country was brought to a halt by a trade union strike demanding the government step down.

Months of blackouts and acute shortages of food, fuel and pharmaceuticals have caused widespread suffering across the South Asian island nation of 22 million people.

Public anger has sparked sustained protests demanding the government's resignation over its mismanagement of the crisis, Sri Lanka's worst since independence in 1948.

Thousands of student protesters had been camped on the road leading to the legislature, which is on a man-made island on a lake in the capital Colombo, since Thursday.

Officers fired a barrage of tear gas followed by water cannon from two trucks, but the crowd quickly reassembled behind police barricades set up to block access to the parliament.

It was the second time police tried to disperse the crowd with tear gas, after an earlier unsuccessful attempt on Thursday afternoon.

Some hung their underwear on the barricades as an insult to the political leadership. Messages like "Gotta go home"

- a rallying cry from the protests - were scrawled on some of the underpants and vests.

Millions of workers stayed off the job yesterday in a strike organised by the country's trade union movement, with all but one scheduled train service cancelled.

Privately owned buses were off the roads while industrial workers demonstrated outside their factories and black flags were hung across the country in an expression of anger against the government, reports AFP.

Thousands of shops, schools and businesses were also closed.

**Privately owned buses  
were off the roads while  
industrial workers  
demonstrated outside  
their factories**

"We can pinpoint the policy blunders of the president that led to this very sorry state of our economy," said trade union leader Ravi Kumudesh. "He must go."

Private buses, which account for two-thirds of the country's fleet, were also off the road, Private Bus Operators Association chairman Gemunu Wijeratne said.

"We are not providing services today, but if groups of people want to join the anti-government protests within a radius

of 20 kilometres, we will give our buses free of charge," Wijeratne told reporters in Colombo.

President Gotabaya Rajapaksa has insisted he will not step down despite escalating demonstrations across the island, including a protest that has been camped outside his seafront office for nearly a month.

Opposition leader Sajith Premadasa told parliament yesterday the opposition wants to move a no-confidence motion against the president and the government next week.

Sri Lanka's economic crisis took hold after the coronavirus pandemic hammered income from tourism and remittances.

Unable to pay for fuel imports, utilities have imposed daily blackouts to ration electricity, while long lines of people snake around service stations for petrol and kerosene.

Hospitals are short of vital medicines and the government has appealed to citizens abroad for donations.

Healthcare workers also joined in yesterday's strike, though emergency services remained operational.

Last month Sri Lanka announced it was defaulting on its \$51 billion foreign debt, and Finance Minister Ali Sabry warned this week that the country will have to endure its unprecedented economic hardships for at least two more years.

## Rail projects derailed

FROM PAGE 1

subsequent extensions – not a common phenomenon.

Usually, project costs go up in case of extensions, mainly due to price hikes of raw materials, addition of new components, and changes in the original design.

In the last one decade, the railway ministry saw a significant budget increase, becoming one of the five ministries or divisions that received highest development fund allocations.

But in terms of project implementation, the ministry is among the low performers. It could not achieve even the average ADP implementation rate twice in the last six fiscal years, shows the IMED report.

BR Director General Dharendra Nath Mazumder was on a foreign tour and was not available for comments when this correspondent tried to contact him on April 20.

Quamrul Ahsan, additional director general (infrastructure) of BR, who was performing the regular duties of the DG, declined to comment.

**DELAYED PROJECTS**

Taken up in 2010, the construction of a rail track from Chattogram's Dohazari to Cox's Bazar is one of the long-awaited projects.

The initial cost for the 128km metre-gauge track was set at Tk 1,852 crore. Four years later in 2014, the project was converted into a dual-gauge track – a complete change of plan – for "better connectivity".

The revised cost rose by 10 folds to Tk 18,034 crore.

More changes followed. The first phase, aimed at building the track from Cox's Bazar's Ramu to Gundum near the Myanmar border, was shelved.

In 2016, the project's deadline was set for June 2022, which could not be met. Visiting the project site in September last year, Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan said the route would open for public in December 2022.

Late last year, the project authorities sought another extension up to June 2024, citing various problems including delay in land acquisition and work disruption due to the pandemic.

With 69 percent of the work done, project authorities now hope the construction will complete by June next year.

Other projects involving procurements for rail engines, coaches, and wagons as well as feasibility studies for new tracks are also behind schedule.

One project was taken up in March 2018 to carry out a feasibility study for building a rail line to connect the under-construction Bay Terminal in Chattogram's Patenga with the railway network.

The deadline for the Tk 4.53-crore project was initially set for March 2019, and later extended till June this year. The project authorities are now seeking another year to complete the study.

Other projects seeking time extensions for one to three years include: constructions of three

## Vegetable oil prices

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resulting from the February 24 invasion have sparked fears of a global hunger crisis.

Russia and Ukraine, whose vast grain-growing regions are among the world's main breadbaskets, account for a huge share of the globe's exports in several major commodities, including wheat, vegetable oil and corn.

The FAO's food price index, which had reported records for both March and February, dipped 0.8 percent in April compared to the previous

month, the agency said in a statement.

"The small decrease in the index is a welcome relief, particularly for low-income food-deficit countries, but still food prices remain close to their recent highs, reflecting persistent market tightness and posing a challenge to global food security for the most vulnerable," FAO chief economist Maximo Torero Cullen said.

The index is a measure of the monthly change in international prices of a basket of food commodities.

## Dhaka college student

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Inspector Halder Arpit Thakur brought them to the court with seven-day remand prayers for each.

In his remand prayer, Inspector Tariqul said Siyam was seen in a video footage hitting Nahid with an iron rod after the latter fell to the ground.

Siyam is the sixth Dhaka College student to be

arrested in the case. The five others were involved with the Chhatra League.

On April 18, employees of Welcome Fast Food and Capital Fast Food in New Market engaged in a brawl that eventually led to pitched battles the following day, leaving two men dead and many others injured.

## China hits back at 'zero Covid' policy doubters

REUTERS, Beijing

Residents of Beijing yesterday fretted over dozens of new Covid-19 cases reported daily and over the possibility of more restrictions on movements as China's leaders threatened action against critics of their zero-Covid policy.

Incurring a heavy economic cost and facing rare public criticism on its tightly controlled internet, China is increasingly out of step with the rest of the world where Covid restrictions are being abandoned and vaccines relied on to protect people.

## Huge rush at ferry terminals

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"Although there is huge pressure of vehicles on this highway, no traffic gridlock has been created," said Mosaddek Hossain, officer-in-charge of Bangabandhu Bridge West Police Station.

The traffic flow will keep intensifying over the next two days, he added.

"We hope movement of vehicles will remain smooth if it does not rain and there are no accidents," said Ataur Rahman, in-charge of Elega Highway Police in Tangail.

Passengers and transport operators expressed satisfaction over this year's traffic management system.

"In previous years, we

had to be stuck in gridlock for hours while travelling during the Eid holiday. But this year's journey was almost hassle-free," said Mahmudul Hasan, who was returning to Dhaka from his village home in Bogura.

Badal Miah, a truck driver heading towards Dhaka from Pabna, said, "We had to wait long to cross Bangabandhu Bridge in previous years. But this year, we did not face any trouble."

Many passengers however alleged that transport operators charged extra fare taking advantage of the excessive demand. There were many who were not even able to

get on public transport.

"I have not been able to board any bus despite waiting here for around two hours. I got the chance to board one or two, but the operators asked for Tk 400 instead of the normal fare of Tk 200," Abdul Quader, who was looking for a Dhaka-bound bus at Tangail's Elega bus stop area yesterday noon, told The Daily Star.

Sudden rain at noon added to the passengers' sufferings at different points on the Dhaka-Tangail highway.

[Our correspondents from Munshiganj and Tangail contributed to this report]

## Supply crunch

FROM PAGE 1

the biggest shipper of edible oil, imposed a ban on palm oil exports to protect its domestic market.

The acute supply crunch perhaps reached its peak when cooking oil disappeared from many retail shops across the country in the run-up to Eid, when demand usually goes up.

In Dinajpur, a five-litre container of soybean oil was sold for Tk 1,000 and a one-litre bottle at Tk 200 at Bahadur Bazar kitchen market.

Earlier on Thursday, Shafiqul Ather Taslim, director (finance and operations) at TK Group, one of the largest cooking oil processors, said that it would take three to four

days for the supply of the product to return to normal.

Meanwhile, Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader told reporters in Narayanganj yesterday that the price hike was an effect of the Ukraine-Russia war and that nothing could be done about this.

BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir said the price hike was the result of an anti-people policy of the government.

"Disappearance of oil from the market before Eid and yesterday's [Thursday's] price hike is a unique and unprecedented incident which left people to suffer enormously," he said in a statement.

## Astronaut crew returns to Earth after 6 months on ISS

AFP, Washington

NASA's Crew-3 mission returned home to Earth yesterday after six months aboard the International Space Station.

The SpaceX Dragon Endurance spacecraft with NASA astronauts Kayla Barron, Raja Chari and Tom Marshburn, as well as European Space Agency astronaut Matthias Maurer, undocked from the orbital laboratory a day earlier.

Their 23.5-hour journey back saw them splash down off the coast of Florida at 12:43 am (0443 GMT).

## Expatriate stabbed to death in Noakhali

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Noakhali

An expatriate in Saudi Arabia was stabbed to death allegedly by his cousins over harvesting mangoes from a tree in a disputed land in Noakhali's Senbagh on Thursday night.

The victim, Md Yusuf, 32, of Bishnapur village, recently returned home.

Yusuf became involved in an altercation with his cousins Sohel, Rubel and uncle Nurnabi over the matter. At one stage, Sohel and Rubel beat up and stabbed Yusuf, leaving him injured critically, said Iqbal Hossain Patowari, officer-in-charge of Senbagh Police Station.

He was taken to Noakhali 250-bed General Hospital where doctors declared him dead around 11:30pm, the OC added.

Police detained three people in connection with the incident.

## Two land in jail over raping schoolgirl

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Jhenidah

A Jhenidah court yesterday sent two youths to jail over raping a seventh-grader in Shailakupa upazila.

The two are: Ariful Islam, 18, and Ratan Mondol, 25.

Quoting the victim's relatives, police said Ariful raped the girl at a park in Shailakupa on April 4 and captured the incident on phone. He then threatened that he would make the video clip viral.

When the girl went to the park again on the Eid day, Ariful and his cohort Reaz Uddin, 25, took her to a hut there and raped her. Park employee Ratan abetted them, police said.

On Thursday, victim's father filed a case with Shailakupa Police Station accusing the three.

Police then arrested Ariful and Ratan. Reaz, however, went into hiding.

Aminul Islam, OC of Shailakupa Police Station, said the victim was sent to Jhenidah Sadar Hospital for medical tests.

## Three Rohingya 'criminals' held in Teknaf

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Cox's Bazar

Three alleged Rohingya criminals of a gang were arrested in a camp in Cox's Bazar's Teknaf on Thursday night.

The arrestees are: Salman Shah, 20, chief of the gang named after him, Mohammad Shafi, 19, and Mohammad Kashim, 20.

Tarikul Islam, captain of APBn-16, said a police team raided Noyapara Rohingya camp after getting information that some armed robbers were preparing to commit a robbery there. Police arrested the three and recovered a firearm and four bullets.

A case was filed with Teknaf Model Police Station in this regard.





At Kamalapur Railway Station, this photojournalist met Shapna and her cat Tintin, who lives in Bashabo. Tintin, a member of Shapna's family, is always a travel companion during the vacations. This time, Tintin went to Rajshahi to spend Eid holidays with the other members of the family. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS

## Build climate-tolerant infrastructures PM urges engineers

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has urged engineers to play more effective roles in constructing infrastructures suitable for coping with adverse impacts of climate change.

"Engineers must play more effective roles in building infrastructures tolerant to climate change and its adverse impacts, and ensuring food and energy security," she said in a message issued yesterday on the occasion of the 74th founding anniversary of Engineers Institution, Bangladesh (IEB) and the Engineers' Day.

Greeting all engineers on the occasion, the PM said the role of engineers is essential in the country's overall development.

The technological and engineering development is the key to the development of a nation, she said, adding that immediately after the independence of the country, the engineers had played a significant role in reconstructing war-ravaged Bangladesh under the leadership of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Sheikh Hasina said the engineers are leading the country forward through technical and engineering progress.

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## AHSANULLAH MASTER KILLING CASE

### An 18-year wait for justice

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

Eighteen years have passed since veteran freedom fighter and Awami League lawmaker Ahsanullah Master was brutally killed in a burst of fire at a rally near his house in Gazipur's Tongi.

But ultimate justice is yet to be ensured, because of the lengthy legal system.

Appeals in connection with the grisly murder have been pending with the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court for six years, depriving the deceased's family of solace.

But the apex court could not start hearing the appeals filed against the HC verdict in the related case, because regular judicial functions of the court remain disrupted due to the pandemic and long backlog of cases.

Advocate Khandker Mahbub Hossain, principal defence counsel of the case, told The Daily Star that the Appellate Division is now hearing and disposing of death references and appeals of 2016.

Appeals and death reference of Ahsanullah Master killing case were filed in 2016, and therefore, those might be heard and disposed of soon if they come up before the apex court, he said.

"We [defence lawyers] are ready for placing arguments on behalf of the convicted accused, as they have been suffering in jail for several years," Khandker added.

Contacted, Attorney General AM Amin Uddin told this correspondent that his office will place arguments on behalf of the state when the appeals will be heard by the SC.

On May 7, 2004, assailants killed Ahsanullah Master and student Omar Faruq Ratan, and wounded 17 at the rally of Swachhchasebak League, a pro-AL body, at Naogaon.

Ahsanullah's brother filed the case the next

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# A digital disaster

Online ticketing service of National Museum, Ahsan Manzil makes visitors suffer, prompts black market sales

DIPAN NANDY

Bangladesh National Museum and Ahsan Manzil reopened yesterday after Eid holidays. Their doors were open from 3:00pm onwards, but visitors found themselves faced with a unique form of suffering.

Ticket counters of the two sites were closed, as all tickets were supposed to be booked online. But most of the visitors did not buy tickets online. Some of them tried to book online tickets on the spot but failed due to the complexity of the process and issues with the servers.

Those who were still adamant to visit, bought tickets on the black market, paying double to ten times the original entrance fee of Tk 20.

The National Museum reopened after the pandemic hiatus on August 23 last year. At first, some 600 visitors used to visit the museum every day. The number has now reached 1,500.

However, despite the increase in the number of visitors, there is no physical ticketing system in place. Visitors have to book tickets online and make online payments from the museum's website. The same goes for Ahsan Manzil.

Mazharul Abedin, an Agargaon resident who came to visit the museum yesterday afternoon, said, "The pandemic is now



Ever since Bangladesh National Museum and Ahsan Manzil shifted to an online ticket-purchase system, visitors have had to buy tickets off the black market, paying double the price. Those who did try booking them online were unable to do so due to the complexity of the process and server issues. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

under control. Why are they selling tickets online? They aren't even available online."

Mohammad Hossain, another visitor, who bought tickets in black, said, "I bought a Tk 20 ticket for Tk 100."

Asked about the source of tickets being sold in black, a security guard of the museum, requesting anonymity, said, "Museum tickets can be bought from the ground floor of Aziz Super Market and Shahbagh Biponin Bitan."

When this correspondent visited

Shahbagh Bipani Bitan, an advertisement for museum tickets was seen hanging.

Talking to this correspondent, an employee of Shahbagh Biponin Bitan's AG Drug Store, wishing to remain anonymous, said, "We buy tickets online, which we sell for a higher price." "We sell a Tk 20 ticket at Tk 50 to Tk 100. Tickets priced at Tk 300 for Saarc nationals and Tk 500 for foreign nationals are being charged from Tk 1,000 to Tk 1,500," he added.

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## Doa mahfil for AMA Muhith today

STAR REPORT

A doa mahfil for former finance minister Abul Maal Abdul Muhith will be held at Gulshan Central (Azad) mosque after Asr prayers today.

In a statement, his family requested all of his well-wishers to join the programme for the salvation of his departed soul.

Muhith was a Language Movement veteran and valiant freedom fighter. He was elected member of parliament from Sylhet-1 constituency.

He passed away soon after midnight on April 30 in Dhaka.

He was laid to rest at his family graveyard in Rainagar, Sylhet.

He left behind his wife Sabia Muhith, daughter Samina, sons Shahed and Samir, and many family members, friends and admirers.

## BANGLADESH-US TIES US Congress commemorates 50th anniversary

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

The US Congress recently introduced a bipartisan resolution, commemorating the 50th anniversary of the establishment of Bangladesh-US diplomatic relations.

Democratic Congressman Brian Higgins of New York on Tuesday introduced the resolution in the Congress, which has been co-sponsored by Republican Congresswoman Amata Coleman Radewagen of American Samoa.

The resolution was referred to the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, stated Bangladesh embassy in Washington yesterday.

The resolution highlighted that the US and Bangladesh share a rich and multifaceted relationship, focusing on cooperation on a range of issues, including economic, security, governance, and development, to advance a shared vision of a free, open, inclusive, peaceful, and secure Indo-Pacific region.

The resolution mentioned the recognition of independent Bangladesh by the US on April 4, 1972, and subsequent acknowledgement of the recognition by then Prime Minister Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman through a letter to President Nixon on April 9, 1972.

It also recognised the joint efforts made by Bangladesh and the US in combating the Covid-19 pandemic, as well as the contributions of the two countries towards assisting Rohingyas who fled genocide in Myanmar.

The Congress resolution also cited Senator Edward Kennedy's role in 1971 in support of Bangladesh's

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As the city is still relatively quiet owing to Eid holidays, the rickshaw-pullers have also been able to catch a break from their routines. Their vehicles were seen securely parked with chains at a stand in Tejaon area. This photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: PRABIR DAS



# Dhaka's air quality turns 'moderate'

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka has seen a significant improvement in its air quality this week due to nor'westers, seasonal showers as well as fewer people on the city roads owing to Eid holidays.

With an air quality index (AQI) score of 86, categorised as "moderate", at 12:00am yesterday, the city ranked 16th in the list of world cities with the worst air quality.

AQI is an index for reporting daily air quality. It's used by government agencies to inform people how clean or polluted their city's air is, and what associated health effects might they have. An AQI between 101 and 200 is considered 'unhealthy', between 201 and 300 is considered 'poor' and reading of 301 to 400 is considered 'hazardous', posing serious health risks to residents.

India's Delhi, the UAE's Dubai and Chile's Santiago occupied the first three spots in the list, with AQI scores of 180, 172 and 162, respectively.

In Bangladesh, the AQI is based on five pollutants – particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5), NO2, CO, SO2 and ozone.

Dhaka has long been grappling with air pollution issues. Its air quality usually turns unhealthy in winter and improves during the monsoon.



**Even after Eid holidays have ended, the roads are relatively free of traffic jams. The Dhaka-Chattogram highway was seen to be almost empty -- a rare scene that acted as a refreshing contrast to the usual heavy congestion. This photo was taken yesterday from Dhaka's Matuail area .**

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## Three local startups get int'l funding

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Three Bangladeshi startups -- Shuttle, Markopolo and MedEasy -- recently received funding from Accelerating Asia, a Singapore-based venture capitalist firm and startup accelerator.

Shuttle received a follow-on funding, as it previously raised \$7,50,000 in its seed round, which was led by the firm. The mass-transit startup operates to make daily commutes affordable and convenient for female commuters.

Markopolo is a deep-tech company that creates AI-based digital marketing assistants, driven by millions of relational datasets. The assistants allow automated campaign creation, management of ads and social platforms, and enables users to launch targeted ads and receive real-time analytics on their performance.

MedEasy is a digital healthcare platform that provides medical consultations via video and home delivery of medicines through its online pharmacy.

Currently, it has 75,000 users and over 100 doctors registered on its platform. In 2021, MedEasy processed over 20,000 medicine orders and witnessed high revenue growth.

## Build climate-tolerant

FROM PAGE 3

She said the AL government has been implementing many mega-projects, including Padma Bridge, metro rail, elevated expressway, Karnaphuli tunnel, LNG terminal, Rooppur Nuclear Power Plant and 100 special zones, apart from the development of road, rail and waterway communication.

The engineers are playing key roles in these development projects, the prime minister said.

Recalling the government's constant support for engineers, she said the AL government

always remains beside them.

During its 1996-2001 era, the AL government allocated 10 bighas of land for construction of IEB building, while it provided a total of Tk 46 crore for the building, Sheikh Hasina said.

Hasina hoped that the engineers would play a leading role in building a prosperous and developed Sonar Bangla, dreamt by Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, by 2041.

She wished success for all programmes taken on the occasion of Engineers' Day.

## US Congress

FROM PAGE 3

independence, and President Bill Clinton's visit to Bangladesh in 2000.

It also mentioned President Joe Biden's

pledge made in 2021 to contribute to climate aid for Bangladesh. The Bangladesh embassy in Washington has welcomed the House resolution.

## Suspension

FROM PAGE 5

delivery of the imported goods to their destination, like factories and other establishments, remains poor due to the holidays.

Only 705 TEUs of import containers were moved from the port in 24 hours till 8:00am on Thursday. On a normal working day, 3,500 to 4,000 TEUs of import containers are delivered to their destination.

They are assuming that it would take a few more days to return to the normal rate of deliveries, as

most factories still remain closed.

CPA Secretary Md Omar Faruk, however, said although the number of waiting vessels have increased due to poor activity during Eid holidays, there is nothing to fear about.

He hoped that the situation would return to normalcy in the next six to seven days.

Brushing aside fears of congestion, the secretary said the port still has enough space in its yards.

# 'Who is BNP's leader?'

Asks Quader, says nat'l polls will be held on time

UNB, Feni

The national election will be held on time, following the constitution, said Road Transport and Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader.

"The national election will not be held under a neutral government but under the country's neutral Election Commission," the AL general secretary told reporters in Feni on Thursday night.

"The Election Commission of Bangladesh will be in charge of all the ministries during the polls

period," he said.

During his interaction with the media, the minister, however, raised questions over the top leadership of BNP.

"Who is their leader? If BNP comes to power, who will head the government?" he asked.

"The constitution of Bangladesh is praised throughout the world. So, why should the government complain to foreign diplomats for persuading BNP to fight the election? Anyway, it will be held on time as per the constitution," he added.



## Fire guts valuables of two shops

STAFF CORRESPONDENT,

Ctg

A fire gutted valuables of two shops, worth around Tk 1.5 lakh, near KB Aman Ali Road's Bara Miah Mosque in the port city yesterday morning.

The incident took place around 10:45am, said Shahidul Islam, senior station officer of Chandanpura fire service, adding that the fire originated from an electric short circuit.

Two fire service units rushed to the spot and managed to douse the blaze after 25 minutes.

## An 18-year wait

FROM PAGE 3

day against 19 people, including Nurul Islam Sarkar, a Jubo Dal leader.

On April 16 in 2005, a Dhaka court handed death sentence to 22 people and life-term to six. A decade later, on June 15, 2016, the HC confirmed death penalty of six persons, including Nurul.

The HC, however, commuted capital punishment for seven others to life imprisonment, upheld life term for two and acquitted 11 of charges.

Currently, five appeals challenging the HC verdict are pending with the apex court, including those by Ahsanullah's brother Motiur Rahman, the government and convicts, attorney general office sources said.

In some appeals, death penalty has been sought for all convicts, while convicts have sought for acquittal from all convictions and sentences in theirs.

## When a little help

FROM PAGE 5

organisation's supervision till they discover the next chapter of their lives. They provide different scholarship stipends and grants.

The organisation is looking into vocational training options for graduates as well.

"The Covid-19 situation made a lot of families move to native homes or engage their children to work. We try to intervene in this situation by talking to their guardians and finding a solution to their issues. Sometimes children drop out anyway but we still try to use our resources to help them continue their education," said Shapla Khatun, headteacher of the Kallayanpur centre.

"Our students love to learn and we try to make education an enjoyable experience for them. Some of them are attracted to come to school for the recreational activities we have for them. It keeps them motivated to keep coming to school," she added.

Besides the SpandaanB School, the organisation hosts a total of 19 Projects. The Haridashi Woman and Child Care and Nutrition Centre (HWCCNC) and Rural Talent Advancement Project (RTAP) are some of those.

"We also provide relief aid to victims of climate-related calamities," said Zakia Afrin, general secretary of SpandaanB.

"Over the years, SpaandanB saw the reach and scope of its projects grow manifold, primarily due to constant championship by its donors and well-wishers. Expatriate Bangladeshis living in the USA constitute a large portion of the donor base. However, of late, there has been a considerable upsurge in local benefactors from within Bangladesh," said Zakia.

"The bravery and resilience of Bangladeshi people are our motivation. No matter how small, we all can contribute to create a better Bangladesh," she added.

## 7 killed, 3 hurt

FROM PAGE 5

killed as a car ran them over on Dhaka-Araihaaz Road on Thursday, reports UNB.

Laden (18) and his friend Riyadh (20), both

from Narsingdi, died on the spot, said Araihaaz Police Station OC Anichur Rahman Mollah. The duo fell off the bike while trying to overtake the car at high speed, he said.

## A digital disaster

FROM PAGE 3

"We sell tickets online to control the crowd. Tickets are available online at a fixed price," said Khondoker Mostafizur Rahman, director general of Bangladesh National Museum.

When asked about tickets being sold in black, the director general said, "We have always advised visitors not to buy tickets from the black market. We have formed a team to regulate this phenomenon; they monitor the sales regularly."

"Several people were

arrested and handed over to police for their involvement in trading tickets in the black market," Mostafizur added.

The scene was quite similar at Ahsan Manzil yesterday. When this correspondent was looking for a ticket, a shopkeeper next door said, "Wait a little while. We have a man who can get you a ticket of Tk 20 for Tk 50 to 200."

"I've come to visit Ahsan Manzil with my family but there are no tickets -- both at the counter and online. We bought five tickets for Tk 80 each [in black],"

said Rokon Mia from Laxmibazar.

Utpal Chandra, another resident from Segunbagicha, told this correspondent that he bought four tickets for Tk 100.

Md Serajul Islam, deputy keeper of Ahsan Manzil, said limited tickets have been arranged for visitors to purchase online after the authorities' decision.

"We cannot go outside to control the black market situation but still try to monitor, with the help of our security guards."

**গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার**  
তত্ত্বাবধায়ক প্রকৌশলী, সওজ, এর কার্যালয়  
সড়ক সার্কেল, কুমিল্লা।  
☎ ০৮১-৬৪৭২৪  
e-mail: [secom@rhd.gov.bd](mailto:secom@rhd.gov.bd)  
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তারিখঃ ২২ বৈশাখ ১৪২৯ বঙ্গাব্দ  
০৫ মে ২০২২ খ্রিস্টাব্দ

**“দরপত্র বাতিল বিজ্ঞপ্তি”**

অনিবার্য কারণ বশতঃ Invitation Ref No-35.01.1933.009.174.07.002.22-416; তারিখ- ০৫/০৪/২০২২ খ্রিঃ মোতাবেক আহবানকৃত “Operation, Maintenance and related services of Rest Area having modern facilities for vehicle, drivers/operators at Nimshar (Ch. 75+500 km) on Dhaka-Chattogram National Highways under Road Circle, Cumilla.” সংক্রান্ত দরপত্রটি এতদ্বারা বাতিল করা হলো।

(মোহাম্মদ জিয়াউল হায়দার)  
পরিচিতি নং-৬০১৯৩৩  
তত্ত্বাবধায়ক প্রকৌশলী (চঃদাঃ), সওজ  
সড়ক সার্কেল, কুমিল্লা।

জিডি-৯০৬

**গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার**  
স্থানীয় সরকার প্রকৌশল অধিদপ্তর  
নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলীর কার্যালয়  
ফরিদপুর  
[www.lged.gov.bd](http://www.lged.gov.bd)

Memo No. 46.02.2900.000.07.001.21.1577

**e-Tender Notice No. 58/2021-22 ( OTM )**

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Package No	Name of work
01.	694557	FDIRIDP/F/21-22/ UNR-SR/743	Construction of 25.00mLong PSC Girder Bridge on Saltha GC(Khalishdubi)-Balibhadradi Boarder via Ramkantapur Bazar over Radhkhali Khal at Ch.6650.00m under Saltha Upazila, Dist.Faridpur [Road ID No-329854109(New), DPP ID No-329853002]
02.	694556	FDIRIDP/F/21-22/ VR-UZR-SR/ 740	Part A:Construction of 24.00m long RCC girder bridge on Kawlibera UP Office-Kazibari Mosque road at Ch.150.00m under Bhanga Upazila, Dist.Faridpur [Road ID No-329105073] Part B:Construction of 15.00m Long RCC girder bridge on Kalamridha GC-Pulia R&H road at Ch.250.00m under Bhanga Upazila, Dist.Faridpur [Road ID No-329102005]
03.	689364	SupRB/Farid/Replace/ 21-22/W-260	Construction of 26.00m long PSC Girder Bridge on Alfadanga GC-Berihat GC Road (Starting from Alfadanga R&H Local Bus Stand) at Chainage:7820m under Replacement Category [329032005]

This is an 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 on line through any registered banks branches **up to 4.00 PM on 30-05-2022, last submission time up to 12.30PM on 31-05-2022.** Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

(K. M. Faruk Hossain)  
Executive Engineer  
Phone No: 0631-63574  
e-mail: [xen.faridpur@lged.gov.bd](mailto:xen.faridpur@lged.gov.bd)

GD-907



# Call it magic, call it miracle

## Unexplored waterfall found in Moulvibazar

MINTU DESHWARA

Right beside the famous Humhum waterfall in Moulvibazar's Kamalganj stands another unexplored waterfall. Locally called "Fikol Jhorna", the fall is surrounded by a few hills. It stands a hundred feet above a hilltop.

Journalist Sajidur Rahman Saju discovered the fall in the border area of Kamalganj a month ago.

"It's not only a miracle but also a beautiful place. The fall is also home to various unknown wildflowers and fruits," he said.

"The fall is gorgeous in itself and is also accompanied by wild trees on both sides of the road," said Ripon Dey, an environmental activist.

"It's a treat for those who love trekking. The rugged slopes, thick forest and mysterious stones, the water from the peak, all add to its magical beauty, thrill and excitement."

Kamalganj UNO Ashekul Haque said Kamalganj is already a prosperous upazila in Moulvibazar, with Lawachhara National Park, Rajkandi Reserve Forest, Humhum waterfalls, Madhabpur Lake and Dhalai border, the memorial monument of Birshreshtha Sepoy Hamidur Rahman residing in it.

Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, Sylhet divisional forest officer of Wildlife Management and Nature Conservation Division, said the fall has outstanding scenes to offer.

Monir Mia, an auto-rickshaw driver in Kamalganj, said the fall is yet to get huge tourist attention and is still quite unexplored.



Locally called "Fikol Jhorna", this recently discovered waterfall stands right beside the famous Humhum waterfall in Moulvibazar's Kamalganj. The rugged slopes, thick forest and mysterious stones, and the water from the peak, all make this unexplored fall quite a sight for tourists.

PHOTO: STAR

## Two arrested over rape of 12-yr-old in port city

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Police yesterday arrested two men on charge of raping a 12-year-old girl in the port city.

The arrestees are Md Jashim (50) and Shakil Ahmed (29).

Both were arrested from Chattogram city, said Khairul Alam, inspector (investigation) of Bayezid Bostami Police Station.

Earlier, the girl's elder brother filed a case under the Women and Children Repression Prevention Act on Thursday night with Bayezid Bostami Police Station, accusing Jashim and Shakil.

According to the case statement, the incident took place on Sunday.

The girl's family members said Jashim and Shakil took the girl to a nearby house in the city and raped her.

After the 12-year-old returned home, she told her family members what had happened and they admitted her to Chattogram Medical College Hospital (CMCH) for medical tests yesterday.

PRAYER  
TIMING

MAY 7

Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4:15	12:45	4:45	6:21	7:45
JAMAAT 4:50	1:15	5:00	6:24	8:15

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

# Suspension of activities for Eid congests Ctg port

## Container vessels not leaving port, as work delayed

DWAIPAYAN BARUA, Ctg

Untimely loading and unloading of containers has congested Chattogram port, the country's premier seaport, with container vessels, which remain anchored due to the disruption.

As of Thursday afternoon, as many as 19 container vessels had been waiting at the outer anchorage for getting berthed, according to data from the port authority's traffic department. Usually, five to six vessels wait to get berthed on a normal day.

Port users said loading and unloading of import and export containers were initially disrupted on the night of Shab-e-Qadr, when jetty workers, who are appointed by private berth operators, stopped working during the night shift.

That disruption led to vessels

**Chattogram Port Authority (CPA) announced that loading and unloading activities at jetties would remain suspended for only eight hours, from 8:00am to 4:00pm, on Eid day. But jetty workers reportedly suspended activities at container jetties around 4:00pm on Monday, the day before Eid, and resumed work after 9:00am on Wednesday, a day after Eid.**

overstaying at the jetties, and the situation exacerbated during Eid holidays.

Earlier, Chattogram Port Authority (CPA) announced that loading and unloading activities at jetties would remain suspended for only eight hours, from



8:00am to 4:00pm, on Eid day.

But jetty workers reportedly suspended activities at container jetties around 4:00pm on Monday, the day before Eid, and resumed work after 9:00am on Wednesday, a day after Eid.

Due to the suspension, the vessels that got berthed on Sunday overstayed for two days at the jetties.

For example, Panama-flagged container vessel OEL Shasta berthed at GCB jetty 9 on Sunday with 928 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent unit) of import containers.

As jetty operations remained suspended, all import containers could be discharged by 10:00pm on Wednesday, after jetty activities resumed, said Mohammad Zakirul Islam, deputy manager of M/s Karnaphuli Limited, the ship's local agent firm.

Later, export containers were loaded on the vessel, which left the port yesterday. If there was no disruption, it could have left

on Wednesday, Zakirul said.

Another vessel -- SOL Promise, carrying 915 TEUs of import containers -- berthed at NCT jetty 3 on Sunday. Although all import containers were unloaded by noon on Monday, loading of export containers got delayed.

Muntasir Rubayat, head of operations at GBX Logistics, the ship's local agent, said following resumption of activities on Wednesday, they started loading export containers and completed doing so by Thursday night.

The vessel left yesterday as well.

This usually happens during Eid holidays every year, said Rubayat.

Due to the delays, the number of container vessels waiting to get berthed is increasing.

Meanwhile, port users fear that when these vessels berth in the coming days, containers will pile up at port yards, as

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7

## 7 killed, 3 hurt in road accidents

STAR REPORT

Seven people were killed and three injured in road accidents in four districts during the last two days, according to reports from our correspondents and a news agency.

In Madaripur, two friends were killed as a motorcycle they were riding on fell into a roadside ditch in Sadar upazila yesterday.

The accident occurred on Dhaka-Khulna highway at Tatibari area around 8:30am, as the motorcyclist lost control over the vehicle, said Arshaf Uddin Ahaman, sub-inspector of Mostafapur Highway Police Outpost, quoting locals.

Ashiq Mia (25) died on the spot and Titu Hossain (28) succumbed to his injuries on the way to Faridpur Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujib Medical College Hospital, he said.

In Chapainawabganj, a girl was killed as an auto-rickshaw hit her while she was crossing the road at Balikpara intersection in Sadar upazila yesterday.

Following the accident around 10:00am, Shamia Shifa (5), daughter of Raihan from Rajshahi's Puthia upazila, succumbed to her injuries on the way to a hospital, said Mozaffor Hossain, officer-in-charge of Sadar Police Station.

Police detained auto-rickshaw driver Al Amin (26) from the spot.

Meanwhile, a man died after a motorcycle hit an engine-run rickshaw van carrying him at Nalbona area in Shibganj upazila around 9:45am yesterday.

Abdur Rashid (58) from Shibganj was killed on the spot, said Shibganj Police Station OC Jubaeer Ahmed.

The motorcyclist fled the scene, said the OC.

In Joypurhat, a man was killed and three persons were injured after a truck, easy-bike and motorcycle collided at Shimultol village in Panchbibbi upazila yesterday.

The identity of the deceased could not be known immediately, said police.

The injured -- Mohan Hossain (20) from Sorail, Golzar Hossain (30) from Nilatpara, and Joyanal Hossain (60) from Mridhanpara in Panchbibbi -- were taken to Panchbibbi Upazila Health Complex.

The accident happened around 3:00pm, said Panchbibbi Police Station OC Polash Chandra Deb.

In Narayanganj, two youths riding a bike were

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

# When a little help goes a long way

## SpaandanB, an expatriate initiative for educating underprivileged children in Bangladesh

NAZIFA RAIDAH

When the pandemic hit, many displaced and impoverished families moved back to their native homes to survive the difficult time. Sujon had just got promoted to the fifth grade a bit before the pandemic started and his reality was no different.

The 11-year-old moved back to Narail for some time and then, forced by poverty, started working in a store near his abandoned Dhaka residence. He feared that his days of attending school were over.

After learning about Sujon, Mostafizur Rahman, associate director of SpaandanB, paid him a visit at the store. He had a conversation with the store owner and tried convincing him to allow Sujon to continue his studies once schools reopened.

After persistent effort, Sujon was back in school again.

This is how-- SpaandanB, a non-profit organisation created by expatriate Bangladeshi- Americans -- makes a



difference. The organisation embarked on its journey in 1998. It was born out of the initiative of a few expatriates who wanted to give back to their country.

Headquartered in San Francisco Bay area, SpaandanB maintains its

operational footprint in Bangladesh through the Dhaka office.

In 2011, SpaandanB Bangladesh office established two primary education centres in Dhaka -- one in Kallyanpur and the other in Gabtoli. Since then

SpaandanB has established or co-established four education centres, expanding in Mohammadpur.

"We used to find kids roaming around the area, selling different items or working at shops or as human-haulier assistants and talk to them. Most were interested to go to school. We asked them to make us meet with their parents. After talking to them, most of these children got the permission to be enrolled in school," Mostafizur told The Daily Star.

"Our journey had started with just 1,200 students, 29 teachers and seven support staff. The first batch of students who enrolled here will be giving SSC this year," he added.

"We provide the students with uniforms, books, food and school supplies so that they can have a proper formal education experience," informed the assistant director.

Students study up to 8th grade at the SpaandanB schools before moving on while remaining under the

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

## College student found dead in Rajshahi

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Police recovered the body of a college student near a railway track in Belpukur area of Rajshahi's Puthia upazila yesterday morning.

The deceased Hasibur Rahman Sagor (19) went missing on Wednesday, according to Belpukur Police Station Officer-in-Charge Md Moniruzzaman. He was an 11th-grader at Belpukur Ideal Degree College.

Sagor's father Sahad Ali said he went missing after going to Green Valley Park in Natore's Lalpur upazila on Wednesday afternoon with friends. Sahad lodged a general diary with Belpukur police on the same night.

At 10:00am yesterday, Sagor's relatives found his body, which had injury marks on the head, and informed police.

The area where the body was found is under jurisdiction of General Railway Police in Ishwardi. Officers went to the scene at noon and recovered the body.

"We will send the body to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital morgue for autopsy after preparing the inquest report," said Ishwardi GRP Station OC Gopal Karmaker.



## Tories suffer loses in local elections

REUTERS, London

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservative Party lost control of traditional strongholds in London and suffered setbacks elsewhere in local elections, with voters punishing his government over a series of scandals.

As early results suggested Johnson, a former London mayor, was losing support in southeastern England, his supporters moved in quickly yesterday to say it was not time to oust a leader they said could still "get things done" to help the economy.

Johnson's party was ousted in Wandsworth, a low-tax Conservative stronghold since 1978, part of a trend in the British capital where voters used the elections to express anger over a cost-of-living crisis and fines imposed on the prime minister for breaking his own Covid-19 lockdown rules.

For the first time, the opposition Labour Party won the council of Westminster, a district where most government institutions are located. The Conservatives also lost control of the borough of Barnet, which has been held by the party in all but two elections since 1964.

Johnson became the first British leader in living memory to have broken the law while in power when he was fined last month for attending a birthday gathering in his office in 2020, breaking pandemic social distancing rules then in place.

## ‘Science doesn’t LIE, Modi does’ India’s Congress seeks higher compensation for Covid deaths

REUTERS, New Delhi

India's main opposition Congress party yesterday demanded a hefty rise in compensation for the families of those who died of Covid-19, after the World Health Organization estimated the country's toll was nearly 10 times the reported figure.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has rejected the WHO estimate released on Thursday that 4.7 million people died in India as a result of the pandemic until last year, when hospitals ran out of oxygen and beds due to a record wave driven by the Delta variant.

India has reported only 524,002 Covid-19 deaths - the most after the United States and Brazil - with more than 43 million infections. Actual infections are believed to be in the hundreds of millions in the country of 1.35 billion people.

"Science doesn't LIE. Modi does," Congress's second-in-command, Rahul Gandhi, said on Twitter, citing the WHO report. "Respect families who have lost loved ones."

He asked the government to compensate the families of each person dying of Covid with 400,000 rupees. The government currently gives 50,000 once deaths are confirmed to be from Covid.

A government spokesperson did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The government rejected the WHO estimates as the "validity and robustness of the models used and methodology of data collection are questionable".



This photo taken on Thursday shows rescuers carrying a survivor out of a collapsed six-storey building in Changsha, central China's Hunan province. Fifty-three people died in the tragedy authorities said yesterday. Illegal construction has been identified as the cause of the disaster.

PHOTO: AFP

## HEATWAVE CAUSED POWER CRISIS India doubles down on coal usage

Most of 23 heatwave-prone states ready mitigation plan

REUTERS

India is planning to reopen more than 100 coal mines previously considered financially unsustainable, a government official said yesterday, as a power crisis forces the world's third-biggest greenhouse gas emitter to double down on the dirty fuel.

The country's electricity demand touched a record high in April as nearly three in four of India's 1.35 billion people endured the hottest pre-summer months in decades.

Surging use of air conditioning triggered the worst power crisis in more than six years last month, and though temperatures have eased in recent days, they are forecast to rocket again soon.

The world's second-largest producer, importer and consumer of coal after China now expects additional output of 75-100 million tonnes of the fuel in the next two-to-three years from the reopened mines, Jain said. India produced 777.2 million tonnes of the fuel in the year ended March 31 and burnt over a billion tonnes.

India's power minister last month asked states to continue importing coal for the next three years, citing domestic coal shortages and higher demand. His ministry has also evoked an emergency law in a bid to restart generation at some idle power plants meant to use imported coal and not operating because of financial reasons.

Meanwhile, some 80 per cent of Indian states are prone to heatwaves and most have plans ready to alter office and school timings as well as working hours for labourers to avoid the hottest time of day when necessary, a government official told Reuters yesterday.

The National Disaster Management Authority



(NDMA) has categorised 23 of India's 28 states and some 100 cities and districts as being at risk of suffering extreme heat. Nineteen states have already made their own heat-action plans and some others are working on them, said NDMA's policy and planning adviser, Kunal Satyarthi.

"There were only nine a few years back but currently 23 are recognised as heatwave-prone states," he said. "Cities have become heat islands, so a lot of them are drafting their own plans."

He said the plans include reducing people's exposure to heat, arranging drinking water in public places and other interventions.

The western state of Maharashtra has also planned to modify market hours, provide public shelters, sprinkle mist in public places and keep ice bags at public health centres, according to the NDMA website. Long-term measures include planting more trees, rainwater harvesting, providing shelter for traffic police and using green nets for shade in market areas, it adds.

## Karine Jean-Pierre named as first Black W House press secy

AFP, Washington

US President Joe Biden on Thursday named Karine Jean-Pierre as the next White House press secretary, the first Black person to hold the high-profile post. Jean-Pierre, who will also be the first openly LGBTQ+ person in the role, will replace Jen Psaki, under whom she served as deputy, from May 13. The 44-year-old Jean-Pierre, who has a daughter with her partner, a CNN journalist, has already taken to the famed podium in the White House's James S Brady Press Briefing Room as Psaki's number two. From May, she'll take center stage at the daily White House press conference, which is broadcast live and highly scrutinized. Before her, only one other Black woman, Judy Smith, had been deputy White House press secretary, during George HW Bush's presidency in 1991.



## Omicron as severe as other Covid variants: US study

REUTERS

The Omicron variant of the SARS-CoV2 virus is intrinsically as severe as previous variants, according to a preprint version of a large US study that counters assumptions in other studies that it was more transmissible but less severe. The findings, which estimated Omicron's severity after accounting for the impact of vaccines, should reinforce the importance of inoculations and booster shots, experts said. Vaccines helped keep hospitalizations and deaths relatively low during the Omicron surge compared with previous variants. The study, which is undergoing peer review at Nature Portfolio, was posted on Research Square on May 2.

## Three Israelis killed in axe attack

AFP, ELAD

Israel conducted a large-scale manhunt yesterday for two Palestinians suspected of killing three Israelis in an axe attack that came as the Jewish state marked its founding. The attack was staged on Thursday night in Elad, a central city mainly populated by ultra-Orthodox Jews. Witnesses said two assailants leapt from a car swinging axes at passers-by, leaving three dead and four wounded, before fleeing in the same vehicle. Prior to Thursday's incident, a string of attacks since March 22 had killed 15 people in separate attacks inside Israel. A total of 27 Palestinians and three Israeli Arabs have died during the same period.

## Road crash

FROM PAGE 12

"We will be able to assess the child's physical condition after around twelve hours," the doctor added.

Police seized the truck. But its driver and helper managed to flee, the OC said.

## Asian Games

FROM PAGE 12

China's financial centre Shanghai.

The OCA said in a statement after its executive board meeting in Tashkent that the Hangzhou organising committee (HAGOC) had been well prepared to deliver the Games despite the "global challenges".

"However, the ... decision was taken by all the stakeholders after carefully considering the pandemic situation and the size of the Games," it added.

The new dates for the Games would be announced "in the near future".

Meanwhile, the Asian Youth Games, scheduled for December in Shantou, have been cancelled altogether. Tashkent will host its next edition in 2025.

Shanghai said on Friday it has brought China's worst outbreak of Covid-19 under effective control following a month-long lockdown of nearly 25 million people.

## Desperate trips on deadly

FROM PAGE 12

time last year.

Frontex data represent the detections of illegal border-crossing rather than the number of persons, as the same person may cross the external border several times.

In the past five years, 22,637 illegal border crossings by Bangladeshis were made on Central Mediterranean Sea route alone, which falls between Libya and Italy, Frontex data show.

Last year, Bangladeshis made 7,848 illegal border crossings on Central Mediterranean Sea route, up from previous year's 4,447.

According to Brac Migration Programme, people from eight to 10 districts across Dhaka, Faridpur and Sylhet regions spend up to Tk 15 lakh each to migrate to Europe illegally.

Shariful Hasan, head of Brac's Migration Programme, said those who attempt to migrate

to Europe illegally are not necessarily from the low-income groups.

Many of them opt to reach Europe to change their "social status", he said.

Brac has found 18 different routes that traffickers use for illegal migration to Europe from Bangladesh, Shariful said.

Now traffickers have become more active in the Middle East targeting "unsuccessful" Bangladeshi migrant workers there to traffic them to Europe, he said.

He added inter-governmental action is required to end migrant trafficking since it cannot be done by one country alone.

Shakirul Islam, chairperson of Oviabashi Karmi Unnayan Program, said creating legal channels is essential to reduce illegal way of migration.

Citing Bangladesh government's recent deal with Greece to send workers there legally, Shakirul said such opportunities should

be opened up in other European countries.

As a "champion" of Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM), Bangladesh can raise the issue of illegal migration in different global forums, he suggested.

Arfanul Haque, labour welfare counsellor at Bangladesh Embassy in Italy, said Italy started taking seasonal and non-seasonal workers from Bangladesh and other countries.

Besides, Bangladesh is trying to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with Italy for legal migration of workers from Bangladesh, he told this newspaper by phone.

He added Bangladesh government is trying to address illegal migration while at community level in Italy, the embassy tries to build awareness among Bangladeshis to discourage their relatives back home to take illegal migration.

## 10 injured as MP's relatives

FROM PAGE 2

the family members of the lawmaker, he alleged.

As the toll collectors were verifying the information, some youths got out of cars and started arguing with the toll plaza staffers, Asaduzzaman said.

At one point, they beat up toll collectors, entered

the office and vandalised it, he said.

The injured staffers are: Security Supervisor Russell, staffers Babul, Subaj and Mahbub.

Contacted, MP Kaniz alleged that the toll plaza staffers first beat up Ashiq, her younger son's friend, and then snatched his mobile phone.

On information, the OCs of Patuakhali and Dumki police stations and other members of police and Rab rushed to the spot.

M o h a m m a d Moniruzzaman, officer-in-charge of Patuakhali Police Station, said legal actions would be taken in this regard after an investigation.

## Massive

FROM PAGE 12

incorporating all of the processes that control how ice flows off of the continent and into the oceans. Groundwater is currently a missing process in our models of ice flow," she added via email.

The ice cap that covers Antarctica isn't a rigid whole. Researchers in Antarctica have discovered, in recent years, hundreds of interconnected liquid lakes and rivers cradled within the ice itself. But this is the first time the presence of large amounts of liquid water in below-ice sediments has been found.

The authors of this study, which published in the journal Science on Thursday, concentrated on the 60-mile-wide Whillans Ice Stream, one of a half-dozen streams feeding the Ross Ice Shelf, the world's largest, at about the size of Canada's Yukon Territory.

Gustafson and her colleagues spent six weeks in 2018 mapping the sediments beneath the ice. The research team used geophysical instruments placed directly on the surface to execute a technique called magnetotelluric imaging.

The technique can detect the differing degrees of electromagnetic energy conducted by ice, sediment, bedrock, fresh water and salt water and create a map from these different sources of information.

## Public admin ministry scolds

FROM PAGE 2

secretary.

Quoting officials, media outlets then reported that at least 209 officers from the 27th BCS batch got promoted, but Sarwoer was not among them.

The public administration ministry order said, "On March 8 last year, Sarwoer Alam commented using his Facebook ID that most of the officials and employees who fought against injustice and irregularities in their careers have been deprived and oppressed at every point of their careers; and taking a stand against offences is itself an offence in this country."

As a government employee, he has acted inappropriately by making such a remark against

the government and the authorities which tarnished the image of the public administration, reads the order.

So, a departmental case was filed against him for misconduct as per the government employees (discipline and appeal) rules. The matter was investigated and it was proved that Sarwoer Alam made such a comment. That's why he has been reprimanded as a minor punishment, the order added.

Despite repeated attempts, The Daily Star could not reach Sarwoer yesterday over the phone for comments.

According to government service rules, an official will not be considered for promotion

for a year after being reprimanded.

Sarwoer joined the government service in 2008 as assistant commissioner. He was promoted to senior assistant secretary in 2014.

As an executive magistrate of the Rapid Action Battalion, Sarwoer earned praise from different quarters for his brave operations against food and medicine adulteration and anti-casino drives.

On October 25, 2020, he led an operation at the house of Dhaka-7 lawmaker Haji Mohammad Salim, also an Awami League leader, after a case was filed against his son Erfan Salim on charges of attacking Lt Wasif Ahmed Khan of Bangladesh Navy in the capital's Dhanmondi.

## Israel's top court paves way for razing eight Palestinian hamlets

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Israel's Supreme Court has rejected a petition against the eviction of more than 1,000 Palestinian inhabitants of a rural part of the occupied West Bank in an area which Israel has designated for military exercises.

After two decades of inconclusive legal manoeuvring, the Supreme Court issued its ruling

late on Wednesday, paving the way for the demolition of eight small villages in a rocky, arid area near Hebron known to Palestinians as Masafer Yatta and to Israelis as the South Hebron Hills.

In its ruling, the court said it had found the Palestinian dwellers, whose inhabitants have kept a distinct, generations-long nomadic way of life, making a living from farming and

herding, had not been permanent residents of the area when the Israeli military first declared it a firing zone in the 1980s.

Masafer Yatta residents and Israeli rights groups say that many of the Palestinian families have been permanently residing in the 3,000 hectares (7,400 acres) area since before Israel captured the West Bank, in the 1967 Middle East War.





James during the press conference.

PHOTO: COLLECTED



PHOTO: RAFIQUOL ISLAM RAF

On the night before Eid, ‘Guru’ James serenaded his fans with a new song, titled ‘I Love You’. Usually shy of the press, the rockstar was present at a press conference at Gulshan Club, where he opened up to journalists about his career, future, and more. The following is an excerpt of various questions answered by James, during the conference.

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT  
DESK

What made you wait for a decade to release a new song?

People – be it friends, family or fans, have always been asking me when I’ll release a new song or an album. However, I could not ignore my fans’ passionate requests, so I went ahead and made one.

What is “I Love You” about?  
Simply put, this is a song that I have dedicated to my fans – they are the lifeblood of my music. The song captures my love for them, and how they make me feel. In the music video, you can see that the audience is also with me, and that is by design,  
You had made it big in Bollywood, why can’t we see you more in that industry?  
I could have worked there more regularly if I wanted to. However, I would never leave my country for anything, it is just not possible for me.  
Everything is digital nowadays – we

barely have albums now. The industry is headed towards streaming music. What is your take on this?  
At some point, it all went digital. However, albums are also being revived. In fact, Bashundhara Digital and I are thinking of coming up with physical copies of the songs that we release. The singles will be anthologised by the album.  
Photography is also your passion. Is there anyone you want to take a photo of, but haven’t?  
I really want to capture Nirmalendu Goon through my lenses.



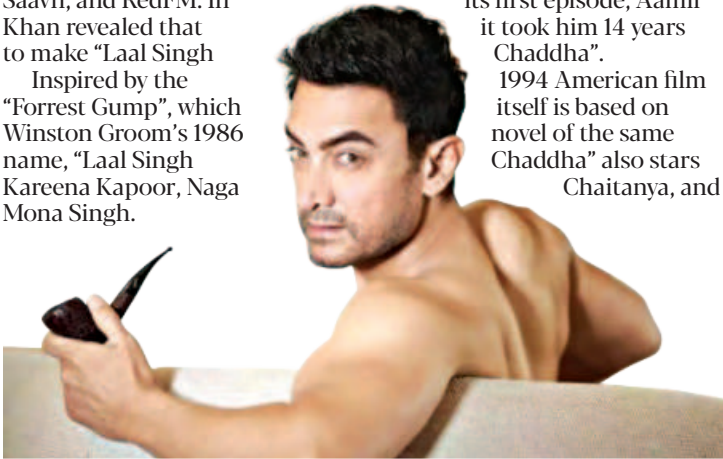
Fahmida Nabi’s ‘Maa’ to arrive on Mother’s Day

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Fahmida Nabi is set to release a new song, titled “Maa” this Mother’s Day. A music video for the song has already been shot, featuring eminent actress Dilara Zaman as a mother.  
“Mothers play an incomparable role in our lives,” Fahmida Nabi told The Daily Star. “I feel very lucky to be able to sing a song about mothers. I hope my fans and listeners appreciate my attempt.”  
On the other hand, two tracks by the renowned singer, “Emon Keno Hoy” and “Ami Tomar Shomadhite Eshchechi”, were released on her YouTube channel on Eid.

Aamir Khan launches his first ever podcast

As a part of an out-of-the-box promotional campaign for his upcoming film “Laal Singh Chaddha”, Bollywood superstar Aamir Khan has launched his very own podcast, a first in his career.  
The actor will communicate with his audience via the podcast, “Laal Singh Chaddha Ki Kahaniyaan”, where he will discuss behind-the-scenes anecdotes from the making of the film, and other intriguing “Laal Singh Chaddha” stories.  
The podcast is available on T-Series’ YouTube channel, Saavn, and RedFM. In its first episode, Aamir Khan revealed that it took him 14 years to make “Laal Singh Chaddha”.  
Inspired by the 1994 American film “Forrest Gump”, which itself is based on Winston Groom’s 1986 novel of the same name, “Laal Singh Chaddha” also stars Kareena Kapoor, Naga Mona Singh, Chaitanya, and



‘KGF 2’ OTT rights reportedly sold for Rs 320 crore

Prashanth Neel directorial “KGF 2” is the second-highest grossing film in India after “Baahubali: The Conclusion”, making over Rs 1,000 crore worldwide.  
The film has sealed a deal with an OTT platform for Rs 320 crore. “KGF: Chapter 1” is already streaming on Amazon Prime, and it is likely that the sequel will also be available there.



Crew, cinema halls ecstatic with ‘Shaan’

ZAHID AKBAR

Since the release of “Shaan”, it has been successful in cinema halls and cineplexes in Dhaka. The police action thriller is doing good business in Dhaka’s Madhumita, Shyamali Cinema Hall, Madhumita, and Blockbuster Cinema.

“Shaan has been houseful since its release,” says Mesbah Uddin Ahmed, senior manager of Star Cineplex. “Needless to say, ‘Shaan’ is number one, and it will only get better reception as time passes. This is great news for Bangla cinema.”  
Siam Ahmed is happy with the performance of his film. “Since release, I’ve received so much great feedback, it was honestly overwhelming,” says



The halls were filled to the brim with people, hoping to catch a glimpse of their favourite stars.



Fans pose with the lead stars.

the actor. “I hope my film could bring back some audiences to theatres. The reception is reminding me of the days of Poramon 2.”  
“The number of halls that are showcasing ‘Shaan’ will increase with time,” says director, M Raahim. “I am still in touch with many cinema hall owners, who could not air the film for various reasons.”  
Ananda Cinema Hall’s Jamil told The Daily Star that the viewers will

only increase as people start coming back to Dhaka. “The audience is showing interest in the movie, and that is great news for us,” he said.  
The leading pair of the film, Siam Ahmed and Puja Chery, have been going across halls in the capital to thank fans for their support for the film. The crew have been posting pictures on social media, depicting thousands of people flocking to theatres to catch the movie.



## What goes up, never comes down

How are consumers to deal with the continuous rise of edible oil prices?

WE are deeply concerned with yet another hike in the prices of edible oil, which will add to the ever-increasing woes of consumers already struggling to make ends meet on their limited incomes. The government has fixed the price of a litre of bottled soybean oil by 23.65 percent—the biggest such increase in Bangladesh’s history—reportedly to address an unprecedented crunch of the essential cooking item. Prior to Eid, when demand for it was at its peak, cooking oil all but disappeared from the market, following a ban by Indonesia on palm oil exports. It was the nail in the coffin of an already unstable market, which has had to confront rising production costs amid higher raw material prices in the international markets and rising shipping costs, supply disruptions and pent-up demand.

In addition to the external shocks, we have observed—with increasing alarm—how unscrupulous businessmen have created artificial crises in the domestic market in an effort to drive up prices over multiple occasions in the past year. In fact, we have penned many editorials urging authorities to take steps to reign in the price manipulations at each of the four stages of the value chain within the country, involving refiners, dealers or supply order traders, wholesale traders and retailers. Unfortunately, we are yet to see decisive action by the government against these actors despite detailed reports of such manipulations.

Over the past year, the price of edible oil has gone up eight times. While we have little control over the external shocks, the government can and must do more to ensure that it—and not the unscrupulous traders—is calling the shots in the domestic market and that it is representing the best interests of the consumers, not that of the traders. Meanwhile, given that the supply crunch in the international market will not ease anytime soon, the government must urgently find alternative sourcing destinations, alternative edible oils and take trade-related measures to maintain a smooth supply of edible oil in the local markets at affordable prices.

The commerce ministry is reportedly going to recommend that the National Board of Revenue (NBR) reduce the import duty on canola, sunflower and olive oil to 10 percent from the existing 32 percent. Given the current constraints, this would no doubt be a welcome move, but we can’t help but wonder if the benefits would actually trickle down to the consumers. We have observed how the government waiver of 15 percent value-added tax at the production stage and 5 percent at the retail level, and another 10 percent VAT cut at the import stage, had little effect in stabilising prices of edible oil. Will the government ensure that history doesn’t repeat itself? We urge them to open their eyes to the unending sufferings of the middle and working classes as they formulate policies to tackle the crisis.

## Brickfields ruining farmlands

Farmers must not suffer for brickfield owners’ business practices

IT’S a distressing reality that the country’s farmers are faced with an ever-spiraling problem of losing their lands and crops to the burgeoning brickfields, such as in Dinajpur’s Biral upazila. We are worried to learn that over a hundred acres of agricultural land are being devoured by brickfield owners, and that black fumes from the kiln are scorching the semi-ripe crops in the farmlands near them. Reportedly, this damage to farmers is being done for many seasons, but no permanent actions have been taken by the administration to drive off unscrupulous brickfield owners.

Besides destroying crops with their noxious fumes, brick kilns and brickfields also destroy the physical structure and fertility of the lands on which these are built. Not to mention the adverse effects they have on the health of the nearby population. Even if the brick kilns in farming areas are removed now, it will be many years before they regain their past fertility. A look around the outskirts of the cities and towns reveals that brickfield owners are unstoppable in expanding their reach, usually by greasing the palms of corrupt officials, who help them carry on with their business. It is indeed surprising that thousands of brickfields are operating throughout the country either with no permission from the Department of Environment (DoE) or with permission that expired long ago. Except for some occasional raids and closure of one or two brickfields, we do not hear of any sustained campaigns by the relevant ministries against these polluters. It is understandable that, with rapid urbanisation and industrialisation, demand for the traditionally built bricks is rising every year but it does not give the owners the right to operate without following government instructions. The laws of the land must be enforced to stop illegal brickfield owners from subjecting our already vulnerable environment to long-lasting damage.

According to the Food Planning and Monitoring Unit (FPMU) under the Ministry of Food, land used for agriculture declined at 0.26 per cent annually between 1976 and 2010—and faster after 2000 at 0.45 per cent. Other sources report that croplands have declined by one million hectares since 1976. Brickfields are one reason for such loss of agricultural land.

We urge the government to take necessary steps to reverse the situation. Experts mention cement blocks as the possible alternative to clay-made bricks, as used in many other countries. In addition, relevant authorities must ensure that brickfields are being operated legally and using the most environmentally-friendly methods possible. Farmers have enough to deal with in terms of unexpected financial hardship (such as the pandemic) and sudden weather disasters (flash floods and droughts). They cannot also be repressed by the misdoings of brickfield owners.

# Here’s what the 2022-23 budget must address



Dr Selim Raihan is a professor of the Department of Economics at the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh, and is executive director at the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling (SANEM). Email: selim.raihan@gmail.com

SELIM RAIHAN

THE national budget for the next fiscal year will be the third since the start of the Covid-19 crisis in March 2020. Can we expect it to address the current realities, contexts and challenges of Bangladesh?

The economy is on the path to recovery from the unprecedented economic and social crises induced by Covid-19. Several international and domestic factors, however, constrain the recovery process. People’s livelihoods were severely affected during Covid, and are yet to get back on track. Also, rising inflationary pressure in recent months is adding to people’s woes.

To help marginalised people, the government should prioritise economic recovery, job creation and inflation control in the next fiscal year’s budget. The ongoing Russia-Ukraine war and the persistent economic stress of Covid have disrupted global supply chains and driven up commodity prices.

The pressure of the current price hike is beyond the endurance level of the low-income people. Some are even curtailing their necessities, especially food. Though, as per government estimation, the food inflation rate is around six percent, according to recent estimates by SANEM, marginalised people have been facing double this rate while buying foodstuff. The official estimates of the food inflation rate depend on the food basket specified in the 2005 survey, but the food habits of people both in cities and villages have changed a lot in the last 17 years. These changes in food habits and poor people’s typical consumption baskets are not considered in the official estimates. This suggests that the actual situation is worse than what is officially stated.

In recent times, the prices of products in the international market have increased; so have shipping fares. However, the question is whether prices are rising at a higher rate in Bangladesh than in the international market. There is a lack of surveillance in this regard. Reliable data on the local production and the amount of import necessary is vital for maintaining the balance between supply and demand. Lack of information and supply-demand mismatch push up prices of goods. Some traders also take advantage of asymmetric information to bid for higher prices. Regular market supervision is needed to avoid such a situation.

The unpredictability of the geopolitical environment does not help the country’s recovery process, either. In such a



▲ VISUAL: TEENI AND TUNI

**In recent times, the prices of products in the international market have increased; so have shipping fares. However, the question is whether prices are rising at a higher rate in Bangladesh than in the international market.**

situation, we must keep a year-round eye on the international market. To monitor the international market, a permanent system must be established. This would aid in the formulation of better and more effective policies.

During the pandemic, severe flaws in social safety net programmes surfaced. There are concerns that an important

if these businesses fail to recover, the overall economy will not revive, leaving many people to keep struggling in the labour market. Micro and small enterprises have benefited the least from the government’s stimulus packages.

Because the private sector accounts for over 80 percent of total investment in the country, boosting private sector

portion of the support allocated to the SSN does not reach the poor due to identification problems. As a result, targeted groups continue to suffer. While local government authorities and officials compile beneficiary lists, there is no system in place to ensure accountability and transparency throughout the process. Therefore, substantial coordination between ministries is required. In addition, all safety net programmes must be consolidated onto a single platform. While the allocation for SSN programmes should be raised substantially, there is also a need to ensure coordination, accountability, and transparency in the overall process of allocation, distribution, and management of the programmes.

The government’s initiative to sell products at a lower cost by providing TCB “family cards” to 10 million families is commendable. However, the coverage must be expanded, as many low- and middle-income families, in addition to poorer families, are still unable to take advantage of this benefit. Along with TCB trucks, sales centres for beneficiaries could be set up across the country.

Most micro and small firms, which play an important part in the economy’s supply chain, are still struggling. The resulting supply chain disruption will continue to obstruct economic recovery at the intended pace. As the informal sector employs more than 85 percent of the workforce, a substantial portion of which is made up of micro and small companies,

investment is crucial for economic recovery. The indicators for private sector investment are still not encouraging. One of the main goals of the budget for 2022-23 should be to illustrate how to break the cycle of stagnant private sector investment, which has persisted over the past decade.

Bangladesh’s tax effort also continues to fall short of its potential. The tax-GDP ratio is less than nine percent and is one of the lowest in the world. The necessity for a prudent fiscal framework has become much more obvious than in the past. There are also expectations that the government will demonstrate some strong political will in implementing long-awaited vital reforms in the financial sector, the business environment, and in social sectors like health and education.

Sri Lanka’s situation also highlights the necessity of learning lessons on managing foreign debt and implementing development projects. Surely, there is the necessity for infrastructural development and mega projects. But considering their economic viability is extremely crucial. Avoiding unnecessary large-scale projects and conducting proper feasibility studies for development projects are extremely important. The projects which are already undertaken could become burdensome if the expenses eventually become exorbitantly high and it takes more time to implement them. We expect to see reflections of some strong directives in this regard in the upcoming budget.

### PROJECT ■ SYNDICATE

## The International Monetary System is More Unfit than Ever

Andrew Sheng is a distinguished fellow of the Asia Global Institute at the University of Hong Kong and a member of the UNEP Advisory Council on Sustainable Finance. Xiao Geng is chairman of the Hong Kong Institution for International Finance.

ANDREW SHENG and XIAO GENG

AFTER the 2008 global financial crisis, the world seemed ready to undertake meaningful reform of the international monetary system. But the promised structural changes never happened. And the recent spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank indicated that the current bout of global economic upheaval will similarly fail to spur transformation.

When the 2008 crisis rocked the global financial system, policymakers took radical action to stabilise it. Beyond government bailouts of distressed banks in the United States, the epicentre of the crisis, liquidity was expanded substantially through large-scale quantitative easing and foreign-currency swaps by central banks.

The obvious next step was regulatory reform, aimed at preventing future crises. To this end, more power was delegated to the Financial Stability Board, an international body focused on identifying and promoting strong regulatory, supervisory, and other financial-sector policies.

But critical reforms were thwarted by pushback from the financial community. Similarly, in the US, the tougher regulatory regime put in place after the crisis was subsequently weakened.

Meanwhile, the massive monetary expansion that had propped up the global economy generated new risks, with prolonged ultra-low interest rates encouraging short-term speculation and fueling asset bubbles, without increasing long-term productivity. At the same time,

the financial sector and ownership of wealth became far more concentrated.

Now, a new set of shocks are threatening to generate further upheaval. According to the Intergovernmental Group of Twenty-Four on International Monetary Affairs and Development, the most pressing challenges include debt distress among emerging market and developing economies (EMDEs), vaccine equity, the surge in inflation, and growing risks to financial stability.

Efforts to address such urgent challenges are largely piecemeal. For example, last August, the IMF approved a general allocation of special drawing rights equivalent to USD 650 billion. This expanded the IMF’s resources substantially, but the demands for funding have increased exponentially.

With the war in Ukraine generating severe increases in energy and food prices, which are hitting EMDEs particularly hard, the situation is set to deteriorate further.

More fundamentally, “urgent” and “important” are not the same thing. And there are some crucial structural-reform questions that the IMF and its most powerful stakeholders have not even begun to answer. Perhaps the most fundamental is whether the current US dollar-based system designed at the end of World War II can continue to provide global public goods.

That system has certainly worked well to foster globalisation, trade, financialisation, and overall growth during the largely peaceful post-WWII period, including the tense Cold War era. But it was not designed to deal with the complex challenges posed by climate change, pandemics, rapid technological innovation, rising inequality, long-term demographic change, and escalating geopolitical conflict. It certainly

was not intended to operate within a multipolar world order.

With the US dollar being weaponised through sanctions, it has become all too clear that the current system is far from neutral.

Moreover, the US is no longer the global hegemon. The world order now seems destined to split into two blocs, each with their own security structures, supply chains, technologies, and financial systems. As Bernard Snoy et d’Oppuers points out in a forthcoming book, when any national currency functions as a global currency, at least six types of instability ensue: environmental, economic, social, financial, political, and ideological.

Building a more stable international monetary system demands a shift to a truly global currency. The SDR is the most obvious candidate, backed by the Palais-Royal Initiative in 2011. But the US, which holds the most sway at the IMF, would not agree to turn the Fund into a quasi-central bank with the power to issue a supernational currency that would erode America’s “exorbitant privilege.”

Even if no national currency is likely to replace the dollar any time soon, there are two other avenues for reducing the dollar’s dominance as a means of payment and store of value: digital currencies and the creation and expansion of non-dollar-based payment systems.

The international monetary system is unsustainable. We can either reform it now or wait for a catastrophic crisis—an EMDE debt crisis on the scale of the Latin American and Asian financial crises in the 1980s and 1990s, a global bout of depression like that seen in the 1930s, or war among major powers—to force our hand.



# Blowing in the Media-wind



BLOWIN’  
IN THE  
WIND

SHAMSAD MORTUZA

Dr Shamsad Mortuza is the pro-vice chancellor of the University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB).

THERE’S a good chance your screen time increased significantly during this weeklong Eid break unless you are one of those reported one million outbound tourists who shored up in various travel destinations or one of those million others who journeyed within the country to visit your near and dear ones. For those of us who used our devices to get our share of the happy hormone as a temporary relief from our daily stress, the apparent lack of human touch during a highly social festive event indicates asocial behaviour, if not screen addiction. Some of us even committed the cardinal sin of binge-watching. As for me, I followed the Johnny Depp v Amber Heard court details, supplemented by a season of “Inventing Anna” on Netflix.

You must be chuckling by now thinking this op-ed is literally blowing in the wind. Well, by design, it is. When I started writing this weekly column almost three years back, I was inspired by the Nobel laureate Bob Dylan’s song in which the lyricist answers a series of hypothetical questions through hints reminding the audience that the answers were right before them. You do not necessarily need to say it aloud as long as you can internalise the riddles that surround you. I reserve my Friday morning to unwind thoughts that have been troubling me, to share them with the reader every Saturday. Writing for me is a journey in which the reader is a fellow passenger, and I can point out to them: Did you see that?

I started my career as a cub reporter with this paper during its inception in the early 1990s. I have drifted away to a relatively freer profession, but not without its share of fair criticism and odd controversies. I no longer have the nose

of sniffing or the ways of telling facts like that of a journalist. I do not know how my journalist friends even pursue such a risky career in a country that ranks the lowest among South Asian countries in terms of press freedom. According to the World Press Freedom Index 2022, Bangladesh now holds the 162nd slot, slipping 10 notches from its previous ranking.

VISUAL:  
SUSHMITA S PREETHA



I do not know how my journalist friends even pursue such a risky career in a country that ranks the lowest among South Asian countries in terms of press freedom.

I envy social scientists and data curators who can engage with realities with a dash of factual details, and shield them with facts and figures. As someone who teaches poetry, I deal with reality in its arcane form. I try to make the unfamiliar familiar, and vice versa. I teach my students to be critical thinkers with creative solutions to connect different discursive dots. My binge-watching sessions over the Eid break offered a rude awakening. Freedom of expression is a far cry even in countries ranked above ours.

Hollywood actress Amber Heard is being sued for defamation by her former husband, based on an op-ed she wrote for *The Washington Post*. The headline on the online version reads, “I spoke up against

sexual violence—and faced our culture’s wrath. That has to change.” The onus is on her to prove that she was a victim of domestic violence.

Depp, who previously lost a libel case against the UK-based *The Sun* for labelling the actor as a ‘wife-beater,’ is having a second go at his ex-wife for the damage that has been done to his

dirty laundry of the couple in a public courthouse in what has become a visual phenomenon. Heard is presented as a bipolar personality who is the “real” abuser in this toxic relationship. The media construct made the Heard team request a dismissal. They were not ready for the number of digital footprints that depicted the actress in a negative light.

How is this related to the true-crime drama in which a compulsive liar pretended to be a European heiress to con the upper echelon of New York? A young woman of Russian origin, raised in Germany, Anna Delvey suppressed her peasant surname of Sorokin and fashioned her life after glitzy magazines to pose as a socialite. She duped banks, hotels, and contacts by pretending to be a trust-fund heiress. Her success shows everything that is wrong with our society wrapped in ego bubbles. The promise of a pending fund made her pursue a dream of building a cultural hub in New York. She was convicted on multiple counts of grand larceny, indicted in 2017, and incarcerated from 2019 to 2021. The story was doggedly pursued by a journalist who later felt responsible for catapulting Anna to fame. Anna was very much a creation of the media. In the Netflix version, Vivian Kent of *Manhattan Magazine* is a hardcore investigative journalist who starts connecting the dots of Anna’s life. Then there is the other group of parasitic journalists who feed on the elites. When Anna traps her journalist “friend” from a fashion magazine into paying for a luxury trip to Morocco, Rachel Williams of *Vanity Fair* cooperates with the police to rat her out. The series thus pits one group of media people against the other. Vivian is trying to climb out of the “scribberia” of has-been journalists to reclaim her position through “inventing” Anna. Rachel is there to seduce Anna for her own benefit. In a Trump era, Anna was the ultimate “fake it till you make it” who took the media for a ride. And the relationship was mutual.

Can Media A be free unless it frees itself from Media B? The answer, my friend, is blowing in the wind.

## Does the world really have the West’s back on Ukraine?



Ashfaq Swapan is a writer and editor based in Atlanta, US.

ASHFAQ SWAPAN

THE war in Ukraine has spawned a mindless Russophobic war hysteria in the West that is appalling. It reminds me of my days in the US during the Iraq war. As Yogi Berra said, “It’s déjà vu all over again.”

The fierce moral posturing. The uncompromising Manichean worldview where the West is the knight in shining armour, and Russian President Vladimir Putin is evil incarnate. Just like Iraq’s Saddam Hussain, Yugoslavia’s Slobodan Milosevic or Syria’s Bashar al-Assad, or whoever America’s bogeyman *du jour* is.

This is a battle for a rules-based world order, we are told by the US and its supine western European allies, and if you’re not with us, you’re against us.

The bit about rules-based order will surely be news for the Palestinians, who are still waiting for their state for over half a century as Israel’s continuous illegal land grabbing includes most recently the annexation of East Jerusalem. We barely heard a peep when Israeli armed thugs attacked worshippers in Al-Aqsa mosque during Ramadan.

The US media is going to town with the fact that an overwhelming majority of the UN general assembly has condemned the Russian attack. The

entire world is against Russia, and Putin is now an international pariah, we are told.

Not so fast. Indeed, the vote overwhelmingly was in support for the West, but you can dissemble with numbers. While numerically impressive, it’s a hollow claim.

India and China refused to play ball. Even the usual US chums, like the UAE and Saudi Arabia, have balked.

Except for a handful of US allies, it is remarkable how pretty much most of Asia, Africa and Latin America don’t buy the West’s fevered moral crusade against Russia.

Now let me be clear. Russia’s attack on Ukraine was grievously wrong—just as the US attack on Iraq was. That is why few countries have actually backed Russia’s attack.

Most of the world outside the US and its Western allies, however, abstained because they reject the moral posturing of the West.

The US would do well to get off its moral high horse and try to recognise why. It must realise that its efforts to paint Russia as the biggest evil this side of hell does not cut much ice. No matter how many times the likes of EU president Ursula von der Leen, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and top US officials make a beeline to New Delhi, for instance, India is not going to jeopardise its deep strategic and economic ties with Russia.

These bilateral ties have a long history

The Soviet Union stood by India in 1971 when Pakistan refused to hand power to the democratically elected Awami League and the Pakistan army unleashed a genocide, while Richard Nixon’s US administration backed Pakistan. So much for the US being champions of democracy.

that transcends ideology. The Soviet Union stood by India in 1971 when Pakistan refused to hand power to the democratically elected Awami League and the Pakistan army unleashed a genocide, while Richard Nixon’s US administration backed Pakistan. So much for the US being champions of democracy.

You’ll have a hard time telling South Africa how bad Russia is. Veteran leaders of the ruling African National Congress have fond memories of the vital support from the Soviet Union in their battle against apartheid. Meanwhile, the West dragged its feet to impose sanctions and US intelligence was in cahoots with the apartheid government, backing leaders like Jonas Savimbi and Renamo guerrillas to thwart anti-colonial battles in Angola and Mozambique.

There is much talk about Russia’s war being a threat to a rules-based order. The US has waged war in Iraq, Yugoslavia and Afghanistan—all without UN sanction. The West is making furious demands to punish Russia for alleged war crimes at the International Criminal Court, but it is led by the US, which does not recognise its jurisdiction. In fact, the US revoked ICC prosecutor Fatou Bensouda’s visa, widely thought to have been in response to her request to investigate possible crimes committed by US forces in Afghanistan.

The US demands that the entire world accept punitive sanctions against Russia. Yet these are not UN sanctions—the West just declared punitive sanctions by fiat without consulting the rest of the world

and expects everybody else to fall in line. As Indian External Affairs Minister Jayashankar Subramanyam curtly noted when asked about cutting fuel imports, “How is it that west European countries get a free pass?”

All of this, I am afraid, reeks of a bygone imperial colonial mindset. Isn’t it remarkable how you can almost tell who backs the US-led crusade against Russia by skin colour? Most white folks are gung-ho on Ukraine. Nations with people of colour? Not so much.

The US and its European allies are also making ominous noises about China. But if the Ukraine invasion is any guide, the West has its work cut out if it wants to get the rest of the world to agree.

When asked about whether China was a threat, Malaysian statesman Mahathir Mohamed said in 2018, “We have traded with China for nearly two thousand years...But China never conquered us. We have relations with Europe. The Portuguese came to Malaysia in 1509. Two years later, they came and conquered us. So I always feel that I’m safer with China than with Europe.”

The West is haranguing us. Better get on the bandwagon, this is about protecting the Western civilisation—the civilisation which gave us two world wars, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and decades-long mass slaughtering in Vietnam, Guantanamo and Abu Ghraib? Mahatma Gandhi’s pithy retort, when asked about what he thought about the Western civilisation, is still as valid today as it was over half a century ago: “It would be a great idea.”

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OPINION

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### CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

#### ACROSS

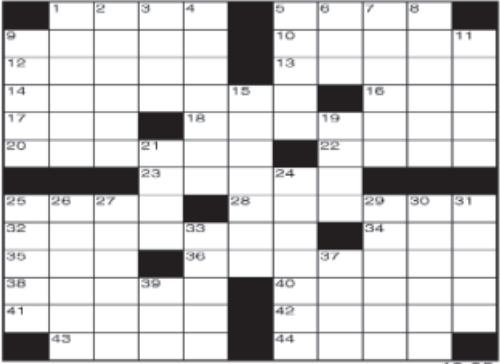
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- 27 Thyroid need
- 29 Seeping
- 30 Turns outward
- 31 Goes under
- 33 “Ghosts” playwright
- 37 “Take — Train”
- 39 Deck topper



### YESTERDAY’S ANSWERS



BEETLE BAILEY

BY MORT WALKER

BABY BLUES

BY KIRKMAN & SCOTT





A countdown clock showing 127 days until the opening of the 2022 Asian Games is seen in Hangzhou, in China's eastern Zhejiang province on May 6, 2022. The continental multisport extravaganza, which was scheduled for September 10 to 25, was postponed due to Covid, with new dates to be announced “in the near future”, organisers said on Friday.

PHOTO: AFP

# ‘Can’t doctor pitches to suit us against Sri Lanka’

The fact that Jamie Siddons loves to hang out at a coffee shop in Gulshan indicates that the Bangladesh national team batting coach seems to adapt well to the local culture. The Daily Star’s Mazhar Uddin caught up with the Australian for a cup of coffee at his favorite place where he opened up to speak about his plans and imminent challenges, and more, during an exclusive interview, the excerpts of which are as follows:

**The Daily Star (DS): What challenges have you set for yourself on your second stint in Bangladesh?**  
**Jamie Siddons:** I always had thought I left Bangladesh too soon and just wanted to come back. Now, I can’t finish what I started but I can start again and do some really good stuff with the young players. The senior players are obviously there but I’m really excited to work with the junior players as there are some really talented ones like [Najmul Hossain] Shanto and [Mahmudul Hasan] Joy and obviously a few others. They already have good scores but aren’t consistent enough yet, that’s what we can work on.  
It’ll take time to put those finishing touches on those guys and they just need a little bit of guidance and I think I’m the right person to do that. I’m really looking forward to seeing what I can do in the next two years, hopefully it’s more than that but my contract is for two years. It may take three or four years to get the same result as I got in the previous stint with the likes of Tamim, Mushfiqur and others.  
**DS: Although Bangladesh won the ODI series, the Test series didn’t go well in terms of results. What are the areas the batting unit needs to work on?**  
**Siddons:** I think we were caught by



surprise that spin did the damage rather than the pace, bounce and seam. Both the pitches spun a lot. In fact, I have never seen a pitch [referring to Port Elizabeth] spin as far as it spun on day four when we got bowled out. But getting bundled out for fifty and eighty is not acceptable. We need to work on playing spin.  
**DS: We often see Bangladesh batting collapsing horribly. Is it only about the technique or the mental aspect of the dressing room needs to change also?**  
**Siddons:** There seems to be calmness in the dressing room but when they go out on the field, they get excited. There was no Tamim and Shakib in the first Test but it was a little too much for the younger boys since the wicket was doing a bit

more.  
It was a good experience though since it was my first look at them as the batting coach. Whether it’s the pressure, for which they couldn’t execute, or wrong choices of shot in the second Test, that we need to talk about.  
**DS: Where do you want to see the Bangladesh batting unit in Test cricket when you finish your stint this time?**  
**Siddons:** We are playing good white-ball cricket but the Test match demands endurance and concentration and is tough and boring sometimes. Our players like excitement and they need to get things done in a hurry but teaching them that it’s a different type of game where you bat for a long time.

As a batter, the aim should be to go out there at 10 am and come back at 6 pm when the umpire knocks the bails off at the end of day. It’s not about how fast you can score as no one remembers those big pull shots, rather everyone remembers how you leave those balls and how you defend, get through different spells and get through the second new ball.  
But we don’t get to play as many Test matches as we play limited-over cricket, which is also a big setback.  
**DS: What are you expecting from the upcoming Sri Lanka series? Do you want to dominate the opponent at home?**  
**Siddons:** I don’t know about dominating but we need to be competitive against any team at home. I don’t think we can generally doctor the pitches to suit us, especially against Sri Lanka. We may have good pacers but they also have a good spin and pace bowling unit. I think this is going to be a close-fought series.  
I think we should be looking to win both Tests, without a doubt, but we have to play our best cricket. Our boys will be back after their Eid celebrations and we are going to Chattogram for eight days of training before the first Test. Let’s see how it goes.



## Taskin leaves for England but Ebadot, Shoriful recover

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh pacer Taskin Ahmed departed for London yesterday for an assessment on the back injury he incurred during the series against South Africa in March-April. Taskin missed out on the second Test after battling through pain in the first Test and was subsequently left out of the squad for the upcoming first Test against Sri Lanka, slated to start on May 15 in Chattogram.  
It was learnt that Taskin, who is being accompanied by BCB’s chief physician Debashish Chowdhury, will likely return on May 14. Asked if there is a chance for surgery, BCB physician Monzur Hossain said: “After the doctor sees him, we will know.”  
Meanwhile, Monzur also informed that two other pacers – Ebadot Hossain and Shoriful Islam – have overcome their injury issues. “Shoriful is doing much better and he will not require anything else [in terms of injury management]. They both are available and have overcome injury issues,” Monzur told The Daily Star yesterday.  
There is further cause for relief for the cricketers returning from Eid vacations as there will be no bio-bubble restrictions during Sri Lanka’s tour. “There will be no such bio-bubble for the Sri Lanka series. We will tell the players to wear masks and avoid overcrowded areas. If they do go into overcrowded areas, we will suggest they maintain health protocols.”

## Silverwood wants to see Lankan flair

REUTERS, Colombo

Sri Lanka’s newly-appointed coach Chris Silverwood wants his batters to score more freely and his fast bowlers to breathe fire early in their spells as he seeks to add a touch of flair to their performance.  
“It’s all about scoring runs and that’s what we want the batting line-up to do,” the 47-year-old, in his first news conference since taking over last month, told reporters on Thursday.  
“I’ll try and instil some confidence into the boys so they can go out there and construct their innings and score big runs, certainly in the first innings, and give us something to bowl at. It’s not rocket science.” Silverwood, who begins his tenure with a two-Test series in Bangladesh later this month, wanted his pacers to operate with sustained hostility.  
“I’ve specifically challenged the Test bowlers to be hot on their first 12 balls, because as we all know the first 12 balls you can make a real impact on your spell as well as put pressure back on the batters,” he said.  
“I want the Sri Lankan flair, I want the boys to express themselves.”



## Mourinho lets the tears flow

AGENCIES

Jose Mourinho was moved to tears after seeing Roma edge out Leicester to book their place in the 2021-22 Europa Conference League final on Thursday.  
A solitary strike from Tammy Abraham at Stadio Olimpico was enough to secure a 2-1 aggregate victory for the Serie A heavyweights over Premier League opposition, with Feyenoord now set to be faced in Tirana on May 25 with major silverware on the line.  
The Portuguese tactician has grown accustomed to competing for top honours, and is now the first manager to reach the final of a continental competition with four different clubs, but success means as much to the 59-year-old now as it has ever done.  
Emotion spilled out of Mourinho at the final whistle in Rome, and the tears were still flowing as he made his way back to the dressing room.  
He told reporters afterwards on why a shot at another trophy with Roma means so much to him: “I am very emotional. This for us is our Champions League.  
“When you work in Rome, live in Rome and breathe Rome, you breathe this club



because it is the real club of the city.  
“I felt from day one it is huge, but no victories and not many finals. The history is not related to the social dimension of the club.  
“We managed to build an OK team that grew step by step so we could beat a Premier League [team]. Of course, I have had bigger moments than this but I am not feeling for myself, I am feeling for the people and my players.”  
Mourinho began his European trophy collection while calling the shots at Porto, with UEFA Cup and Champions League successes savoured there.  
He went on to claim continental football’s prize for a second time while working at another Serie A giant, Inter.  
Europa League glory was then savoured with Manchester United in 2016-17 – which remains the last entry on the Red Devils’ roll of honour – and he has now guided Roma to the Europa Conference League final. Said outing will be the Giallorossi’s first in a European showpiece since 1991, when they lost to domestic rivals Inter in the UEFA Cup final.



A young Rangers fan spreads his arms in celebration as the Glasgow giants beat RB Leipzig 3-1 in Ibrox on Thursday for a 3-2 aggregate win to book a Europa League final spot. Giovanni van Bronckhorst’s men will face Eintracht Frankfurt, who saw off West Ham United, in the final in Seville on May 18.

PHOTO: REUTERS



When the time comes, if you are hired, you have to do your job. If you are fired, you have to wait for the next job. If you have a dangerous contract and don't produce results and the management is not happy, you can get fired within two months. I am used to it.

Sheikh Jamal's Nigerian coach  
Joseph Afusi

From Latin America and Europe, where the standard of football is considered the epitome, many coaches have flown – thousands of miles to Bangladesh, a country where the beautiful game is a part of the people’s emotion and euphoria. The Daily Star talked with Mario Lemos, Andres Cruciani and Oscar Bruzon – three coaches who have been working in Bangladesh for many years – to get an insight into their experiences. Alongside, Tapu Barman, a national footballer who worked with multiple foreign coaches, expressed his thoughts on the gaffers.



# ‘I want my family to see the real beauty of Bangladesh’

Abahani’s long-serving coach Mario Lemos says he’s all in to enjoy and explore the natural beauties and culinary delights of Bangladesh more and wants his family to be part of the experience while talking to The Daily Star’s Ashfaq UI Mushfiq.

**The Daily Star (DS):** When you got the offer to coach Abahani, what were your initial thoughts about Bangladesh and what is your current impression?  
**Mario Lemos (ML):** Actually, before Abahani, I worked with the national team (Bangladesh) for four months and I already knew about the club back then. My initial thoughts about Abahani were that it was a big club in Bangladesh. The day I arrived in Bangladesh, I went to visit Abahani with the then national team coach Andrew Ord and met the players. So later on it was easier for me to take the job and coach the biggest club in the country in my opinion. Time flies and it’s been three years and my fourth season at the club, it’s been a great experience and I’m looking forward to more years to come.

**DS:** How do you judge the culture of Bangladesh football?  
**ML:** I think Bangladesh is a sleeping giant. Sure, cricket is the main sport of the country, but football has been doing really well in the past few years. I think there is a big passion and a big tradition for the game along with a big history. You know about the Mohammedan vs Abahani, the big rivalry, and people talking about the games of history with so much emotion. I think we can go back there. Of course, it requires a lot of work with the players of the academies and grassroots. I think in the three years I’ve

been in Bangladesh; the quality of football and the players have improved a lot. The facilities of the players and the league have also improved and hopefully, we can keep on pushing for the better, not just the coaches and players but the media and everybody that is involved with football.

**DS:** Since you’ve been here for some time, what is your impression about our grassroots football?  
**ML:** I’m not connected with the grassroots but I want to be. I am trying to find ways to share my expertise with the younger generation. I think investing in the grassroots and the youth is the only way you can improve Bangladesh’s football.

**DS:** Away from football, how do you see Bangladesh’s culture?  
**ML:** I think socially and culturally Bangladesh is a country that is developing and the main engine of this country is the people. And this younger generation I see, they are very hungry, hard-working and energetic. And I think that will develop the country even more. What I also see is that people have a lot of pride in their history and traditions. I like seeing them celebrate Language Day; seeing the pride they take over independence; that is something I will take with me.

**DS:** Any fond memories or special incidents

in Bangladesh that you share with your family?  
**ML:** I’ve had the privilege of traveling a lot. I have been to all parts of Bangladesh: Nilphamari, Cumilla, Mymensingh, Gopalganj, Sylhet just to name a few. I’ve used different types of transportation in Bangladesh: airplanes, buses, trains, boats – I have travelled by them quite a lot. I’ve been taking my family to Sylhet in recent times and hopefully if I get the opportunity, I’ll take them to travel to different parts of Bangladesh because it is a beautiful country with so many different beaches and natural sights. I want my family to see the real beauty of Bangladesh.

**DS:** Anything specific regarding Bangladesh, i.e., food/music/art that you are especially fond of?  
**ML:** I would say the food, no doubt! I’m a big lover of Bangladeshi food. I love when we play away from Dhaka because that’s my opportunity to try many traditional foods and I like spicy food. I ask my friends where I can find the most authentic places to eat traditional food. I look into art a little bit because my wife is an art teacher and an artist. Every time we have an opportunity to see some local exhibition, we go and we try to follow. No doubt there are a lot of good artists in Bangladesh with a lot of passion for art.



## ‘Don’t see a football culture here’

Andres Cruciani returned to Bangladesh after 14 years to take charge of Saif Sporting Club after a brief stint with the Bangladesh football team as the head coach, during which men in red and green finished as the runners-up in 2005 SAFF Championships. The 59-year-old Argentinean shared his views about the country’s football and his sociocultural experience and more to The Daily Star Sabbir Hossain during an exclusive interview, the excerpts of which are as follows:

**The Daily Star (DS):** How has the football scenario changed here?  
**Andres Cruciani (AC):** When I first came here in 2005, I had no idea about the country except for its history of independence and geopolitics. But about the football, for example, I knew absolutely nothing. In this return to train Saif SC, I found a very changed Dhaka, a lot of development and growth, especially in infrastructure.

**DS:** Your take on the prevalent football culture here?  
**AC:** I honestly don’t see a football culture here. When talking about something that belongs to the culture of a country or a society, this implies the practice and development of the [relevant] activity on a massive scale. Participants engage from an early age and from every corner of the territory. But unfortunately, I don’t see that happening here. There is a lot of passion and fanaticism for football, but the fans’ passion here is reserved for international stage only and not for the local.

**DS:** How have you experience the cultural side of things here outside football sphere?  
**AC:** I’m not very internalised, but I know- there is a great cultural movement here with musicians, writers, poets, painters, sculptors, actresses and actors. But football keeps me absorbed most of the time and that has prevented me from having more knowledge and contact with other areas and activities here.

**DS:** Could you share any lasting memories made here?  
**AC:** I always keep the best memories of my time spent here in Bangladesh, where I enjoyed a lot. Above all, it’s the kindness and friendship that they always offered me. The people here are the most valuable to me.

**DS:** Did you get a scope to explore the food and places so far?  
**AC:** I can say that I like all the local food and I enjoy it to the fullest. I even like spicy food, although now I can’t have it because I have to take care of myself. Also, I usually watch and listen to local music on television when I find myself zapping. I lived a very emotional moment days ago in Gopalganj. Elias, a former player and current BFF official, took me to see the ancestral home of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and narrated the whole surrounding story.



## ‘Each coach had a different philosophy’

Bangladesh’s reliable centre-back Tapu Barman boasts the experience of playing under a number of foreign coaches at the club level and the national team. The 27-year-old defender worked with a total of 18 different foreign coaches – nine at the national team and as many at the club level. In an interview with The Daily Star’s Anisur Rahman, Tapu talked about his experiences. The excerpts of the interview are as follows:

**The Daily Star (DS):** How have your experiences been training under different foreign coaches?  
**Tapu Barman (TB):** Each coach had a different philosophy. And I learned a lot from them as they were from different nations. However, I must point out the training sessions I had under Macedonian coach Nikola Ilievski in 2011 and Jamie Day in 2021 as they were developed using scientific methods specifically designed to improve players’ performance.

**DS:** How good a rapport do you think the foreign coaches were able to build with the Bangladeshi players?  
**TB:** Most of the coaches were cheerful and helpful as they wanted to get the maximum out of the players. However,

Jamie Day, Fabio Lopes, Lodewijk De Kruijff were, in my opinion, ahead of others at the national team level while Mario Lemos and Oscar Bruzon could be kept ahead among the coaches I had in the domestic circuit. To be honest, I was afraid to talk to coaches at the beginning of my career. Later, I was able to shrug it off gradually.

**DS:** How did you use to take the different concepts of the coaches regarding football in Bangladesh?  
**TB:** They usually arrived with a positive concept about Bangladesh football and with ideas about the current footballers. They used to study and gather knowledge from the internet. However, some coaches, who were given the responsibility of the national team for the first time, had confusion regarding the standard of football in Bangladesh. But they later went on to find out that the players were able to exceed their expectations.

**DS:** How helpful were the foreign coaches to the players off the field?  
**TB:** It’s always a plus if coaches help players on both their on and off-the-field matters. Most of the coaches that I trained under, barring five or six, had

this quality. I got favours from coaches when I had family issues.

**DS:** It is said that footballers are more loyal to foreign coaches than the local coaches. What’s your opinion on this?  
**TB:** Actually, it varies from player to player.

**DS:** What were the foreign coaches’ takes on Bangladesh’s culture?  
**TB:** They always appreciated our hospitality but were agitated by the heavy traffic on the roads. The foreign coaches, especially the national coaches, enjoyed the fans’ enthusiasm and even asked the players to capitalise on the home-ground advantage.

**DS:** Can you recall any memory with the coaches that still inspires you?  
**TB:** During the World Cup Qualifiers in Doha, coach Jamie Day inspired me and Jamal Bhuiyan to put up better performances that could earn us the opportunity to play in foreign leagues. In the first match against Afghanistan, I played better and scored the equaliser during a 1-1 draw. Following that campaign, I was offered by an agent to play in India and Qatar which is a sweet memory for me.

## ‘Kacchi Biryani has been my all-time favourite’

Oscar Bruzon had coached in Spain, India and Maldives before arriving in Bangladesh, where he guided his charges to over 100 games ever since the Spaniard took over in 2018, raising Bashundhara Kings in the club-to-beat status. The 44-year-old coach, who also worked as the head coach of Bangladesh national football team in their latest SAFF assignment last year, talked to The Daily Star’s Ashfaq UI Mushfiq and expressed his views on some of his Bangladesh experience. The excerpts of the interview are as follows:

**The Daily Star (DS):** When you got the offer to coach Bashundhara Kings, what were your initial impressions about Bangladesh and how has it evolved?  
**Oscar Bruzon (OB):** I came straight from a winning project at Maldives [New Radiant Sports Club] with the same goals and objectives as Bashundhara Kings. I immediately understood the drive and mission of my new club at both developmental and professional aspirations.

**DS:** As you’ve been working with a top team in Bangladesh, how do you see the culture of football here?  
**OB:** All Bangladesh Premier League clubs this season are competitive. There is a clear evolution on the league level in the past years. And nowadays, we can find four to five clubs that could compete well in the international arena such as the AFC Cup.

I feel we are progressing on the right track towards becoming, together with the ISL [Indian Super League], the best league in the region and having a bigger impact internationally.

**DS:** How do you see the current grassroots-level football scenario of Bangladesh??

**OB:** Grassroots is where most of the efforts should go from all of us to produce the best players in the future.

**DS:** Apart from football, your impression on Bangladesh’s social culture?  
**OB:** Bangladesh is a country where me and my wife have always felt most welcome. We are involved with the local and international community here at Bashundhara and also in some close-by areas of Dhaka.

**DS:** Tell us some of your memorable experiences in Bangladesh off your work.  
**OB:** Playing tennis twice a week with some Bangladeshi friends is probably the most



joyful moment out of work and home. We play good competitive matches amongst ourselves and those who lose- pay for the snacks and recovery drinks after the games.

**DS:** What’s your favourite local food? Did any art or music from Bangladesh catch your attention?  
**OB:** Regarding food, Kacchi Biryani has been my all-time favourite since I came to Bangladesh. And about art, my wife is an artist so she has her own circuits of action. She always says- there are a lot of talented people here in Bangladesh.



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# EU tweaks Russian oil sanctions plan

## Offers Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic more time to adapt

**AGENCIES**

The European Commission has proposed changes to its planned embargo on Russian oil to give Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic more time to prepare for the shift in their energy supplies, three EU sources said yesterday.

The EU executive set out the embargo this week as part of its toughest yet package of sanctions against Russia over the conflict in Ukraine. But Hungary and other member states said they were worried about the impact on their own economies.

The tweaked proposal - which EU envoys discussed yesterday morning without reaching an agreement - would give the three countries help to upgrade their oil infrastructure, the sources said.

There would also be a three-month transition before banning EU shipping services from transporting Russian oil, instead of the initial one month - to address concerns raised by Greece, Malta and Cyprus about their shipping companies, one of the sources added.

More discussions were expected later yesterday and perhaps into the weekend, the sources added, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Diplomats said talks were complex but many expressed confidence that a compromise among all 27 EU governments could be reached before next week, reports Reuters.

Under the original proposal, most EU countries would have to stop buying Russian crude oil six months after adoption of the measures, and halt imports of refined oil products from Russia by the end of the year. Hungary and Slovakia were initially given until the end of 2023 to adapt.

Under the changes, Hungary and Slovakia would be able to buy Russian oil from pipelines until the end of 2024, and the Czech Republic could continue until June 2024, if it does not get oil via a pipeline from southern Europe earlier, the sources said.

Meanwhile, Russia's massive Admiral Makarov warship has reportedly been hit by Ukrainian missiles causing it to burst into flames.

The Admiral Grigorovich-class frigate was on fire yesterday morning in what would be a fresh blow for warmonger Vladimir Putin, reports mirror.co.uk.

A senior official from the Russian parliament said yesterday that Russia will remain in southern Ukraine "forever", speaking on a visit to the Moscow-controlled city of Kherson.

"Russia is here forever. There should be no doubt about this. There will be no return to the past," Andrey Turchak said, according to a statement from the ruling United Russia party.

Local authorities in the city of Mariupol yesterday accused Russian forces of opening fire on a car on its way to evacuate civilians from a vast steel works, killing a fighter and violating a ceasefire agreement.

Moscow did not immediately comment on the Mariupol city council's statement.

Russian forces have occupied Mariupol, leaving the city's last defenders - and scores of civilians - holed up in the Azovstal plant.

Andriy Biletsky, a founder of the Azov Regiment holed up in the steelworks, said it was under attack and called for help. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky described the blockade of Mariupol as torture and said if Russia killed civilians or troops who could otherwise be released, his government could no longer hold peace talks with Moscow.

**A senior official from the Russian parliament said Russia will remain in southern Ukraine 'forever'**

**A family of four risking it all to cross the Dhaka-Chattogram highway even as the helper of the fast approaching truck is waving at them to clear the way. They took the risk ignoring the safe option of using the footbridge nearby to cross the highway. The photo was taken from Narayanganj's Mizmizi area.**

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

### ILLEGAL MIGRATION TO EUROPE

# Desperate trips on deadly routes

JAMIL MAHMUD

Kabir Matubbar (not his real name) took an illegal route to Italy from Bangladesh in 2015. The trip included a daring boat journey in the Mediterranean Sea from Libya.

He paid about Tk 6 lakh to traffickers for this migration and left behind a well-run grocery shop in Madaripur, his home town.

But his attempt failed after the migrant boat carrying him was intercepted by the authorities in the Mediterranean. He landed at a refugee camp in Italy, where he was sheltered for five months.

"It was a risky journey. When we were in the middle of the sea, it seemed everything will end here," he said.

Later, he tried to get work as an undocumented migrant in Italy but failed, and subsequently had to return home empty-handed in 2016.

Kabir, 33, said "successes" of his neighbours in Madaripur, who entered Italy illegally and made their fortune, tempted him to take the risky journey.

"Now, I feel it's better to do something in Bangladesh," said Kabir, a father of two, who now runs the old grocery shop to earn a living.

Kabir's story is not uncommon as many Bangladeshis take illegal and risky journeys on different Mediterranean routes spending hefty sums of money to "fulfil their dream" of making a fortune in Europe.

While many can cross the European border illegally, tragedies such as drowning by boat capsizing and hostage taking by traffickers also make global headlines.

Migrant rights groups said multiple factors, including temptation to upgrade their "social status" and make a fortune, act as the main drivers

for many Bangladeshis to migrate illegally to Europe.

They said there are certain "pockets" in different districts from where illegal migration to Europe is frequent. Besides, trafficking gangs are active in these areas to lure aspirant migrants.

To reduce illegal migration to Europe, they suggested taking inter-governmental action, conducting round-the-year drives against traffickers at home, and making legal migration easier.

According to European Border and Coastguard Agency, Frontex, 26,820 illegal border crossings by Bangladeshis on five Mediterranean routes were detected between 2017 and 2021.

In January-February this year, Frontex detected 1,442 illegal border crossings by Bangladeshis on the five routes. Only 431 such border crossings were detected during the same

SEE PAGE 6 COL 2

# Massive amount of water found below ice sheet in Antarctica

CNN ONLINE

Hidden deep below the ice sheet that covers Antarctica, scientists have discovered a massive amount of water.

The groundwater system, found in deep sediments in West Antarctica likely to be the consistency of a wet sponge, reveals an unexplored part of the region and may have implications for how the frozen continent reacts to the climate crisis, according to new research.

"People have hypothesized that there could be deep groundwater in these sediments, but up to now, no one has done any detailed imaging," said the study's lead author, Chloe Gustafson, a postdoctoral researcher at the University of California San Diego's Scripps Institution of Oceanography, in a news statement.

"Antarctica contains 57 metres of sea level rise potential, so we want to make sure we are

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

**A man throws the debris from a broken window as he cleans his room at an apartment damaged by a missile explosion in Kramatorsk, eastern Ukraine. The photo was taken on Thursday.**

PHOTO: AFP

# Asian Games postponed over Covid

REUTERS, New Delhi

The Asian Games scheduled to take place in the Chinese city of Hangzhou in September have been postponed until 2023 because of the Covid-19 situation, the governing Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) said on Friday.

The 19th edition of the multi-sports Games, second in size only to the Summer Olympics, was scheduled to take place from Sept. 10-25 in the capital of Zhejiang province, some 175 kilometres southwest of

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1

# Road crash claims lives of mother, son

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kusthia

A young man and his mother died after the motorcycle he was riding collided head-on with a truck in Kusthia's Battail Junction area yesterday morning.

Itiaz, 22, was taking his mother Anjana Khatun, 40, and 10-year-old younger brother Ifad from their Kaburhat home to visit relatives in Molla Tegharia area of the upazila, said police.

Ifad was seriously injured in the accident and is undergoing treatment at Kusthia General Hospital, said Idris Ali, officer-in-charge (OC) of Kusthia Highway Police.

Itiaz, a student of Kusthia Polytechnic Institute, was killed on the spot around 10:00am, the OC said.

Anjana and Ifad were taken to Kusthia General Hospital, where the mother died around 2:00pm.

An inconsolable Nazmul Islam, Anjana's husband, said at the hospital, "Normally, I don't allow my son to ride the motorbike, but I allowed it today. It was my blunder. Everything has been ruined."

Abdul Momen, the hospital's deputy director, said a team of three doctors has been formed to provide better treatment to Ifad, who is under observation at the intensive care unit.

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PHOTOS: AFP, REUTERS

# Ukraine war: How far will it go?

## As peace talks stall, West, Russia dig in for a protracted conflict

ZIAUL HOQUE

When President Vladimir Putin launched “a special military operation” on February 24 to “demilitarization” and “denazification” of Ukraine, there were a few to doubt that the military campaign would end in Russia’s favour and it would be over soon.

But after nearly two and half months, the devastating war, which left cities in ruins, killed thousands and forced nearly 6 million people to flee the country, is raging. Moreover signs are indicating that it may expand beyond Ukraine and become a conflict that might redefine the diplomatic landscape of the world.

In Washington, there is a certain satisfaction with the way the first phase of the war has played out.

With Russia’s advance stalled due to fierce local resistance and Western support, analysts say, despite Russian offensive has been narrowed and now mainly focusses on the east, both sides appear ready to dig in for a protracted conflict.

From warning of nuclear confrontation to stoking energy crises and perhaps even eyeing up fresh territories to invade, Moscow has ramped up its threats in recent weeks – but so has the West: The United States and its allies are readying huge new shipments of heavy weapons and military equipment to help Ukrainian troops on the ground, while voicing more ambitious goals for the conflict.

US officials say President Joe Biden’s request to Congress to provide \$33 billion to Ukraine, which includes \$20 billion for military equipment and assistance, would allow Kyiv and its allies to withstand months more Russian aggression.

and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov warned that Russia will not pause its military operations during future peace talks.

Putin, while launching the offensive, said the West, despite several attempts by Russia, has crossed a redline by not forfeiting its attempt to make Ukraine a Nato member. He said, despite promises, Nato continued its eastward expansion, closer to Russian border.

“For the United States and its allies, it is a policy of containing Russia, with obvious geopolitical dividends. For our country, it is a matter of life and death, a matter of our historical future as a nation. This is not an exaggeration;

economy of a major source of funds.

The European Union came close to that Wednesday when it unveiled plans for a gradual ban on Russian oil imports. But it will still not touch Russia’s huge gas exports – and several EU member states are demanding an extension behind the proposed one year period while they secure new sources of fuel.

But the oil embargo needs to be adopted unanimously by the EU’s 27 countries amid signs of deep divisions among its members. Last year Russia supplied 30 percent of the bloc’s oil and 15 percent of its petroleum products.

On Russian front, withdrawing its troops and



not expected to be lifted soon even after the war ends, if history teaches us anything.

These rises many questions without clear answers. And the respective media of the two warring sides appear to toeing the line of their respective governments making the overall picture ever murkier.

It seems both Ukraine and Russia have to pay heavy prices for their misadventures. So, who is really winning?

How long Ukraine will be able to sustain its defense and prosecute its offense? Is there a point at which Western arms and assistance is exhausted or no longer strategically palatable? Will Western aid reach the undefined “red line” for Moscow and, if so, what comes next? What will be West’s reaction if Russia attacks a weapon shipment intended for Ukraine inside a Nato nation?

Who will bear the massive reconstruction bill of Ukraine? How long European countries will have to house the refugees? Who will fund these projects and how long?

How the West will secure oil and gas for

While the battle lines in Ukraine are largely fluid and will remain so, the progress of the war suggests that neither side will be able to achieve a satisfactory outcome. So who is winning?



The request followed remarks by Defense Secretary Lloyd J Austin that initially caused some disquiet among European allies. Speaking to reporters after a visit to Kyiv, Austin said the US wanted to see Russia “weakened to the extent that it can’t do the kinds of things that it has done in invading Ukraine.”

Last month, in an interview on NBC, national security adviser Jake Sullivan cast the war not just as a defense of Ukraine but also an opportunity to deliver significant blows to the stability of the Russian state. “At the end of the day, what we want to see is a free and independent Ukraine, a weakened and isolated Russia, and a stronger, more unified, more determined West,” he said. “We believe that all three of those objectives are in sight, can be accomplished.”

Meanwhile, the diplomatic door to end the war is closing. Despite several rounds of negotiations over the past weeks, the war continues to intensify.

Putin said negotiations had hit a “dead end”

this is a fact. It is not only a very real threat to our interests but to the very existence of our state and to its sovereignty. It is the red line which we have spoken about on numerous occasions. They have crossed it,” Putin said in a nationwide televised address informing Russians that he had “no other options”.

Meanwhile, Nato appears set to expand further, with both Finland and Sweden indicating they are actively considering joining the alliance. Germany and other European countries are publicly committing to buying and selling more weapons and spending more on defense, which risks derailing efforts to confront more urgent global issues like climate change.

Now the United States and its allies are warning the world that the next phase of the war in Ukraine will be long. But it will pose a daunting diplomatic task for Biden, who must find a way to maintain unprecedented Western unity against Moscow – for the duration.

Lead by US, the West has organized a vast coalition to impose extraordinary economic sanctions on Russia. But as the new battle takes shape in Ukraine’s east, American strategists fear this mutual effort may gradually deteriorate.

If the fighting stays concentrated in the Donbas region, far from Kyiv and Nato’s eastern border, the feeling of urgency that has so far united the West is likely to fade, according to a diplomat.

Another official believes that some European countries – which are deeply affected by the inflation precipitated by the sanctions – could be tempted to release some of the pressure on Russia.

However, such a scenario does not seem imminent. For now, the United States and several European countries would still rather turn up the temperature on Putin.

But they have already hit him hard, and the West is running out of future options.

The US is hoping for a European ban on Russian oil, or even gas to deprive the Russian

focusing on Donbas region doesn’t mean that Moscow doesn’t have broader military goals in Ukraine.

Experts say Russia’s withdrawal from Kyiv looks to be a temporary ploy. To minimise its own losses and maximise those of Ukraine, Russian offensives are now concentrated in one direction at a time.

Despite the sanctions, international isolation and alleged heavy losses in the war, experts say, Moscow can sustain the war militarily and economically for years.

Fresh out of Covid pandemic, the war has already disrupted much needed economic recovery efforts across the world. According to UN, the impact of the war had set in motion a three-dimensional crisis that is devastating global food, energy and financial systems for developing countries.

But who is winning the war? While the battle lines in Ukraine are largely fluid and will remain so, the progress of the war suggests that neither side will be able to achieve a satisfactory outcome.

Ukraine is unlikely to secure the total victory that some in the West are increasingly suggesting is a possibility. Ukraine will likely end up well-supplied and well-armed due to the West’s support but there is a limit for Kyiv to maintain the fight. It is unlikely that the United States or Nato will put troops on the ground as doing so will undoubtedly be seen as escalatory and risk further expansion of the conflict involving nuclear powers.

More over the assistance Kyiv is receiving isn’t without any strings attached. For example, the US Congress last month passed legislation that invokes the Lend-Lease Act of 1941 to allow Biden to supply weapons to Ukraine on loan. And these loans may complicate matters even after the war.

Many believe Putin has been dragged into a war that will cost Russia heavily in decades to come. Though militarily strong, Russia’s economy will suffer from the sanctions, which are

**There are two ways for a war to end: One way is for one side or the other to be basically destroyed. And the Russians are not going to be destroyed. So that means one way is for Ukraine to be destroyed. The other way is some negotiated settlement. If there’s a third way, no one’s ever figured it out.**

Noam Chomsky

countries dependent on Russian sources? How long it will take?

At the same time, will Russia forever remain disconnected from the global economy? What conditions will be set for Moscow to normalize ties? How can robust support for Ukraine be sustained once Western citizens ‘move on’ from the war?

How will this conflict be resolved? Can Moscow and Kyiv reach an agreement that will be politically viable for the Ukrainian people and the policy makers of the West?

Only time will answer these questions. In a recent interview to The Intercept, Noam Chomsky, a renowned dissident intellectual, said the conflict has to end by a negotiated settlement.

“There are two ways for a war to end: One way is for one side or the other to be basically destroyed. And the Russians are not going to be destroyed. So that means one way is for Ukraine to be destroyed. The other way is some negotiated settlement. If there’s a third way, no one’s ever figured it out.”

So the real question now is: can the world allow Ukraine to be destroyed to end the crisis?



LAW VISION

# In quest for rules to be laid down under the Arbitration Act, 2001

The presence of rules with guidelines for both the parties and the appointing authority could have helped to avoid many unwanted situations that frequently arise in legal proceedings, including the appointment of arbitrator(s). This is one example which illustrates how the absence of rules under the 2001 Act creates scope for the misuse of the process of law and explains how the same can cause undue delay in completing the arbitration proceedings.

KAMAL HOSSAIN MEAHZI

In many instances, an Act of Parliament includes a provision allowing the government or the relevant authority to make rules for carrying out the provisions of the concerned Act. Under an Act of Parliament, the rules are framed as directives and/or instructions for the users of the legislation in question. If rules are framed as such, more clarity is brought about and confusion about many provisions of the relevant statute gets dispelled. It also helps to carry out the purpose of the legislation in line with the intention of the legislature.

In Bangladesh, the Arbitration Act, 2001 came into force on the 10th day of April 2001, which permits the government to make rules in exercising its powers conferred by section 57 of the Act. It was expected that the rules would be framed immediately to make the use of arbitration simpler, easier, and less cumbersome. However, although twenty years have elapsed since enactment of the Act, the government is yet to make rules.

Likewise, there exist no official rules for administering dispute resolution processes through mediation. Although the use of mediation or other ADR techniques is permissible, with consent of the parties, but under section 22 of the Act there are no rules that could be used and applied to guide the process. This article makes an attempt to argue that if rules were framed, they could have helped to ensure the due process in settling dispute through alternative means by using mediation, conciliation, and arbitration etc.

The importance of rules may be highlighted by stating an example. Section 12 of the Act deals with appointment of arbitrators. It has laid down the steps that may be taken by the parties when there arises disagreement regarding the appointment of an arbitrator. Upon application by a party, the District Judge has power to appoint an arbitrator when it is a domestic arbitration. In the case of international commercial arbitration, an application for appointment of an arbitrator is filed before the Chief Justice or any other Judge of the Supreme Court of Bangladesh so designated by the Chief

Justice. However, the provisions of law do not explain or give any guidance as to how the appointing authority being the District Judge or any other Judge of the Supreme Court will carry out this task with consent and/or assistance of the disputing parties.

In this regard, reference may be made to the UNCITRAL Rules. Articles 8 and 9 of the said Rules deal with the appointment of sole arbitrator and presiding arbitrator (if it is a tribunal



▲ PHOTO CREDIT: IPLEADERS

for three arbitrators) respectively. For appointing sole arbitrator or the presiding arbitrator, the appointing authority follows the same Rules as stated in Article 8. Article 8(2) of the said Rules being relevant here has been reproduced below:

“Article 8(2).....In making the appointment, the appointing authority shall use the following list -procedure, unless the parties agree that the list -procedure should not be used or unless the appointing authority determines in its discretion that the use of the list -procedure is not appropriate for the case:

(a) The appointing authority shall communicate to each of the parties an identical list containing at least three

names;

(b) Within 15 days after the receipt of this list, each party may return the list to the appointing authority after having deleted the name or names to which it objects and numbered the remaining names on the list in the order of its preference;

(c) After the expiration of the above period of time the appointing authority shall appoint the sole arbitrator from among the names approved on the lists

of the timeframe, the rules permit the appointing authority to proceed with the appointing process considering the preference of the parties, if any, or the appointing authority gives appointment applying its discretion. Thus, the said UNCITRAL Rules has laid down clear guidelines for the disputing parties as well as the appointing authority, which brings transparency and predictability to the process.

Since similar rules do not exist under the 2001 Act, the mischief-making party takes advantage of this loophole in law and tries to delay the appointment process with intention to frustrate the arbitration proceedings. It may be argued that the law obliges the courts to appoint arbitrator(s) within sixty days based on any application forwarded by a party. However, only in rare instances, is this timeframe respected.

The presence of rules with guidelines for both the parties and the appointing authority could have helped to avoid many unwanted situations that frequently arise in legal proceedings, including the appointment of arbitrator(s). This is one example which illustrates how the absence of rules under the 2001 Act creates scope for the misuse of the process of law and explains how the same can cause undue delay in completing the arbitration proceedings.

A set of well-defined rules could also reduce the expenses of arbitration. A standard could be set for fees and expenses required. Moreover, in an agreement with a multi-tier arbitration clause, the use of mediation is normally preferred by the parties as a first step prior to progressing with arbitration. In such situations, it becomes difficult to advance the mediation process due to the absence of rules. In the result, the use of mediation hardly results in success.

Since the 2001 Act permits the use of mediation and other methods during an arbitration proceeding, a set of comprehensive rules may be framed to make the processes faster, simpler, and efficient.

*The writer is a Student of Advanced Masters in Compliance, University of Fribourg, Switzerland, and an Advocate, Supreme Court of Bangladesh.*

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

# ILO Convention No. 190: A monumental development to address violence and harasssment at workplace



LAW DESK

Until June 2019, various international instruments, norms, and practices were developed by both the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations to deal with violence and harassment at workplace. All those instruments and norms focused on specific issues, targeted specific groups, and were developed in light of specific contexts. Thereafter, the Convention No. 190 concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work (Convention No. 190) was adopted with an inclusive and integrated approach and set out a fundamental set of principles for addressing violence and harassment in the places related to work. It is pertinent to mention that Bangladesh is yet to ratify the Convention.

In the international platform, the adoption of the Convention could not be timelier considering the pervasiveness of the occurrence of violence at workplaces across countries all over the world. The Convention is strong and practical and provides a clear overarching action-oriented framework as well as an opportunity to ensure decent work environment based on dignity and respect for human persons, free from violence and harassment. The Convention is a milestone that anticipated to shape future labour reforms globally. The instruments and ideas based on which the Convention came into existence gives the impression that all that had been spoken about workplace violence for more than 60 years were compiled and brought under a single instrument.

“Violence and harassment” have been broadly defined under the Convention

**“Violence and harassment” have been broadly defined under the Convention as “a range of unacceptable behaviours and practices, or threats thereof, whether a single occurrence or repeated, that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm, and includes gender-based violence and harassment”**

as “a range of unacceptable behaviours and practices, or threats thereof, whether a single occurrence or repeated, that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm, and includes gender-based violence and harassment” (Article 1). Article 1(b) further defines “gender-based violence and harassment” as violence and harassment directed at persons because of their sex or gender or affecting persons of a particular sex or gender disproportionately. Thus, the Convention takes a pragmatic approach in defining “violence and harassment” which encompasses, among others, physical abuse, verbal abuse, bullying and mobbing, sexual harassment, threats, and stalking.

The Convention applies to both private and public sectors, in both formal and informal economy; it protects everyone who works, irrespective of the contractual statuses – the trainees, interns and apprentices, including workers whose employment has been terminated, volunteers, jobseekers and job applicants, and individuals exercising the authority, duties or responsibilities of an employer (Article 2). Focusing on inclusivity, the Convention also is mindful of the fact that in the present world, work does not always take place at a specific workplace within a particular infrastructure, and therefore it extends its protection across other places, including work-related trips, travels, trainings, events, or social activities (Article 3). Taking into account the changing nature of jobs and a very large number of unorganised workers within the spectrum of labour all over the world, the Convention also addresses third party violence to ensure accountability.

The Convention also recognises an all-encompassing and wide range of state obligations, which contextualise the general obligation to “respect,

promote and realise the fundamental rights and principles at work” in effectively addressing violence and harassment in the world of work. The obligations include: adoption of laws and regulations to define and prohibit violence and harassment at workplace; compliance with the definition provided in the Convention; adoption of “laws, regulations and policies for ensuring right to equality and non-discrimination in employment and occupation, including for women workers, as well as for workers and other persons belonging to one or more vulnerable groups” (Article 6); taking all appropriate measures to prevent workplace violence and effectively protecting workers and adopting an effective workplace policy on violence and harassment. The Convention further recognises the obligation of each member states to monitor and enforce national laws and regulations regarding violence and harassment at workplace ensuring easy access to appropriate and effective remedies characterised by safe, fair and effective reporting and dispute resolution mechanisms and procedures in cases of violence and harassment at workplace (Article 10).

The Convention acknowledges the pervasiveness and unacceptability of violence and harassment at work, and directs the course for preventing, prohibiting, and eliminating them altogether. The comprehensive account of the Convention is therefore rightly expected to change attitudes of workplaces across member states with regard to violence and harassment.

Ratification of the Convention by Bangladesh could bring forth significant positive changes in the realm of work for Bangladesh and could institutionalise the dealing of violence and harassment at workplace and thereby protect women and other vulnerable groups.



# Intuitions of Harmony: The Vibrant Vision of Rabindranath Tagore

Ever since the COVID pandemic began, ‘distance’ and ‘isolation’ have become catchwords in our code for survival, but these words also assume a wider resonance in geopolitical terms, for today we inhabit a world that is increasingly riven by social, economic, religious and political fissures. At this moment, it is worth reflecting on the broad, inclusive vision of Rabindranath Tagore, whose words conjure up a diverse yet interconnected universe, where all things, great and small share an underlying unity: “The same stream of life that runs through my veins night and day runs through the world and dances in rhythmic measures” (Gitanjali).

**RADHA CHAKRAVARTY**

Born in 1861, Rabindranath was brought up in a large family with an open, eclectic approach to culture, religion and the world of ideas. This receptivity to heterogeneous influences remained with him throughout his life, expressing itself in his thought, writings and practices

As a humanist, Rabindranath believed in reaching out beyond the comfort zone of home, to seek out the unknown and unfamiliar. A compulsive globe trotter, he travelled across continents, to connect with people and cultures in different parts of the world. In fact, he came to be regarded as a mediator between nations, almost a prophet and mystic, and India’s international cultural ambassador. Contact with diverse cultures widened his horizons, and sensitized him to the importance of embracing otherness:

Thou hast made me known to friends whom I knew not. Thou hast given me seats in homes not my own. Thou hast brought the distant near and made a brother of the stranger. .... (Gitanjali)

Exposure to other cultures also enhanced Rabindranath’s nuanced understanding of East-West relations. Although he strongly opposed imperialism, even surrendering his knighthood in protest against the Jalianwallah Bagh massacre in 1919, he admired English literature, Western music, and other elements of European culture. “Let us be rid of all false pride and rejoice at any lamp being lit in any corner of the world, knowing that it is a part of the common illumination of our house,” he writes (letter to C.F. Andrews, 1920). Rabindranath’s desire was for “the co-operation of all peoples of the world,” while respecting mutual differences.

In Rabindranath’s vision, humanism represents a higher value than nationalism. All the same, he does not actually reject the idea of nationhood. Rather, he insists on a more nuanced understanding of what the term “nation” can imply. In “What is a Nation?” (1902) he describes the nation as a construct based on the collective memory, aspirations and will to action of an entire people. As an alternative



to the Western nation state, he speaks of *samaj* or society, “a spontaneous self expression of man as a social being,” where relations between people “are not mechanical and impersonal but based on love and cooperation” (“Society and State,”*Swadeshi Samaj*, 1904). Novels like *Gora* and *The Home and the World* demonstrate his evolving ideas on nationhood and identity. His songs became the national anthems of India and Bangladesh, and inspired the Sri Lanka anthem too.

What frequently troubles Rabindranath is the prescriptive, monolithic imagination behind many social, political and religious systems. He critiques the idea of “one nation” being imposed on the world by imperialist power. To H G Wells (June 1930), he complains: “The tendency in modern civilization is to make the world uniform. Calcutta, Bombay, Hong Kong, and other cities are more or less alike, wearing big masks which represent no country in particular.” Seen in retrospect, these insights appear far-sighted, for they anticipate contemporary debates about the culturally homogenizing effects of globalization.

Rabindranath’s writings also reveal his anguish at different forms of oppression prevalent in society, and a prophetic sense of the rising tide of resistance to come. His views on social issues, especially on women’s empowerment, appear ahead of

their time in many respects. Texts such as *Chokher Bali*, *Gora*, “Khata,” *Chitrangada* and “The Wife’s Letter” address questions of female desire, gender stereotypes, the predicament of widows, women’s role in nation-building, their right to education and need to find a voice. “Nari” argues that women will usher in a new and better world. Issues of caste, untouchability, and women’s access to religion take centre stage in *Chandalika*. During his sojourn at Silaidaha, the young Rabindranath had witnessed the plight of the rural population in Bengal, and developed an empathy for the downtrodden. We see this concern in *Ghare Baire* and “Dui Bigha Jami.” “It is the poor who bear the responsibility of freeing a society that has been trampled upon by the wealthy,” Rabindranath insists ((*Samabanyiti*, c. 1928; translated by Fakrul Alam). In *Stray Birds* he predicts: “Man’s history is waiting in patience for the triumph of the insulted man.”

The song *himsaye unmotto prithibi* expresses Rabindranath’s distress at the violence and hate he sees around him:

THE WORLD today is wild with the delirium of hatred, the conflicts are cruel and unceasing in anguish, crooked are its paths, tangled its bonds of greed. ... O Thou of boundless life, save them, ...

Let Love’s lotus with its inexhaustible treasure of honey open its petals in thy light. (*Poems*, 1942)

*Natir Puja* draws on the Buddha’s image to make a plea for religious tolerance and inclusivity. *Gitanjali* questions religious rituals and orthodoxies, recognizing a god who lives in people’s hearts:

Leave this chanting and singing and telling of beads! Whom dost thou worship in this lonely dark corner of a temple with doors all shut? Open thine eyes and see thy God is not before thee!

He is there where the tiller is tilling the hard ground and where the pathmaker is breaking stones. He is with them in sun and in shower, and his garment is covered with dust. Put off thy holy

**What frequently troubles Rabindranath is the prescriptive, monolithic imagination behind many social, political and religious systems. He critiques the idea of “one nation” being imposed on the world by imperialist power.**

mantle and even like him come down on the dusty soil!

Rabindranath’s writings exude a vivid sense of oneness with the natural world. *Chhinna Patrabali* manifests his visceral ecological consciousness: “This earth, like someone I have loved long, through many births, remains ever-new to me; the two of us share a very deep and extensive acquaintance.” The story “Bolai” depicts a special affinity between human and natural realms. Rabindranath’s songs, poems and paintings are suffused with this love for nature. Today, as the world reels from the impact of global warming, his ideas acquire a special resonance.

The educational experiments of Rabindranath Tagore also stem from this visionary dimension in his

thought. As a school dropout unable to adjust to conventional methods of teaching, his own experiences fuelled his desire to invent an alternative system of education closer to nature and indigenous elements. In 1901 he founded a school in Santiniketan, in the heart of rural Bengal, where children would be taught in unorthodox ways intended to foster their intellectual curiosity, closeness to nature, creativity and self-reliance. Visva-Bharati, formally established in 1921, was a university inspired by Rabindranath’s dream of bringing together “All the world in one nest” (*yatra visvam bhavatyekanidam*). The university was meant to draw together the finest elements from different cultures across the world, providing a space for dialogue across languages, intellectual systems and creative traditions. The idea was to develop the human personality as a whole, in order to promote the fullest possible realization of human potential. Rooted in local tradition yet truly international, Santiniketan aspired to combine modern science with spirituality. Sriniketan, the project for rural reconstruction that developed alongside, was designed to create social awareness among students while improving the living conditions of the underprivileged sections of the local community at Bolpur.

Rabindranath’s often dystopian view of the world he saw around him paradoxically inspires his vibrant, inspirational imagination of a more harmonious existence. Perhaps it is time for us to revisit that dream:

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high; Where knowledge is free; Where the world has not been broken up into fragments by narrow domestic walls ... Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake. (*Gitanjali*)

**Radha Chakravarty** is a writer, critic and translator. She has co-edited *The Essential Tagore* with Fakrul Alam. Her recent translations include *Our Santiniketan* (Mahasweta Devi) and *Char Adhyay* (Rabindranath Tagore). She was Dean, International Affairs and Professor of Comparative Literature and Translation Studies at Dr. B. R. Ambedkar University, Delhi, India.

## From Rabindranath Tagore’s CHHINNAPATRA

TRANSLATED BY SOHANA MANZOOR  
*Shelaidaha, 1888*

Our boat was docked by a sandbank on the other side of Shelaidaha. It was a gigantic strip of sand where the contour of a river could be seen. Sometimes streaks of sand could be mistaken as streams. No sign of a village, or people, tree or grass, but spots of chapped and dark earth interspersed the dry white sand. If one looks to the east, a fathomless blue above was visible, and a profound expanse of whiteness at the bottom. It was as if the earth offered a poverty-stricken barrenness and the sky mirrored an ethereal futility. Desolation of this kind is difficult to match. On the west, appearing like a dreamland was a quiet stream. Under the rays of the setting sun lay a high bank on the other side of the river and small huts. It seemed that one back saw the creation of the world, while on the other saw the apocalypse. I specifically remember the sunset because that is the time when we made our visits. In Calcutta, we tend to forget how beautiful the earth really is. That the sun sets everyday amidst this peaceful abode of trees,

and thousands of stars rise over the endless grey, lonesome and desolate sandbank every night – seem simply sublime. You will comprehend the incredible beauty of the land only if you live here. How can one explain the strange act of turning the pages of a huge volume on the eastern sky at dawn, and at dusk retracing the same pages on the western horizon? The narrow stream, the wide expanse of sandbank and a picturesque embankment on the other side, seemed like an abandoned edge of earth. A hushed repose of learning! These words might sound like mere poetry in our capital city, but here, this was the reality.

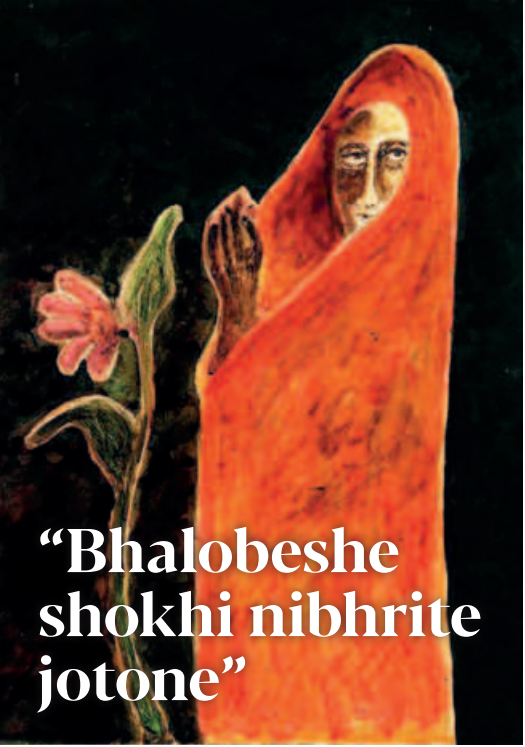
In the evening, the boys along with their friends went to explore the sandbank. Bolu went one way and I another. The two women walked towards yet another direction. Sometime later, the sun went down and the golden glimmer disappeared. The scenes around me became indistinct and the small shadow by my feet made me realize that the crescent, pale moon had risen. The moonlight on the white sandbank caused delusion—where was the sand and where was the water, where was

the sky and where was the land? It seemed like a mirage.

Yesterday, after spending some mesmerizing moments around this place I had gone back to our boat to find that only the boys had returned. I sat on a chair and started reading a book on an obscure topic called “animal magnetism.” The light from the lantern was low, and others seemed to have disappeared. I placed the book face down on the bed and headed out to look for them. In that vast land of pale sand, I saw not a single black head. I shouted, “Bolu.” The sound travelled in all ten directions and mingled with the sphere, but no responses came. My heart sank like a large umbrella when it is shut forcefully. Gofur came out of the boat with a light, Proshonno came out too as did the boatswains. We divided into small groups and spread out looking for them. I went on calling Bolu and Proshonno kept calling “chhoto ma.” The boatmen could be heard hollering, “Babu, babu.” In that silent and deserted land, many voices kept on calling but to no avail. Once or twice, Gofur shouted, “I see them,” but then he said, “No, I don’t.” Just think of the

mental agony I was going through. You have to imagine the silent night, the pale moonlight, a lonesome and desolate sandbank with the light from Gofur’s lantern flickering in the distant. Some plaintive cries from one side turned into echoes far away. We were hopeful one moment and then our hearts plunged into despondency. All kinds of horrific thoughts flashed through my mind. Did Bolu get trapped in quicksand? Perhaps she had fainted away. Or, maybe they were attacked by some ferocious animals. I found myself positioned against the freedom of women. Suddenly, someone said that they had ended up on the other side of the upward slope and hence could not return. The boat sailed on to the other side and the mistress of the boat returned. Bolu was heard saying, “I’ll never take you people with me again.” Everybody was tired and embarrassed. Under the circumstances, I could not utter any of the reproachful words I had rehearsed. Even when I woke up the next morning, I could not say anything to them.

**Sohana Manzoor** teaches English at ULAB. She is also the Literary Editor of The Daily Star.



TRANSLATED BY VINCENT DIP GOMES

Inscribe my name, beloved,  
With care and affection  
In the temple of your secluded heart.

Trace the beat of the music  
That plays in my soul  
In the anklets on your feet.

Caress in your loving embrace  
My cooing bird of songs  
And hold it your palace garden.

Do not forget, beloved, to tie  
The friendship band I gave you –  
Along with your gold bangles.

Pluck a bud from my creeper  
Unmindfully, and place it  
In the curly arrangements of your hair.

In my fond memory  
Paint a vermilion dot on  
Your fair forehead.

Let the sweetness of my enchanted heart  
Melt and blend  
In the scent of your body.

Collect the broken pieces of  
My distraught life and death to mingle  
With your unparalleled glory.

**Vincent Dip Gomes** is a fourth-year student in the Department of English, ULAB.





## ‘Capital-ists’ blockade entry points to stop Eid vacationers returning

**“I contribute greatly to this country’s economy. I deserve to have a clean and peaceful capital city. I will continue to be a great earner for my country when all my workers return from...”**

ROOTED CORRESPONDENT

As literally millions of people were coming back to the capital yesterday, a group of residents flocked to the city’s entry points and set up blockades to stop so-called “district dwellers” from returning after Eid vacation.

Calling themselves “Capital-ists” and missing the irony, the angry mob of well-dressed men and women were seen taking selfies with their iPhones and shouting “go back to your districts!” as buses piled up at the capital’s entrance points.

Visiting one such spot, this correspondent saw expensive cars lined up on the right wing – the side of the barricade that you’d rather be on. The correspondent was also very grateful because he had stayed rooted in the capital.

Experts say this has long been in the works as people who stayed behind in the capital during Eid vacations -- in other words

those who had lavish enough homes and means in the capital to celebrate the festival -- have often been heard to say how much more peaceful the city became when half the people went back home before Eid.

The identity of the experts cannot be disclosed because there is a chance that they are this correspondent’s friends.

On the right wing of the entry point, one Capital-ist activist said, “Have you seen the city these past few days? It was beautiful. I could actually reach Dhanmondi from Banani in 20 minutes. That’s when I realised the problem.

“It’s all these district dwellers. They live in the capital year round, but they don’t care for it. They cause all the traffic jams, and make the city dirty. It’s time. We have decided to take our capital back. Go back to your districts!” he shouted.

When asked what he does, the man said he was a garment factory owner.

“I contribute greatly to this country’s

economy. I deserve to have a clean and peaceful capital city. I will continue to be a great earner for my country when all my workers return from...” his voice trailed off and he went pale as he looked at all the people on the wrong side of the barricade.

A woman on the right wing said, “I was able to go to so many places this Eid, and I realised our capital can be so beautiful. Driving along the clean and congestion-free streets, I almost forgot the dishevelled state of my home. That Rokeya, let her come back from her village, I have quite the list of chores for her to do.”

The chief of the Capital-ists then ascended to the podium and said, “I thank my fellow Capital-ists for taking this initiative. This Eid, I did not even feel like going abroad. It felt like my own capital, where I was born, was *bidesh*. I intend to keep it this way, and help our country become like *bidesh* all year round.”

## Men get most joy in disbelieving women, proving they are liars: Survey

STAR SURVEY CORRESPONDENT

The world does not like believing women and that fact has been further supported by a recent worldwide survey.

The survey, which was kicked off following the Heard vs Depp saga unfolding inside a courtroom in the greatest nation in the world, revealed that men and in fact most people find immense joy in the knowledge that a woman is wrong, that her claim to fame is based on lies and she is a liar or her claims of abuse are fake.

“Look, it is hard to believe women in the best of times. It’s in the gospels, women always cross the line. From Sita, to Eve, to Amber, they have all brought down great men with their careless and conniving ways,” says one of the respondents of the survey.

Another respondent decided to shed some light on the “hating on women phenomenon” and said the overwhelming majority of YouTube videos are in favour of Depp because he was such a big star who always made people laugh and Amber was most definitely lying and as such she had proven women cannot be trusted.

He further said, “Look how calm and collected Depp appears, he even made the audience laugh. But look at Heard. She was crying and was unstable while giving her deposition. How can someone who can’t hold her calm in the courtroom, hold her calm in the bedroom? This is basically the case with most women. They overreact to everything.”

Most survey respondents also said one woman’s



claims alone can’t be taken seriously. “There must be at least 60 women claiming they were abused by one man, to be taken seriously, such as in the Bill Cosby case.

“Just when the world was coming to terms with giving the abuse victim the benefit of doubt, the Depp vs Heard case has shifted the balance and the world is back to questioning the motives of a woman bringing allegations of abuse. This survey has shown us that majority of men, especially on social media, are quick to jump on the women-hating wagon. It’s the easier option,” concluded the lead author of the survey Mansplan Manpreet.

## THIS JUST IN Football isn’t dead

KHALID HOSSAIN

A lot had changed in the world of football since 2019: Real Madrid, once a European powerhouse, stooped to the lowest of lows, having failed to win any Champions League in the previous three attempts.

Chelsea Football Club lost their sugar daddy in a Russian billionaire owner through warfare.

Lionel Messi left a just-less-than-bankrupt club named FC Barcelona and went to live off-the-grid in Paris and Bangladesh, a country where more than a hundred million passionate football fans of Brazil and Argentina reside, and which somehow dramatically slipped to 188 in FIFA rankings against overwhelming odds and couldn’t qualify for the World Cup this time around.

Some say, football’s status as the most popular game had lost its charm ever since Manchester United stopped possessing what it takes to win even a mother’s forgiveness. However, almost all mainstream academicians, based on a collective twenty-twenty hindsight, blamed the pandemic for the rapid decline of football since watch-from-home audiences weren’t generating enough profit despite being overall productive in their daily lives. Something had to give to bring fans back to TV, something!

Not everyone gave up believing in football though. Most notably, a notorious cult group named ‘Football will never be Soccer, you free-kicks!’ had never let their faith dampen. All they had to do was patiently wait until the prophesied Chosen One came along, the one who’d miraculously turn the tables with his Midas touch in almost every game and thus,

revive the entertainment value of the game itself; at least present a fighting chance for football’s sake.

That’s where Karim Benzema, like a Tamil movie hero, enters the frame and keeps being the main protagonist behind rebooting action-packed, from-out-of-nowhere-comeback wins for Real Madrid, who are one step

away from lifting this year’s Champions League trophy after Wednesday night.

With all scripts flipped late in curiously dramatic fashion one by one as Paris St Germain, Chelsea and Manchester City -- all overnight-turned-rich clubs -- were made

to suffer a severe-to-mild identity crisis, Madrid face Liverpool next, where Karim Benzema from France, frontrunner for the heavyweight championship, is up against Sadio Mane and Mohamed Salah, the reigning tag-team champions from Africa.

It seems the toppling of the hegemony of World Wrestling Entertainment among the teenage football fans is only around the corner; and real football is likely to come back in style following a nerve-wracking, romantic match in the finale in Paris.

