

**P5 Tangail hillocks**  
Grabbers continue feasting on them



**P6 'Fame fades'**  
Actor Sohel Mondal tells The Daily Star



**P7 Journo funeral**  
Mourners attacked, outcry mounts



**B1 Forex crisis**  
Experts suggest BB weaken taka

# INDIAN EXPORT BAN Pressure now brews over wheat

Prices shoot up by 25pc

STAR REPORT

After edible oil, wheat, the second-most consumed cereal in Bangladesh, is posing to be the next pressure point for food inflation, which in March leapt to its highest level since October 2020.

Yesterday, a day after India announced a shock ban on wheat exports, the prices of the grain shot up here, in a testament to the interconnected nature and fragility of agricultural systems that have been exposed by a perfect storm of war and weather.

At Chattogram's Khatunganj, the country's largest wholesale market, the price of wheat has increased by as much as 25 percent. The Indian wheat is selling for Tk 1,500 a maund (about 37.5 kilograms), up from Tk 1,200 on Thursday.

The Canadian wheat's price too increased: by about Tk 250 to Tk 2,050-Tk 2,080.

It was the same case similar all over the country, including the capital, according to traders.

Bangladesh, which depends on imports to meet 86 percent of its annual requirement of 85 lakh tonnes of wheat, started procuring the cereal in significant volumes from India in 2020.

And in the financial year that ended on March 31, Bangladesh was the largest importer of wheat from India, accounting for nearly half of the neighbouring country's record seven million tonnes of wheat exports, according to estimates by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade under the Commerce Ministry.

**"We have kept the window open for [our] neighbours. We have also kept the window open for a large number of vulnerable countries if their governments do make such requests. The order is to divert trade to the needy, poor and the vulnerable countries,"**

Indian Commerce Secretary BVR Subrahmanyam

## WHY A GLOBAL WHEAT SUPPLY SHORTAGE IS EXPECTED

- Russia-Ukraine war
- Poor harvest in China
- Inventories tight in the US, Canada
- Argentina restricted exports
- Australia shipping at full capacity
- Drought and heat in India

The Indian export restriction comes after searing heat in March and April, where temperatures of up to 45C hit large parts of India's wheat belt, have heightened concerns about the country's domestic supply.

Subsequently, the wheat price in India, where inflation has hit an eight-year high, has risen to record levels, going well above the government's minimum support price of Rs 20,150 in some spot markets.

However, Indian Commerce Secretary BVR Subrahmanyam yesterday calmed the fears of its neighbours.

"We have kept the window open for [our] neighbours. We have also kept the window open for a large number of vulnerable countries if their governments do make such requests. The order is to divert trade to the needy, poor and the vulnerable countries," he told the media, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

He, however, did not name any country.

Indian officials said while the ban on wheat export may hit private traders, it is unlikely to affect government-to-government deals. For

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Dinghies with commuters negotiate a water hyacinth-covered stretch of the Buriganga at the capital's Swarighat. The invasive plant becomes ubiquitous during this time of the year.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

## PK Halder arrested in West Bengal

The man who 'embezzled Tk 2,500cr' was posing as an Indian, defrauding banks there too; Momen says he will be brought back to Bangladesh

STAR REPORT

Prashanta Kumar Halder, who has been on the run from facing charges of money laundering since 2019, was arrested along with an associate in West Bengal yesterday.

The former managing director of NRB Global Bank, better known as PK Halder, was arrested by the Indian Directorate of Enforcement, which investigates money laundering and violations of foreign exchange laws, said officials at Bangladesh Deputy High Commission in Kolkata.

The arrests were made at the request of Bangladesh, our correspondent in New Delhi reports, quoting Bangladeshi officials.

In cases filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC), PK Halder is accused of swindling multiple non-banking financial institutions out of more than Tk 2,500 crore. The ACC will take measures to bring him

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back to the country as soon as possible, said its chairman Mohammad Moinuddin Abdullah.

"We have an extradition agreement with India... We will bring him back," he told The Daily Star.

Contacted yesterday evening, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said the

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## Journalists decry DSA

Worried over laws in the offing, shrinking space for free speech

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Journalism in Bangladesh is under siege on the digital front, beginning from surveillance to draconian laws.

This has led to a culture of fear and self-censorship, curtailing freedom of expression and silencing independent media.

Editors and publishers of newspapers across the country convened yesterday to present this statement at a discussion to mark the World Press Freedom Day. The programme was organised by the Editors' Council at the CIRDAP auditorium.

At a session titled "Press Under Digital Siege", all speakers condemned the expansive list of laws that can be used to silence journalists.

These include the defamation law in the Code of Criminal Procedure, the Information Communication Technology Act, the Digital Security Act, the draft Data Protection Act, the draft BTRC regulations for social media and the draft OTT platform regulations.

Mahfuz Anam, president of the Editors' Council, asked, "What is it that journalists do that our hands and feet must be bound with so many laws?"

There are 20 provisions in the DSA that prosecute offences related to freedom of expression and 14 of those are non-bailable, he said.

Even the most impartial, best-intentioned judicial system cannot prevent the incarceration of a journalist being prosecuted under the DSA, since the offences are non-bailable, he added.

"What offences do journalists commit that they do not even deserve bail?"

Nurul Kabir, editor of New Age, said the press operates within a culture of "extralegal" oppression - a kind that abuses repressive legislation.

"Whenever a culture of fear is established, it is always because of the deficit of a free press. Freedom of expression is a political right."

Kader Gani Chowdhury, the president of the BNP-faction of the Dhaka Union of Journalists, said, "Previously, it was not possible to write against influential people on mass media. Now it is not possible to write against them on [even] social media."

He added, "Laws should be made for the public's benefit, whereas they have [instead] been made to violate the rights of the people. This is meant to threaten them into silence. Leaders should be open to criticism."

Nazrul Islam Mithu, president of Dhaka Reporters' Unity, said, "The defamation law in the country is a remnant of our colonial legacy. But even the British have turned defamation into a civil offence - it is no longer a criminal offence [there]."

Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul, former president of Bangladesh Federal Union of Journalists, said the Official Secrets Act is another colonial act that gets pulled up on a whim to persecute journalists.

"Globally, trust in the media is eroding. New laws that repress independent media will intensify this."

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## Tigers face new-look SL

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh will be desperate to start the process of transforming themselves into a proper Test unit when they face Sri Lanka in the first match of the two-Test series at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram today.

The match is scheduled to begin at 10am [BST].

Since their historic win against New Zealand at Mount Maunganui earlier this year, Mominul Haque and his troops have been unable to live up to expectations. They were outplayed in the two-match Test series in South Africa in April.

The hosts will be without two of their crucial cogs of the bowling department - pacer Taskin Ahmed and Mehedi Hasan Miraz - due to injuries. However, Bangladesh will be boosted by the presence of Shakib Al Hasan, who was supposed to miss the Test due to Covid-19, as

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Bangladesh head coach Russell Domingo (C) and team director Khaled Mahmud (R) laugh with ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan (L) at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday, ahead of the first Test against Sri Lanka beginning today.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED





Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her younger sister Sheikh Rehana jointly laid the foundation stone of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial Trust Library at the capital's Dhanmodi-32 yesterday.

PHOTO: BSS

## None can erase Bangabandhu's name from history Says PM

BSS, Dhaka

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina yesterday said repeated attempts were made to remove the name of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman from history and thus the nation was deprived of knowing the real history since 1975.

"But it is not possible now as the new generation is very much aware of the country's true history," she said.

The premier made this remark while addressing the foundation stone laying ceremony of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman Memorial Trust Library at Dhanmodi-32 in the capital.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her younger sister Sheikh Rehana, the two daughters of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, jointly laid the foundation stone of the library.

Prime Minister's Deputy Press Secretary KM Shakhawat Moon briefed the media about it.

Hasina said the library of Bangabandhu Memorial Trust would help the new generation know about the true history of Bangabandhu and the country.

She said the anti-liberation forces had stopped the trial of the killers of the Father of the Nation by enacting an indemnity ordinance after 1975.

The Awami League government has freed the nation from the stigma through the trial of the killers by repealing the indemnity ordinance after assuming power, she added.

Bangabandhu's grandson Radwan Mujib Siddiq was also present on the occasion.

## Dhaka's air quality remains 'moderate'

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka's air quality continued to be in the "moderate" zone yesterday, mainly owing to rains in different parts of the country.

With an air quality index (AQI) score of 99 at 10:05am, the city ranked 11th in the list of world cities with the worst air quality.

When the AQI remains between 51 and 100, the air quality is acceptable. However, there may be a risk for some people, particularly those who are unusually sensitive to air pollution.

India's Delhi, Kuwait's Kuwait city and the United Arab Emirates' Dubai occupied the first three spots in the list, with AQI scores of 282, 172 and 161, respectively.

An AQI between 101 and 200 is considered 'unhealthy', particularly for sensitive groups.

Similarly, an AQI between 201 and 300 is said to be 'poor', while a reading of 301 to 400 is considered "hazardous", posing serious health risks to residents.

AQI, an index for reporting daily air quality, is used by government agencies to inform people how clean or polluted the air of a certain city is, and what associated health effects might be a concern for them.

In Bangladesh, the AQI is based on five criteria 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.

A report by the Department of Environment (DoE) and

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## SC judicial activities resume on Monday

BSS, Dhaka

The Supreme Court will resume its judicial activities from Monday, after a 17 day vacation.

The cause list for 53 benches of the High Court division was published for hearing in this regard, said court sources.

Besides, the hearing of the cases under the appellate division of Supreme Court will be held by two separate benches, it added.

The 17 day vacation included weekly holidays, public holidays and court's vacation.

## 49 held in anti-drugs drives in the capital

UNB, Dhaka

Dhaka Metropolitan Police (DMP) yesterday claimed to have arrested 49 people on charges of selling and consuming banned drugs.

Sources at the DMP headquarters said members of the Detective Branch and local police conducted drives across the city in the past 24 hours and made the arrests.

Some 12,151 pieces of yaba, nearly 12 kg of cannabis, 73 small packets of heroin and 43 bottles of Phensedyl were seized from their possession.

A total of 39 cases have been registered with local police stations against the arrestees under the Narcotics Control Act.

## 'A pioneer of freethinking'

Say speakers on National Professor Anisuzzaman at event marking his second death anniversary



Speakers at the event commemorating the second death anniversary of National Professor Anisuzzaman yesterday.

PHOTO: COLLECTED

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

It has been two years since National Professor Anisuzzaman, famously known as the nation's lighthouse, passed away.

Yesterday was his second death anniversary.

Chandrabati Academy organised a seminar in remembrance of his life and works at the capital's Foreign Service Academy on the day.

Foreign Minister Abdul Momen was chief guest at the seminar. Selina Hossain, chairperson of Bangla Academy, and Prof Muhammad Samad, pro-vice chancellor of Dhaka University, were special guests.

The seminar was chaired

by renowned singer Rezwana Chowdhury Bannya.

Litterateur Anisul Hoque, Abul Khayer and Prof Abdul Mannan were present among many distinguished guests.

Dr Anisuzzaman's wife Siddiqua Zaman and son Ananda Zaman were also present.

Honouring Anisuzzaman's contributions, Momen said, "Professor Anisuzzaman was our lighthouse. Although he has left us, he has left behind a treasure trove of literary works and fundamental research on Bengali literature."

"We must preserve his works and convey his thoughts and ideas to our future generations," the minister said.

Selina said, "A personality like Anisuzzaman is born once every several centuries. We must teach our next generation about how he has enlightened us through his thoughts and literary works."

"He is one of the pioneers of freethinking in Bangladesh. His knowledge on our history, heritage and traditions was massive. He was a vanguard in all our historic national movements, such as the Language Movement, Liberation War and the movement for democracy," added Selina.

Remembering Anisuzzaman's contributions in the Language Movement, Prof Samad said, "Anisuzzaman was one of

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## Will introduce school buses to ease gridlock Says DNCC mayor

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Dhaka North City Corporation (DNCC) Mayor Md Atiqul Islam yesterday said they would take initiative to introduce school buses for different schools, especially English-medium ones, to reduce traffic congestion in the city.

Addressing a meet-the-press programme at Gulshan's Nagar Bhaban to observe his two years as mayor for the second term, Atiqul said they will ask authorities of all English-medium schools to introduce the service.

"I have already discussed the matter with the deputy minister for education. I will talk to the education minister to make the initiative successful," said the mayor.

"We will reduce taxes for those who will introduce the bus service and will also come up with a system so that guardians can easily monitor their children's movement," he said.

Regarding traffic congestion, the mayor said Setu Bhaban and BRTA Bhaban have become the cause of traffic congestion from Banani's Chairman Bari to Dhaka airport.

Requesting the government to take steps to shift those buildings to other places, the mayor said if the BGMEA building can be demolished, then why will it not be possible to demolish these two buildings.

Responding to a question about U-loops, the mayor said they were an initiative of late mayor Anisul Huq, and authorities have implemented them following Buet's design.

Widening of roads is required at some U-loop points like Chairman Bari and Nabisco to get desired results, he said.

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PRAYER  
TIMING  
MAY 15



	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	4:10	12:45	5:00	6:36	8:00
Jamaat	4:45	1:15	5:15	6:40	8:30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

## One held over question leak of DSHE exam

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The question paper of an examination to get employed at Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) has allegedly been leaked.

The exam for the post of "office assistant/computer operator" was held at 61 centres in Dhaka on Friday. It aimed to fill 513 vacancies.

Police's detective branch (DB) has made the claim, following the arrest of an examinee from the capital's Eden College centre on that day.

The arrestee was identified as Md Sumon Jomadder (30).

Harun-or-Rashid, joint commissioner of DB, told The Daily Star yesterday that the question was leaked around 2:18pm on Friday, around 42 minutes before the exam.

"The arrestee already said that the question paper was leaked," he said.

Asked about who was behind it and how it happened, he said they are investigating the incident, and details will be disclosed soon.

A case was filed with Lalbagh Police Station.

According to the first information report (FIR), the invigilator of room-2237 at Eden Mohila College found Sumon answering the MCQ questions by copying

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On Dhaka-Chattogram highway, where hundreds of medium and large vehicles ply on a regular basis, a man was seen riding his bicycle right in the middle of the road with a passenger on board. Since vehicles tend to move at high speed on highways, such risky way of travelling could lead to a fatal accident at any point. This photo was taken in Narayanganj's Signboard area yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN





Many areas of Tangail and Gazipur have been flattened due to rampant hillock cutting, which is supported by local influentials. This has put the biodiversity of the region in huge danger. If action is not taken to prevent this practice in due time, the distinct geological feature of this part of the country may just disappear. These photos were taken recently.

PHOTO: STAR

## Grabbers feast on Tangail hillocks

MIRZA SHAKIL

A range of red hillocks -- it's not only a great sight, surrounded by luscious Sal forests, but is also crucial in conserving the biodiversity of the midlands of Tangail and Gazipur.

However, this geological feature is on the verge of extinction, owing to the greed of an influential quarter, which is cutting the hillocks, flattening them and selling the soil to brick kilns.

In many areas, these influential locals have also occupied the surrounding flatlands and cultivated different crops, fruits and vegetables, by forging documents of ownership, thanks to some corrupt land department officials and employees, sources said.

A recent study by the environmental science and resource management department of Mawlana Bhashani Science and Technology University found that the hillocks in the region are undergoing a transformation due to the growing commercialisation of land and expanding

**According to locals, the excavators cut the hillocks in these areas at night and take the soil away on trucks, leaving the roads dusty. This also creates inconvenience for people living on the sides of roads.**

urbanisation and industrialisation.

Even just two decades ago, before falling victim to the soil traders' greed, there were numerous hillocks in Mirzapur's Gorai, Ajgana, Latilpur, Banshtail and Tarafpur unions. The traders have also been extracting soil from the government's reserve forests surrounding the hillocks, alleged locals.

Ashrafur Islam, a ranger at Banshtail Range, said they had recently seized three excavators and sued one of the owners for extracting soil from the reserve-forest land.

According to locals, the excavators cut the hillocks in these areas at night and take the



soil away on trucks, leaving the roads dusty. This also creates inconvenience for people living on the sides of roads.

Jamir Uddin, deputy director of Department of Environment in Tangail, said they cannot take any action against the plunderers due to not having magistracy power. "Only the local administration can take steps against it."

Asked, Mirzapur Upazila Nirbahi Officer Hafizur Rahman said fines of around Tk 50 lakh have been realised during multiple drives. He also mentioned that they will continue the drives.

The mayhem has not stopped in Ghatail upazila as well, where about one third of the landscape is covered by red hillocks, under six bits of a reserve forest area in Dhalapara range. During a recent visit, this correspondent noticed that many of the hillocks have already been flattened in Delutia, Kachara and Baripara areas under Choura and Deopara, Gourishwar under Battala and Akander Baid in Sagardighi.

"It is not possible to cut the hillocks without contacting the forest department officials and employees. Yet, it has become a

common occurrence," told Jahurul Islam, a local.

Dhalapara Range Officer Abdul Hamid, however, claimed that they stopped the hillocks from being razed after they acquired information about it.

Ghatail upazila assistant commissioner (land) Farzana Yasmin said they conducted mobile court drives at Delutia. However, no one was found at the scene.

Meanwhile, indiscriminate cutting of hillocks is also going on at adjacent Sakhipur, where grabbers have been occupying khas land, according to sources.

Contacted, Ataul Gani, deputy commissioner in Tangail, said a section of influential people backed by politicians are active in hillock cutting due to increasing demand for soil in different development projects.

"However, there is no alternative to conserving the beautiful natural assets for protecting the balance of environment and biodiversity," he said.

The issue has already been discussed in several development coordination committee meetings of the district, he added.

“

**It is not possible to cut the hillocks without contacting the forest department officials and employees. Yet, it has become a common occurrence.**

Jahurul Islam  
A local from  
Dhalapara

## We will keep fighting for democracy

Says Fakhru

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur



BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir yesterday urged party leaders and activists to continue movements to restore democracy through the 2023 elections.

He said democracy has been destroyed during AL's rule.

Fakhru was addressing the inaugural session of Dinaipur district council of BNP on Dinaipur Institute premises.

The senior BNP leader said the nation is going through a tough time and such a situation occurs whenever AL is in power. "Awami League talks about democracy but does the opposite," he said.

Autocratic rule is prevailing in the country, he said. Murder, rape, looting and robbery have become common nowadays, he said.

The AL-led government ruined the judicial

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## AL council of Ctg south by Sept: Hanif

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

The council of Chattogram south district unit of Awami League will be held by September, the party's joint general secretary Mahbulul Alam Hanif said yesterday. He made the announcement while addressing the grassroots representatives conference organised by the AL unit at a convention centre in the port city.



Hanif said unlike what BNP leaders are saying, Bangladesh will never face situation like that in Sri Lanka due to very strong economic foundation of the country. "We have been developing under the leadership of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and so, there will not be any economic crisis in this country," he said.

"The conspirators are spreading propaganda but they would not succeed," he added. Information Minister Hasan Mahmud, who also addressed the programme, echoed him.

AL organising secretary Abu Sayeed Al Mahmud Swapan said the council of grassroots level would be completed by July while the district level council would be held by the first week of September. AL presidium member Engr Mosharraf Hossain addressed the meeting as the chief guest with AL Chattogram south district president Moslem Uddin Ahmed in the chair.



Two mangled buses after they collided head-on on Tangail-Mymensingh highway in Madhupur, Tangail yesterday, killing one of the drivers and injuring at least 25 passengers. Inset, a car fell into a canal from an abandoned bridge in Tongibari, Munshiganj the same day, which killed two teenagers.

PHOTO: STAR

## No warning sign to prevent their death

**2 teens die as car falls off abandoned bridge; families blame authorities' negligence**

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Three young friends yesterday decided to go on a joy ride in a car, hoping to have a good time together. But that joy turned into a nightmare for them and their loved ones.

Their car fell from an abandoned bridge into a canal, killing two of them in Munshiganj's Tongibari upazila.

The accident took place at Pura Bazar area around 3:30am.

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বাংলাদেশ প্রকৌশল বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, ঢাকা

আবশ্যিক

বাংলাদেশ প্রকৌশল বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ের উন্নয়নমূলক কার্য সৃষ্টিতে সম্পন্ন করার নিমিত্তে প্রধান প্রকৌশলী কার্যালয়ে নিম্নবর্ণিত পদটি খন্ডকালীন (সম্পূর্ণ অস্থায়ী) নিয়োগের জন্য যোগ্যতা সম্পন্ন বাংলাদেশী নাগরিকদের নিকট হতে আবেদনপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে।

পদের নাম ও বেতন	পদের সংখ্যা	নির্ধারিত যোগ্যতা ও অভিজ্ঞতা
স্থপতি (Architect) সর্বসাকুল্যে মাসিক বেতন ৳: ৪৬,৪৪০/- (ছেচল্লিশ হাজার চারশত চল্লিশ) এছাড়া বছরে ১টি নববর্ষ ভাতা ও ২টি উৎসব ভাতা প্রাপ্য হবেন। অফিস সময়ঃ সপ্তাহে ৩ দিন, সকাল ৯:০০ হতে বিকেল ৫:০০টা	১টি পদ খন্ডকালীন (সম্পূর্ণ অস্থায়ী)	বাংলাদেশ প্রকৌশল বিশ্ববিদ্যালয় হতে B. Arch ডিগ্রিধারী হতে হবে। ন্যূনতম ১০ বছরের বাস্তব অভিজ্ঞতা থাকতে হবে।

প্রার্থীকে সাদা কাগজে নাম, পিতার নাম, মাতার নাম, স্থায়ী ও বর্তমান ঠিকানা, শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা, অভিজ্ঞতা, জাতীয়তা, জন্ম তারিখ, NID-এর কপি, সদ্য তোলা পাসপোর্ট সাইজের ২ কপি ছবি, মোবাইল নম্বর, ইত্যাদি উল্লেখপূর্বক সকল প্রকার সনদের সত্যায়িত কপি এবং নিজ ঠিকানা সম্বলিত ফেরত খামসহ আবেদনপত্র রেজিস্ট্রার, বাংলাদেশ প্রকৌশল বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়, ঢাকা বরাবরে পৌছাতে হবে। নিয়োগ পরীক্ষা/সাক্ষাৎকারে উপস্থিত হওয়ার জন্য কোন প্রকার যাতায়াত বা দৈনিক ভাতা প্রদান করা হবে না। কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ ব্যতিরেকে এই নিয়োগ প্রক্রিয়া গ্রহণ/বাতিল/পদ সংখ্যা হ্রাস-বৃদ্ধির ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন। নিয়োগ প্রক্রিয়ায় কর্তৃপক্ষের সিদ্ধান্তই চূড়ান্ত বলে গণ্য হবে। চাকরিরত প্রার্থীগণকে অবশ্যই যথাযথ কর্তৃপক্ষের মাধ্যমে আবেদন করতে হবে।

উল্লিখিত পদের আবেদনপত্র জমাদানের শেষ তারিখঃ ৩০/০৫/২০২২

জিডি-৯৬৯

রেজিস্ট্রার

# Fame fades away, but hard work is remembered:

SHOHEL MONDOL



PHOTO: COURTESY OF SHOHEL MONDOL



Starting out with minor roles in films like 'Under Construction' and 'Aynabaji', Shohel Mondol has proved himself as one of the most talented actors working today. He is also a passionate stage actor. He recently starred in Nuhash Humayun's anthology series, 'Pett Kata Shaw', on Chorki.

**For Shohel, giving his best to every project is more important than chasing stardom. "Fame eventually fades away, but hard work is remembered," he says.**

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

Sharing anecdotes from the sets of that show, Shohel explained that there was an incident where his character's hand was cut, and he had to put his 'bloody finger' into a jar of red chili powder. "We used actual chili powder, and in the next scene, I had to rub my eyes with my fingers. Naturally, my eyes had started to burn and I had tears rolling down my cheeks. It was painful, but thankfully, the scene ended up looking great," he mentions.

His projects, "Boli" and "Unoloukik" (Don't Write Me), and "Taan" were quite experimental. Upon asking whether he would like to keep experimenting, Shohel shared that he wants to explore situational

comedies, biographies, and family dramas with social messages. He hopes to do full-fledged commercial movies as well.

He also commented on the government's draft regulation for digital, social media and OTT platforms: "This act should involve people who are working in the OTT sector. Their absence might affect the people who are genuinely making good content. Freedom of individuals should not be hampered in a democratic country."

His web series for Hoichoi, "Refuge" is currently in post-production, while his films, "Hawa" and "Mayar Jonjal" are slated for release this year.

"We shot 'Hawa' in St Martin's Island for 40 days. One scene in the film required me to be under sea water with our director of

photography for six hours straight. That experience will stay with me forever," shares the "Taqdeer" actor.

For Shohel, giving his best to every project is more important than chasing stardom. "Fame eventually fades away, but hard work is remembered," he says.

"I am not worried about the fact that my fame can evaporate in an instant. Rather, I am terrified of not being able to perform well. In those moments, I even think of giving up acting, but I keep trying until I am satisfied with the outcome."

That being said, if acting does not work out for Shohel somewhere down the line, he would pick travelling as a career.

He will begin working on Robiul Alam Robi's untitled Chorki project this month.



## Meet the next generation of Bollywood in Zoya Akhtar's 'The Archies'

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

With Bollywood all geared up to welcome the next generation of actors, filmmaker Zoya Akhtar has shared the first look of her much-talked-about film, "The Archies", starring Suhana Khan (Shah Rukh Khan's daughter), Khushi Kapoor (Sridevi's daughter), and Agastya Nanda (Amitabh Bachchan's grandson).

Suhana is set to play Veronica, while Agastya and Khushi will be playing Archie and Betty respectively.

In addition to the trio of star kids, the film will also feature young talented artistes Dot, Mihir Ahuja, Yuvraj Menda, and Vedang Raina in pivotal roles. The Zoya Akhtar directorial, an Indian adaptation of the popular Archie comics, will be a live-action musical set in the 1960s. It is slated for release on Netflix in 2023.

## Bubly's 'Prem Puran' with Roshan



Ziaul Roshan and Shobnom Bubly are set to star in the film, "Prem Puran".

The romantic movie is jointly directed by Masud Mohiuddin and Mahmood Hasan Shikdar.

Most recently, Bubly was seen in the Chorki original film, "Floor Number 7", directed by Raihan Rafi.

Roshan and Bubly have previously worked together in a number of films, including "Chokh", "Revenge", "Betray", and "Maya: The Love".

# COUNTRYWIDE

RAJSHAHI DIVISION

## Bad weather hampering Boro harvest

ANWAR ALI

Rice yield is likely to dwindle to some extent in eight districts of Rajshahi division during this Boro season due to bad weather during the harvest period, officials and farmers said.

Good weather persisted during the sowing and cultivation period, but the storms and rains started partially damaging crops in many areas since the harvest began in mid-April.

Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) which warned farmers of more storms till the end of May is also another reason for crop damage in storms.

Farmers cannot harvest Boro paddy before the storms as many of them cultivate additional crops before the proper sowing period of Boro paddy. This leads to crop damage, they said.

Such as farmers in Rajshahi cultivate potatoes before boro and mustard in the Chalan beel areas covering Natore, Pabna and Sirajganj districts, delaying the boro cultivation, they said.

The DAE has recorded a yield of 3.99 tonnes of rice per hectare as they accounted for a harvest of 31 per cent of 8,20,981 hectares of boro

land till Tuesday in Rajshahi and Bogura regions in the division.

The yield was 0.27 tonnes per hectare less than last year's yield of 4.26 tonnes per hectare, DAE officials said.

"The total yield will rise after the harvest of hybrid and high yielding varieties of paddy completes," Mohammad Khayer Uddin Mollah, acting additional director of Rajshahi DAE said.

He admitted there are chances for declining yield this year.

According to growers and DAE officials, farmers of Chalan Beel usually harvest paddy early.

This year when the DAE is asking farmers to harvest early, farmers of plain lands are facing a labour crisis as most farm labourers were visiting Chalan Beel and other low-lying areas where the harvest starts early.

The farm labourers would return home to join the harvest of their respective districts later.

During a visit to Chalan Beel areas of Satpukuria village in Natore recently, this correspondent found that most farmers already harvested their crops.

They were seen engaged in separating paddy from sheaves, stacking piles of straws, and boiling

paddy for making rice.

They would survive the upcoming monsoon with the rice while they would sell the rest.

DAE officials said Boro paddy was cultivated on some 33,000 hectares of land in Chalan Beel areas.

In the three upazilas of Shingra, Boraigram and Gurudaspur, some 86 per cent harvest was completed, but in Sirajganj and Pabna districts, the harvest barely went beyond 35 per cent, DAE officials said.

Hossain Ali Lebu, a farmer, said he suffered a loss of Tk two lakh as he gathered 200 maunds less paddy this season from 30 bighas of his boro lands.

"Storms lashed my paddy sheaves to the ground," he said, adding "This loss is appearing big as cultivation costs have risen with an increase of diesel price."

He further added that he delayed boro cultivation after harvesting mustard.

However, Md Jewel, another farmer, said he managed a good yield on his 150 bighas of land.

"Good weather helped me," he said, adding that he got 20 maunds per bigha yield from local varieties while the hybrid varieties fetched him a yield of 25 to 35 maunds.

## 22 AL men

FROM PAGE 12

As soon as the van reached Bayan More near Mahabub's home, a group of 15-20 criminals attacked them. The goons hacked them indiscriminately and fled.

Locals rushed the three injured to Daulatpur Upazila Health Complex from where they were shifted to Kushtia General Hospital. Mahabub breathed his last there around 1:20am on Thursday.

The two others were undergoing treatment at the hospital yesterday.

## Buddha

FROM PAGE 12

the people of Bengal since ancient times. Paharpur and Mainamati Shalban Bihar are its shining examples."

He urged the members of the Buddhist community to celebrate Buddha Purnima maintaining health guidelines to prevent the future spread of Covid-19.

The prime minister urged all to work generously to further strengthen the practice and bond of harmony in Bangladesh in future.

"I hope that by upholding and nurturing the ideals of Gautama Buddha, everyone will play a role in building Bangladesh as a peaceful country," she said.

## World's

FROM PAGE 12

Victoria Fellner visited Sky Bridge 721 earlier this week as part of a preview event, sharing photos on her Instagram account.

Fellner told CNN Travel that taking her first step on the bridge gave her a "queasy feeling." But this initial fear subsided as she admired the surrounding landscape.

## Special campaign to start

FROM PAGE 12

received their booster shots as of Thursday have also been excluded from this list.

"We have enough vaccines in our stock to inoculate all the eligible recipients with the booster dose," Dr Mowla Baksh Chaudhury, deputy director and programme manager of the expanded programme on immunization (EPI), told Mowla said.

## 3 couples die in freak road

FROM PAGE 12

The couple on the motorbike -- Anik Raham Babu, 28, and Yasmin Aktar, 19 -- also died on the spot.

The mangled remains of the car landed on Firoj Mollah, 55, and his wife Ruma Begum, 40, who were threshing paddy. They were killed on impact.

The bus flipped on its side on the road, killing its passenger Altob Hossain Khan, 50, said Sirajul Islam, in-charge of Bhatiapara Highway Police Outpost in Gopalganj.

At least 25 bus

passengers were injured in the accident, he told The Daily Star.

On information, fire service members, police and locals rushed to the spot, recovered the bodies and rescued the injured.

Road traffic was suspended on the highway for about half an hour after the accident, said police.

Lelin Saha, 48, younger brother of Bashudev, said, "My brother was going to our village home to see my ailing mother. I talked to him over the phone about an hour before the accident. But he is now

gone for ever."

Deceased Firoj's neighbour Tinu Mollah said Firoj was a physically challenged person. He used to thresh paddy with the help of his wife. The accident has left the couple's three school-going children orphaned.

Abu Nayeem Md Mofazzal Haque, OC of Bhatiapara Police Station, said they earlier recommended that the authorities set up a central reservation on this particular section of the highway as accidents occur here frequently.

## Macron starts second term with challenges mounting

AFP, Paris

French President Emmanuel Macron formally began his second term in office yesterday, maintaining suspense about his new government ahead of parliamentary elections next month that will shape his next five years in power.

The 44-year-old scored a solid victory in April 24 presidential polls against far-right leader Marine Le Pen, but still needs a majority in parliament to be able to push through

his domestic reform agenda.

The identity of Macron's new government is expected to set the tone for campaigning, with the president suggesting he intends to name only the second woman prime minister in modern French history.

Speculation has been rife in the French media, with UNESCO Director-General Audrey Azoulay and current Labour Minister Elisabeth Borne seen as possible candidates, but Macron has taken his time to name a

replacement for outgoing Premier Jean Castex.

"It's been decided, but no one knows who it is," a presidential advisor told AFP on condition of anonymity.

An announcement is expected early next week.

Macron's Republic on the Move party has been renamed Renaissance ahead of the parliamentary polls on June 12 and 19, with several centrist and centre-right parties set to compete under the collective pro-Macron banner of "Together".



Farmers are busy separating paddy from sheaves and stacking piles of straws in Chalan Beel area in Singra upazila in Natore as they fear storms and rains may damage their crop any time.

PHOTO: ANWAR ALI



A few hundred protesters gather during a demonstration against a possible Nato membership of Sweden outside the ruling Social Democrats party's office in Stockholm, Sweden, yesterday. Sweden on Friday inched closer to a reversal of its decades-long policy of military non-alignment, as a security policy review concluded that joining Nato would reduce the risk of conflict in northern Europe.

PHOTO: AFP

## ATTACK AT JOURNO'S FUNERAL

## Outcry against Israel mounts

AFP, Jerusalem

The US and EU led an international outcry yesterday after Israeli police charged the funeral procession of Palestinian journalist Shireen Abu Akleh and beat pallbearers who almost dropped her coffin.

Thousands of mourners packed Jerusalem's Old City on Friday for the burial of the 51-year-old Al Jazeera journalist, two days after she was killed during an Israeli raid in the occupied West Bank.

Television footage showed pallbearers struggling to stop Abu Akleh's casket from falling to the ground as baton-wielding police charged towards them, grabbing Palestinian flags.

The United States was "deeply troubled to see the images of Israeli police intruding into her funeral procession," Secretary of State Antony Blinken said.

The European Union condemned what it said was "unnecessary force" used by the Israeli police.

Israel and the Palestinians traded blame after Abu Akleh was shot in the head on Wednesday near Jenin refugee camp in the northern West Bank. She had been wearing a helmet and a bulletproof vest marked "Press".

Israel's army said an interim investigation could not determine who fired the fatal bullet, noting stray Palestinian gunfire or Israeli sniper fire aimed at militants were both possible causes.

The Palestinian public prosecution said an initial probe showed "the only origin of the shooting was the Israeli occupation forces". Al Jazeera said Israel killed her "deliberately" and "in cold blood".

In a rare, unanimous statement, the UN Security Council condemned the killing, calling for "an immediate, thorough, transparent, and impartial investigation."

Abu Akleh, a Christian and a Palestinian-American, was a highly respected reporter and her funeral drew massive crowds. The Jerusalem Red Crescent said 33 people were injured in Friday's mayhem, of whom six were hospitalised. The Israeli police said they arrested six people.

The United States, European Union and United Nations have backed calls for a full investigation into her killing. Israel has publicly called for a joint probe, which the Palestinian Authority has rejected.



## ASEAN SUMMIT IN WASHINGTON

US hails 'new era'  
Myanmar junta slams summit snub, lauds ties with China

AGENCIES

US President Joe Biden said on Friday a first summit in Washington with leaders from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) marked the launch of a "new era" in the relationship between the United States and the 10-nation bloc.

In a joint 28-point "vision statement" after a two-day meeting, the two sides took what analysts called a symbolic step of committing to raise their relationship from a strategic partnership to a "comprehensive strategic partnership" in November.

On Ukraine they reaffirmed "respect for sovereignty, political independence, and territorial integrity," wording that a regional expert said went further than past Asean statements. The statement did not condemn Russia by name for its Feb 24 invasion.

The summit marked the first time Asean leaders gathered as a group in Washington and their first meeting hosted by a US president since 2016.

Biden's administration hopes the effort will show that the United States remains focused on the Indo-Pacific and the long-term challenge of China, which it views as its main competitor, despite Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

He was also hoping to persuade Asean countries to toughen their stance on Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Biden told the Asean leaders that "a great deal of history of our world in the next 50 years is going to be written in the Asean countries, and our relationship with you is the future, in the coming years and decades."

Biden called the US-Asean partnership "critical" and said: "We're launching a new era - a new era - in US-Asean relations."

Vice President Kamala Harris said the United States would remain in Southeast Asia for "generations" and stressed the need to maintain freedom of the seas, which the United States says is challenged by China.



"The United States and Asean have shared a vision for this region, and together we will guard against threats to international rules and norms," Harris said.

Neither she nor Biden mentioned China by name. The United States has accused China of using coercion against its neighbors.

Asean groups Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

Biden hosted a summit dinner at the White House on Thursday, and his administration promised \$150 million for areas including infrastructure, security, pandemic preparedness and clean energy.

New US commitments will include deployment of a Coast Guard vessel to the region to help counter what the United States and regional countries have described as China's illegal fishing. Still, US spending pales in comparison to that of China, which in November alone pledged \$1.5 billion in development assistance for Asean over three years to fight Covid and fuel economic recovery.

Meanwhile, Myanmar's junta on Friday slammed the United States for snubbing it at a regional summit and meeting with opposition leaders, and instead lauded its ties with "powerful" China.

"In the Asia-Pacific region, China is a powerful country. Our country is dealing with and having relations with powerful China and India," he said.

## Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed elected UAE president

AFP, Abu Dhabi



The UAE's long-time de facto ruler Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan was elected as president yesterday, official media said, a day after the death of former leader Sheikh Khalifa. The 61-year-old was unanimously elected by the Federal Supreme Council, WAM news agency said, becoming the ruler of the oil-rich country founded by his father in 1971. Sheikh Mohamed,

often known as 'MBZ', met members of the Federal Supreme Council, made up of rulers of the UAE's seven emirates, as the country enters a period of mourning for his half-brother Sheikh Khalifa. Sheikh Mohamed's ascension, which was widely expected, formalises his position as leader of the desert state of 10 million after years of calling the shots while Sheikh Khalifa was sidelined by poor health.

## OPPOSITION TO NATO EXPANSION

## US 'working to understand Turkey's position'

AFP, Washington

Washington is "working to clarify Turkey's position" after President Recep Tayyip Erdogan expressed opposition to Finland and Sweden joining Nato, White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki said Friday. The idea of the two nations becoming members of the transatlantic alliance had received "broad support from Nato member countries," Psaki said. Pentagon spokesman John Kirby likewise said the United States is working to "better understand" Ankara's stance. Erdogan told journalists on Friday that "we do not have a positive opinion" about the two countries joining the alliance. Turkey has long accused Nordic countries, in particular Sweden, which has a strong Turkish immigrant community, of harboring extremist Kurdish groups as well as supporters of Fethullah Gulen, the US-based preacher wanted over the failed 2016 coup. To gain Nato membership, all the 30 members of the alliance must agree unanimously to extend a formal invitation.

## Tripura CM Bilab Dev resigns amid party infighting

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi



Chief Minister of India's BJP-ruled Tripura state Biplab Kumar Deb yesterday resigned from the post amidst serious infighting in the party's state unit one year ahead of fresh assembly elections there. Deb said he has submitted his resignation to Governor S N Arya whom he met at the Raj Bhavan in Agartala, capital city of Tripura.

Later in the day, the BJP appointed Dr Manik Saha as his replacement. Saha, who is a dentist by profession, was elected as a Rajya Sabha MP just last month and is also the Tripura state president of the BJP. Deb took to Twitter to congratulate his successor and said Tripura will prosper under PM Modi's "vision and leadership". Deb was appointed the chief minister after the BJP stormed to power in 2018, ending 25 years of Left Front rule in Tripura.

## RUSSIA REFERENDUM

## Georgia's breakaway region to vote in July

AFP, Moscow

The leader of Georgia's breakaway region of South Ossetia on Friday set July 17 as a date for a referendum on joining Russia.

"Anatoly Bibilov signed a decree on holding a referendum in the Republic of South Ossetia," his office said in a statement, citing his people's "historic aspiration" to join Russia.

South Ossetia was at the centre of the Russian-Georgian war in 2008 after which the Kremlin recognised the territory - along with another separatist region, Abkhazia - as an independent state and stationed military bases there.

Bibilov lost his bid for re-election earlier this month. Russia has expressed hope the incoming leader, Alan Gagloev, will preserve "continuity" in ties with Moscow.

The announcement came amid Russia's military campaign in Ukraine, where separatist regions of Donetsk and Lugansk have also expressed interest in joining Russia.

In August 2008, Russia launched an assault against Georgia which was battling pro-Russian militia in South Ossetia. The fighting ended five days later with a European Union-mediated ceasefire but claimed more than 700 lives and displaced tens of thousands of ethnic Georgians.



Child migrant Eliana, 4, from Guatemala, is being carried towards a member of the Texas Army National Guard, after she and other asylum-seeking migrants waded across the Rio Grande river into the United States from Mexico in Roma, Texas, US, on Friday.

PHOTO: REUTERS



"The spread of the malignant epidemic (Covid-19) is a great turmoil to fall on our country since the founding. But if we don't lose focus in implementing epidemic polic..., we can more than overcome the crisis."

Kim Jong Un as North Korea reports 21 new deaths

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

## Drives against oil hoarders alone will not work

Greater scrutiny and control essential to keep oil prices stable

WE appreciate the government's ongoing drives against illegal hoarders who continue to sell edible oils at prices much higher than what's printed on the bottles. Reportedly, cooking oil almost disappeared from the retail shops across the country before Eid-ul-Fitr, even before the government hiked their prices. Having created an artificial crisis in the market, the hoarders then started selling the oils—bought way before the new prices were imposed—at much higher prices. This has created immense sufferings for the ordinary people who are already struggling to buy essential food items due to increased prices.

Amid such a situation, the government started drives against the hoarders, and between Monday and Thursday last week, seized over 6,34,000 litres of edible oil from warehouses and shops across the country. The Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection (DNCRP), an agency of the commerce ministry which is conducting the drives, has also fined the hoarders for such illegal activities. While conducting such drives is no doubt important, the question remains as to whether this would be enough to stop the illegal hoarders and bring down prices in the retail market.

Reportedly, over the past year, the prices of edible oils have gone up eight times. And after the latest increase in prices, many consumers have turned to alternative sources such as mustard oil, as it is comparatively cheaper than soybean and other oils, given that mustard oil is produced locally with locally produced ingredients. But shockingly, the companies have now also increased the price of this oil to make extra profits. Reportedly, mustard oil prices of different brands have increased by up to Tk 80 per litre in the local market.

The situation is really concerning and the government must do everything to keep the cooking oil market stable. While the DNCRP must conduct regular drives in all districts of the country to prevent the hoarders from exploiting consumers, strict directives must be given to the companies producing oils to not increase prices at will violating the rules.

Simultaneously, the government needs to identify the syndicates responsible for creating such artificial crises, and make sure the masterminds behind them are brought to book—as by the amount of hoarded oil that is being discovered, it is apparent that there is some sort of coordination going on between well-connected traders, dealers and importers, leading to this scenario. Additionally, the government should sell edible oils at subsidised prices to the poor through its open market sales (OMS) programmes, and look for alternative markets to buy the product from at cheaper prices.

## Floating hospital brings hope to rural backwaters

A commendable initiative that deserves our full support

STORIES of selfless service are few and far between in this age of unbound greed and self-gratification, yet they restore our faith in humanity. One such story, published in this daily on Saturday, highlights the vital contributions of a floating hospital that sails through rivers to far-flung areas and offers healthcare services to the common people. Aply named Jiban Tari, the hospital, the first of its kind to be launched in Bangladesh in 1999 by the non-profit Impact Foundation Bangladesh (IFB), provides specialised health check-ups and services for eyes, ENT, orthopaedics and physical deformity to the disadvantaged population.

Reportedly, the three-deck floating hospital has an accommodation facility for 32 full-time residential staff members, including doctors, nurses, paramedics, medical technologists and support staff, with two fully-fledged operation theatres to perform surgeries on board. With the resources available to them, the hospital authorities say they have served patients in 32 locations in 22 districts, while 700,000 patients have received medical services and more than 50,000 have undergone surgeries.

One can well imagine the rigorous background work that goes into preparations for sailing for a particular destination and obtaining permission from the civil, police and health authorities. It is heartening to know that the hospital has operated even during the pandemic, providing medical services and running awareness campaigns on Covid-19. We also appreciate the fact that the hospital trains school teachers on how to conduct basic eye check-ups on students and community leaders on basic health and hygiene. For a floating establishment on the move around the rural backwaters, the question of having access to updated information is a pertinent one. In this connection, we're glad to know that foreign surgeons come on visits to provide training to the health providers and help in ensuring quality treatment and care at the hospital. Such trainings and exchanges help to keep its staff abreast of the latest medical knowledge.

The Jiban Tari initiative is thus a remarkable example that shows us what the collective will of humanity can achieve if inspired properly and guided in the right direction. Understandably, discipline and dedication are required to make such a venture successful. It is not business as usual for a group of people living on a small ship for months on end and serving the sick. They deserve our unconditional support and recognition.



ILLUSTRATION: ANWAR SOHEL

# Return of enforced disappearance and extrajudicial killing?



### ON THE SHORES OF (IN)JUSTICE

CR Abrar is an academic and a member of Nagorik, a platform for human rights and the rule of law.

CR ABRAR

IT was a sombre occasion at the Dhaka Reporters Unity premises on April 30. At a press conference, Yasmin Nijhum claimed that a group of men in plainclothes introducing themselves as members of a law enforcement agency picked up her 44-year-old husband Mohsin Gazi from the city's Shewrapara area on April 19. She further informed that the family was advised by the perpetrators that since her husband would be returned within three days, they need not report the matter to any authority. More than 10 days after his disappearance, as Mohsin did not return and his loved ones had no information about his whereabouts, Nijhum made a fervent plea at the press conference that at least Mohsin "should be shown arrested".

Nijhum reported that at around 2:45am on that day, a group of six to seven men came in three white minibuses to their house. Their landlord was informed by the group that they had come to pick up Mohsin and claimed to have an arrest warrant issued against his village address in Bhola (it was neither shown nor presented to the family). One of the men displayed an identity card. However, when Nijhum's brother took a photo of the card, he was forced to delete it and reset his phone. Nijhum claimed that the police refused to file any case and only agreed to register a general diary, that too "on condition that no law enforcement agency will be mentioned in the document", Nijhum alleged. The officer in charge of the Kafrul police station declined to comment on the allegation that they had asked the family not to mention any enforcement agency's name in the GD.

The press conference was a prompt and bold expression of solidarity by the members of Mayer Dak with the family of Mohsin, the latest victim of alleged involuntary disappearance in Bangladesh. Soon after the outbreak of the news of his disappearance, the Mayer Dak leadership convened the press conference to spread the message about the latest victim and exert pressure on the authorities that Mohsin be produced before the court or at least shown arrested as demanded by his spouse. At the press conference, the family stressed that they had credible information that the victim was in custody of a particular unit of an elite law enforcement agency in Dhaka. Throughout the day, despite such brave claims, the state agency maintained a stoic silence.

A day after the press conference, Mohsin was "shown arrested", curiously by Rab 8 in the faraway southern town of Barishal. The commanding officer of Rab 8 pleaded ignorance of the claims that the family had made about him being involuntarily disappeared from his Dhaka residence. A press release by the unit stated that Mohsin Gazi was found in a mahogany orchard based on a "tip-off" as he and his "accomplice robbers" were

taking shelter there "carrying illegal and locally made weapons". A number of items including cleavers, pistol, shooter gun, rifle and several bullets were claimed to have been recovered from the group. Rab also brought about allegations of extortion, theft, intimidation, abduction and hostage taking against "Mohsin and his gang".

While the charges against Mohsin are matters for the police to establish in the court of law, questions abound. For example, how can an individual who was allegedly apprehended by a team of six or seven persons claiming to be members of a law enforcement agency (with at least one person displaying identity card)—using at least three similar minibuses, in the wee hours of the morning, from the middle of Dhaka city, after informing the landlord and the members of the family of the apprehended individual about the purpose of their mission, and promising to bring him back in three days, with the individual essentially being involuntarily disappeared for more than 10 days, only to be discovered in the southern city of Barishal—be involved in a conspiracy with weapons along with a group of accomplices in a mahogany orchard? While the concerned unit of the law enforcement agency may feel confident with the crafted narrative, discerning observers would find such claims to be preposterous and derisive. There is little doubt among the members of the family and those who witnessed the arrest of Mohsin in Shewrapara on April 19 that he was involuntarily disappeared. Surely, he remained outside the protection of the law during the interim period.

The US sanctions on Rab and seven of its key current and former officials have irked, if not rattled, the Bangladesh government. Unfortunately, the Bangladesh government has continued to deny knowledge of or involvement in such phenomena. In line with this approach, it termed the US move as "outlandish" and "regrettable" and its foreign minister publicly solicited Indian support to get rid of the sanctions.

There was a sharp drop in the number of incidents of both alleged involuntary disappearances and extrajudicial killings after the imposition of the sanctions, bringing relief among the citizenry. The Mohsin Gazi episode appears to have brought an end to that feeling of respite. The lull that accompanied the US sanctions (imposed on December 10, 2021) on grounds of alleged extrajudicial killings also appeared to have come to an end when one Raju, 35, succumbed to Rab action in Cumilla on April 18. In a separate case, Kawser Ali Mondal (45) of Joypurhat died after a shootout with Rab in Manikganj four days later. The Rab claimed it had to open fire as the force came under attack by the miscreants. While members of law enforcement agencies are indisputably justified to take stern action if they come under attack, including using firearms, one is perplexed as to why ordinary individuals would be coerced to sign documents by state agencies to declare that they had "witnessed gunfight", whereas in reality, they had not seen any such occurrence. Two witnesses of the case, Rifat Mahmud (20), and Saiful Islam (37), a CNG driver, had to sign documents at Rab's prodding, but admitted to the press that although they had seen a dead body, they were not

witness to any gunfight. The locals also reported that they were not aware of any incident of gunfight with the Rab either (The Daily Star, April 22, 2022). These grievous incidents in the third week of April 2022 are indeed alarming.

At the Mayer Dak press conference, family members of at least a dozen disappeared persons demanded information about their loved ones along with that of Mohsin. They asked why members of law enforcement agencies refuse to furnish their identity documents and arrest warrants when they come to apprehend such individuals, why the police refuse to take cases when family members specifically name and identify the perpetrators, why the authorities do not investigate properly, and why the public representatives do not discuss such flagrant violations of rights on the floor of the parliament. If the claims by the government that its functionaries are not engaged in such heinous practices are tenable, then does the onus not rest on the state to account for more than 600 cases of involuntary disappearances over the last decade or so? The unwarranted and unsubstantiated statements of senior functionaries of the state including ministers that the victims are "hiding" after swindling in business, or after extramarital affairs, or have gone overseas without the knowledge of the family and the like, are an affront to victim families' sentiments. The families challenged the authorities to prove a single such case.

Bemoaning the disappearance of her husband, a wife said, "they have taken away the roof from over my head". Years have passed by, yet many families do not know whether their loved ones are dead or alive. "If he has gone, then I would like to hold a milad (the last rite)", said one mother. "At least they should show us his final resting place", was the desperate plea of a father. A boy wanted to know why his father does not accompany him to his school like his other mates. Likewise, little Lilly wanted her father to choose her dress for the then-upcoming Eid, a wish that will never come to fruition. Other family members highlighted mundane aspects of their lived experience without their loved ones. "My husband was in timber trade and we have enough savings in bank to tide us through. But we cannot access the money as we cannot get a succession certificate and thus have to live on the charity of my extended family", narrated another wife. Property settlement of many households remains pending for the same reason.

The failure of the mainstream society to extend moral support to the victim families is palpable. The decision of the National Press Club authorities to deny permission to use the venue for the Mayer Dak press conference only reflects the level of impediment and non-cooperation that these families face. Likewise, the silence of the mainstream civil society, the keepers of national conscience, on such gross violations of human rights is an affront to the spirit of the Liberation War. The time has come for the state to account for the whereabouts of every involuntarily disappeared person and, instead of trying to secure external support to remove sanctions, set up an independent and credible investigation in all cases of involuntary disappearances and extrajudicial killings.

**The decision of the National Press Club authorities to deny permission to use the venue for the Mayer Dak press conference only reflects the level of impediment and non-cooperation that these families face. Likewise, the silence of the mainstream civil society, the keepers of national conscience, on such gross violations of human rights is an affront to the spirit of the Liberation War.**



# Celebrating Fulbright Program on the golden jubilee of US-Bangla partnership



DEBAPRIYA BHATTACHARYA

Dr Debapriya Bhattacharya is a non-resident fellow at the Centre for Global Development (CGD), Washington, DC, and distinguished fellow at the Centre for Policy Dialogue (CPD), Dhaka.

RECENTLY, Bangladesh and the United States have celebrated half a century of their multifaceted partnership. It would be quite opportune to point out that the Fulbright Program, the flagship academic exchange program of the US government, played a significant role in providing critical substance to this partnership. It has boosted technical knowledge and intercultural skills of Bangladeshi academics and other professionals, and prepared a couple of generations for nation-building pursuits. Concurrently, a large group of experts from the US have acquired positive changes in their professional interactive approaches and contextual sensitivities by being in Bangladesh under the program.

Over the 75 years of its existence, the Fulbright program granted awards annually to nearly 8,000 students and scholars from 160 countries of the world as well as the US. Since its inception, more than 400,000 Fulbright alumni have studied, taught and conducted research in each other's countries. The program is well known for merit-based selection and academic prestige; its alumni include 60 Nobel Prize winners, 89 Pulitzer Prize winners, and 40 current or former state or government heads. Over the five decades, hundreds of members of Bangladesh's knowledge system, including this author, have had taken full advantage of this window of opportunity.

My association with the Fulbright program had been a family affair. I was a Senior Fulbright Fellow at the Center for Global Development (CGD), Washington, D.C., during 2004-05. In the recent past, CGD has elected me as one of its Non-Resident Fellows. On the other hand, my younger brother, Dr Debadarshi (Dipen) Bhattacharya, a professor of astrophysics who has worked for NASA and is a science-fiction writer, was a Fulbright Fellow from the US at BRAC University during 2006-07.

The program was created in 1946, in the context of the post-World War II, through legislation moved by Senator J William Fulbright. He was an influential statesman and the longest-serving chair (1959-1974) of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the US Senate. Democrat Fulbright's visionary leadership on

international relations greatly contributed to the creation of the United Nations as well as its peacekeeping initiatives. His efforts and contributions towards enhancing mutual understanding and partnership were recognised through the setting up of the prestigious Fulbright program. He passed away in 1995 at the age of 89.

Senator Fulbright's influence on me predates my participation in the program. I was struck by his basic philosophy, which in many ways defines the ethos of the program, and this is best expressed in his own words: "In the long course of history, having people who understand your thought is much greater security than another submarine". On another occasion, he pointed out that "as a conservative power, the United States has a vital interest in upholding and expanding the reign of law in international relations". What is interesting is that he related the rule of law in international relations to domestic democratic polity. No wonder he asserted that "to be a statesman, you must first get elected".

But, as a civil society person engaged in policy activism, my favourite quote from the writings of Senator Fulbright was the following: "In a democracy, dissent is an act of faith." In the era of diminishing democratic space, particularly for civil society, this saying remains of enduring relevance for our leaders. I wish our leaders took on board the senator's observation that "the citizen who criticises his country is paying it an implied tribute". Indeed, it is time to do a fresh reading of not only the apostles of democratic dispensation, such as Benjamin Franklin, but also of modern thinkers like J William Fulbright, who articulated some of the fundamental values of a rule-based liberal economy and society.

Over the last 50 years, the US-Bangla partnership has reorganised itself not only on strong footings but has also been energised by new momentum. Over the last two decades, the US has consistently been the number one export destination for Bangladesh. Bangladesh enjoys an annual trade surplus with the US to the tune of USD 5.9 billion (2021). This is despite the fact that since 2013, after the Rana Plaza incident, Bangladesh is not a beneficiary of the US Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) which provides for preferential market access to export products from developing countries.

The US is among the top three sources of remittance for Bangladesh. Over the last decade, it has also remained as one of the top five sources of foreign direct investment (FDI) for Bangladesh.



REPRESENTATIONAL PHOTO: BIGSTOCK

**The Fulbright program has not only evolved over the five decades as a mainstay of the US-Bangla partnership but has also emerged as a strong lever in Bangladesh's quests, *inter alia*, to leave the group of Least Developed Countries (LDCs), mitigate the adverse impact of climate change, and prepare for the 4IR.**

The net annual official development assistance (ODA) from the US to Bangladesh increased to almost USD 310 million annually by 2020. The partnership reached a new height during the pandemic, which included supply of vaccines by the US and Bangladesh exporting personal protection equipment (PPE) to the American market. The US remains a steadfast supporter of Bangladesh's efforts to host the Rohingya refugees and send them back to Myanmar. It has already provided more than USD 1.7 billion to this end.

The bilateral partnership is evolving within the institutional framework provided by the Bangladesh-US Partnership Dialogue (since 2012), the Bangladesh-US Security Dialogue (since 2012), and the Trade and Investment Cooperation Forum Agreement or TICFA (since 2014).

However, the significance of the Fulbright program for US-Bangla partnership needs to be explored within the mentioned dimensions and framework of the bilateral relationship and, more specifically, in the area of education. The US is one of the top four bilateral providers in terms of ODA commitments to education, accounting for about 5 percent of the total commitment. From 2011-2020, the average annual commitment of the US to Bangladesh's education sector was USD 7.17 million.

In the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the contribution of the US is quite pronounced in the delivery of SDG 4 (Quality Education). Specifically, US support had been focused on target 4.4.b, which is to increase the number of scholarships to developing countries for enrolment in higher education. Bangladesh is the fastest-growing country in terms of sending international students to the US. In the 2019-2020 academic year, over 8,800 Bangladeshi students studied in the US, with more than 75 percent of them studying in STEM fields (41 percent in engineering, over 19 percent in mathematics/computer science, and 14 percent in on-the-job training). Moreover, to improve early-grade reading and expand schooling to dropout children, USAID works with the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education of Bangladesh to invest in teacher training and production of teaching and learning materials.

To conclude, the Fulbright program has not only evolved over the five decades as a mainstay of the US-Bangla partnership but has also emerged as a strong lever in Bangladesh's quests, *inter alia*, to leave the group of Least Developed Countries (LDCs), mitigate the adverse impact of climate change, and prepare for the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR).

# The darker side of RTI in Bangladesh

SHAMSUL BARI AND RUHI NAZ

Dr Shamsul Bari and Ruhi Naz are Chairman and Assistant Director (RTI), respectively, of Research Initiatives, Bangladesh, RBIB. Email: rib@icitech-bd.com

TODAY, we turn away from the positive and encouraging side of the Right to Information movement in Bangladesh, depicted in our previous column (*The Daily Star*, April 16, 2022), to peer into the shadows.

**Union Parishad Chairman threatens to beat up RTI applicant:** The case stemmed from an RTI application submitted to the Designated Officer (DO) for RTI of a Union Parishad (UP) in Nawabganj Upazila, Dinajpur District, on February 6, 2022. Harunor Rashid, a local journalist, sought the following information: the number of Succession Certificates issued by the UP during the calendar year 2021; the amount

of fees levied for their issuance; and the government account to which the money was deposited. While waiting for a response, the applicant happened to visit the UP office on some other business on February 17, 2022. The Secretary of the UP, who is also the DO, spotted Harunor and informed the Chairman. According to local media, the Chairman apparently lashed out at him for his audacity to ask for such information. He used the "most filthy language, threatened to beat him up and threw him out of the office." Such behaviour is bound to scare prospective users of the law.

**Railway official enraged upon receiving RTI application:** Rita Akhter of Godagari Upazila of Rajshahi district had submitted an RTI request to the

DO of the local office of the Railway Department, seeking information on three counts. One, what actions were taken by the authorities to combat black marketing of railway tickets; two, rules authorising ticket-checkers to recheck passenger-tickets at the exit gate; and three, railway policy/rules, if any, to deal with poor behaviour of transgender passengers on trains. After passing through several hands, the application ended up with an officer who called the applicant on the phone and asked about her background, profession, and reason for seeking the information. He allegedly went into a rage and asked the applicant whether she had visited the station recently and was aware of various measures undertaken by the authorities to combat black-marketing and so on. He was reportedly extremely rude to the applicant and was annoyed by the fact that she used the RTI Act, which he felt was an instrument to harass public officials. If what we gathered is correct, it is indeed sad that government officials hold such a misconception about the purpose of RTI. This must change for the law to succeed.

**Designated Officer angered by an RTI application from a person who resides in another area:** The case arose from an RTI application submitted by one Quamruzzaman Pasha, a resident of Sariakandi of Bogura District, to the DO of the Environment Directorate Office of Moulvibazar Sadar Upazila of Sylhet district. He asked for some information on the air-pollution situation in Amtoil Union under the Upazila. He wished to know what measures were undertaken by the authorities to protect local inhabitants from the harmful effects of factory emission in the Union and receive reports on factory visits by concerned officials. Upon receiving the application, the DO reportedly called the applicant and asked what interest he had in seeking information on an area where he did not reside. She further told the applicant that she had no time to visit the concerned

areas nor to respond to his RTI request for information covered by official secrecy. The DO was obviously unaware of the scope of the law, the lack of geographical limitation on its application countrywide, and requirement to provide reason for seeking information under it.

Our investigations revealed that applicants face a variety of reactions from irate officials who feel uncomfortable to deal with RTI requests. For example, DOs may call and ask them to withdraw their applications or face dire consequences; employ other tactics to withdraw requests; invite them to their office and behave rudely with them; claim that the information sought falls under the jurisdiction of other units or under some exempt category, etc. All these to avoid responding in writing.

At the same time, however, we discovered a few examples of positive attitude of DOs towards applicants. In some instances, the DOs sought further information from applicants themselves to pursue a wrongdoing or guidance to locate the desired information. In others, DOs would call the applicants to convey that the information was dispatched. Some would even praise applicants for using the law to improve governance.

It is indeed a mixed bag. Though the negative experiences clearly outnumber the positive ones, the latter indicate hope for the future. It is important, therefore, that the negative aspects are identified on an objective basis and redressed properly. Normally one would expect the Information Commission (IC) to deal with them. But unfortunately, our enquiries also revealed many complaints against the IC itself. This emphasises the need for the development of a close interaction mechanism between the IC and the civil society for promotion of RTI law in the country. And since there are clear dereliction of duties by many public officials, the overarching supervisory role of the Cabinet Division of the Prime Minister's Office over public bodies could be put to use for their amelioration.

**Since there are clear dereliction of duties by many public officials, the overarching supervisory role of the Cabinet Division of the Prime Minister's Office over public bodies could be put to use for their amelioration.**

**CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH**

**ACROSS**

- 1 Brass band members
- 6 "Paradise Lost" figure
- 11 Of service
- 12 Banish
- 13 Submerged
- 14 Puzzled
- 15 Looked lasciviously
- 17 Pole worker
- 19 Bear's lair
- 20 Capt.'s superior
- 23 Bonehead
- 25 Flank
- 26 Deli staples
- 28 Annual race, for short
- 29 army exercises
- 30 Snaky shape
- 31 Sheltered side
- 32 Spot
- 33 Volcanic rock
- 35 Yellow gem
- 38 Like Santa's suit
- 41 In the know
- 42 Bert's buddy
- 43 Job bonuses
- 44 Oozes

**DOWN**

- 1 Soaking spot
- 2 Salt Lake City player
- 3 Wallets
- 4 Baby wipe additive
- 5 Clinched
- 6 Common dice roll
- 7 Cut drastically
- 8 Box office buys, in slang
- 9 Brewpub offering
- 10 Homer's neighbor
- 16 Dwells
- 17 Jockey Arcaro
- 18 Beef cuts
- 20 Grinding item
- 21 "Skyfall" singer
- 22 Track great Owens
- 24 Jeans feature
- 25 Runner on snow
- 27 Folds
- 31 Takes it easy
- 33 Pound sound
- 34 Collected stories
- 35 Keg need
- 36 Need to pay
- 37 Hole number
- 39 Pointer
- 40 "Certainly!"

WRITE FOR US. SEND US YOUR OPINION PIECES TO dsopinion@gmail.com.

**YESTERDAY'S ANSWERS**

S	H	O	P	S		B	A	B	A
C	A	R	A	T		R	A	N	O
O	B	E	Y	S		E	L	T	O
P	I	G	S		S	N	E	E	Z
E	T	A		A	P	E		S	E
S	A	N	D	B	A	G	S		
S	I	C		S	U	E		M	O
I	N	A	B	I	T			N	A
T	A	B	O	O		M	E	D	I
U	N	I	O	N		A	M	A	Z
P	E	N	S			T	O	N	E

# Find out if you are dehydrated

**Dehydration occurs when your body is unable to carry out its normal functions due to a lack of water and other fluids. It is a most prevalent issue that is mostly ignored until serious adverse outcomes occur.**

DR NAZIF MAHBUB

A lot of people get sick, and some even die as a consequence of dehydration. It is estimated that one in nine people around the world does not have access to clean drinking water, and dehydration has taken the lives of 760,000 children in developing countries.

You will become dehydrated if you do not restore lost fluids. You lose water every day by sweating, breathing, urinating, defecating, crying, and saliva (spit). Drinking or eating water-rich meals usually restores lost fluids.

The human body is roughly 75 per cent water. Without this water, it cannot survive. Water is found inside cells, within blood vessels, and between cells. Water loss is increased by fever, Diarrhoea, vomiting, sweating a lot, a lot of peeing (Diabetes and some medications like water pills — also called diuretics — can make you pee more often). Thirst is not always a good predictor of bodily water needs. Many people, especially older people, are not thirsty until dehydrated. So, drink more water in hot weather or while sick.

Dehydration symptoms vary with age. Dry mouth and tongue, no tears when sobbing, and no wet diapers for a long time

are indicators of dehydration in infants and young children. Dehydration symptoms in adults include severe thirst, infrequent urination, dark urine, weariness, and dizziness. Symptoms of extreme dehydration include fast heartbeat, rapid breathing, fainting, tiredness, loss of energy, disorientation, and irritability.

People are more susceptible to dehydration than others:

- Senior citizens. Some people lose their thirst sense as they age, and as a result, they do not drink enough water.
- Infants and young children are more prone to suffer from diarrhoea or vomiting.
- People who have chronic conditions that cause them to urinate or sweat more frequently, such as diabetes, cystic fibrosis, or renal disease
- People who take medications that induce them to urinate or sweat more frequently
- People who exercise or work outside in hot weather

The key to

combating dehydration is to drink enough fluids:

- Every day, drink plenty of water. Because everyone's needs vary, see your doctor about how much water you should drink each day.
- When the weather is hot or you are unwell, drink more water.
- Sports drinks might be beneficial if you are exercising in the heat and sweating a lot of minerals.
- Avoid sugary and caffeinated beverages.

For most healthy people, following your thirst is a good daily guideline.

**Dr Nazif Mahbub** is a Research & Policy Analyst, Centre for Research, Innovation and Development Action (CRIDA) and MPH (Health Policy & Management) candidate, University of Alberta.



## Vegan diets boost weight loss, lower blood sugar in adults with overweight or type 2 diabetes

A 12-week vegan diet may result in clinically meaningful weight loss and improve blood sugar control in overweight adults and those with type 2 diabetes, according to a meta-analysis of 11 randomised trials involving almost 800 participants (aged 18 or older).

However, vegan diets rich in fruits, vegetables, nuts, legumes and seeds, with no animal derived foods, did not affect blood pressure or triglycerides compared to other diets.

For this study, the researchers analysed the effect of vegan diets on other types of diets on cardiometabolic risk factors — body weight, body mass index [BMI], blood sugar levels, systolic and diastolic blood pressure, total cholesterol, low-density lipoprotein cholesterol, high-density lipoprotein cholesterol, and triglycerides.

Compared with control diets, vegan diets significantly reduced body weight (effect average -4.1 kg) and BMI (-1.38 kg/m<sup>2</sup>). But the effects on blood sugar level (-0.18% points), total cholesterol (-0.30 mmol/L) and low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (-0.24 mmol/L) were rather small.

Further analyses found even greater body weight and BMI reductions when vegan diets were compared with continuing a normal diet without dietary changes than other intervention diets.

## Tips for maintaining good eyesight

DR RAMISHA MALIHA



Keeping your vision healthy entails more than just receiving regular vision screenings. Your entire health might affect your eye health. Here are six tips for keeping your eyesight healthy.

**Eat right:** Eat meals rich in omega-3 fatty acids, vitamin C, and E. These nutrients may help prevent macular degeneration and cataracts.

**Wear safety glasses:** It is estimated that over 2.5 million eye injuries occur each year, making it critical to wear protective eyewear. Wear protective eyewear or safety glasses to avoid anything coming into contact with your eyes.

**Wear sunglasses:** The best approach to keep your eyes healthy is to get a good pair of sunglasses that block UV radiation.

**Discard old makeup:** Bacteria thrive in liquid makeup. To avoid eye infections, replace your goods every 3 months.

**Take screen breaks:** Long-term computer, tablet, or phone use can cause eyestrain, dry eyes, neck and shoulder discomfort, and headaches. To prevent them, you must take a 20-minute screen break.

**Get regular eye screening:** Everyone should receive regular eye exams. Your doctor may advise you to see an ophthalmologist during the screening if they suspect a vision or eye problem.

Eye health is vital. Follow these tips to maintain your eyes healthy and see your best.

E-mail: ramisha.maliha@thedailystar.net

## The shocking extent of exploitative formula milk marketing

STAR HEALTH DESK

Formula milk companies pay social media platforms and influencers to directly access pregnant women and new mothers. The \$55 billion worldwide formula milk market targets new mothers with targeted social media material often not recognised as advertising.

A recent World Health Organisation (WHO) report titled Scope and impact of digital marketing strategies for promoting breast-milk substitutes outline digital marketing techniques to influence new parents' feeding decisions.

To deliver targeted advertising to new moms and pregnant women, formula milk firms can buy or collect personal information using technologies like apps and virtual support groups (or 'baby clubs').

The report summarises findings from a new study that gathered and analysed 4 million social media postings about new-born feeding between January and June 2021. These posts reached 2.47 billion people and generated more than 12 million likes, shares or comments.

Formula milk corporations post to social media 90 times each day, reaching 229 million people, three times as many as non-commercial accounts that promote breastfeeding.

As a result of this widespread marketing, moms are less likely to exclusively breastfeed as recommended by WHO. Commercial milk formula advertising should have ended decades ago. It is outrageous that formula milk firms are now using more effective and

sinister marketing strategies to increase sales.

The report drew on previous multi-country research on mothers' and health professionals' experiences of formula milk marketing and social listening research on public online communications. The studies illustrate how misinformation regarding breastfeeding and breast milk impairs women's confidence to effectively nurse.

The global digital marketing of formula milk violates the 1981 World Health Assembly's International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes (the Code).

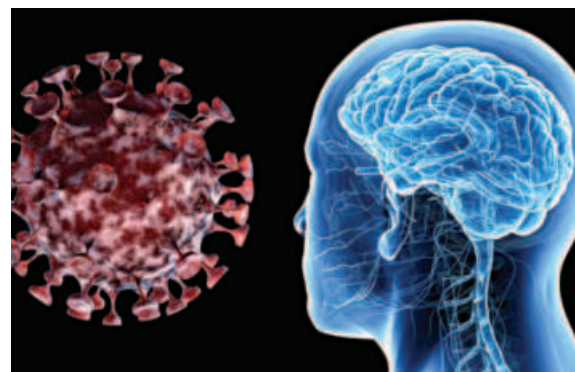
The Code is a landmark public health agreement aimed to safeguard the public and mothers from aggressive infant food industry marketing methods that harm breastfeeding.

Despite substantial evidence that exclusive and continuous breastfeeding improves children, moms, and community health, far too few children are breastfed exclusively.

These marketing methods may reduce the quantity of formula milk sold, increasing profitability.

Because national monitoring and health authorities can ignore these forms of digital marketing, new approaches to Code implementation and enforcement are required. Currently, cross-border marketing can circumvent national legislation.

WHO has urged the infant food industry to stop exploitative formula milk marketing and governments from protecting new children and families by banning all formula milk advertising and promotion.



## Even mild COVID-19 can lead to substantial brain changes

Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans from before and after the COVID-19 diagnosis show adverse brain changes. In a new study from the U.K. Biobank, two magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scans and cognitive testing were performed on people as part of a longitudinal population study predated the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 401 people, positive tests for SARS-CoV-2 occurred between the two MRIs (during the first 18 months of the pandemic); second MRI scans were performed an average of 141 days after positive SARS-CoV-2 tests in this group.

Compared with controls, people with COVID-19 had more reduction in grey matter thickness in the orbitofrontal cortex and parahippocampal gyrus, more tissue damage in regions connected to the olfactory cortex, and greater reduction in global brain size, and greater cognitive decline. Similar changes were not seen in a small group of participants who had developed non-COVID pneumonias between their two scans.

This study, combined with recent studies of SARS-CoV-2 infection of primates, provides strong evidence that even mild COVID-19 can be associated with brain changes.

**Services**

- OPD Consultation
- Dialysis
- Chemotherapy
- Medical Day Care
- Dentistry
- Child Development Centre
- Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation
- Endoscopy and Colonoscopy
- Pathological Laboratory
- Radiology & Imaging (X-Ray, CT-Scan, USG, Mammography)
- PFT, FeNo, DLCO
- Uroflometry
- Echo, ECG, ETT, Holter
- Vaccination
- Pharmacy

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**Dr. A. M. Shafique**  
MD (Cardiology)

**Dr. Md. Helal Uddin**  
D-Card, MSc

**Dr. Reazur Rahman**  
DTM&H (Bangkok), D-Card

**Dr. Tunaggina Afrin Khan**  
MD (Card)

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**Prof. Dr. Masuda Khatun**  
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Apart from wanting to end to his lean patch, Mushfiqur Rahim will be hoping to be the first Bangladesh batter to reach the five thousand-run milestone in Tests during Bangladesh's first Test against Sri Lanka, starting from today at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram. Mushfiqur, however, is not the only one in pursuit of the feat as another stalwart in Tamim Iqbal is also on the verge of achieving it. [Inset] Meanwhile, with rain in forecast for most part of the five-day encounter, Shakib Al Hasan and Bangladesh pace bowling coach Allan Donald yesterday were seemingly worried about the weather as they pointed towards the cloud covering during practice.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

## Lankans planning 'out of the box'

SPORTS REPORTER, from Chattogram

Troubles had escalated at home but Sri Lanka captain Dimuth Karunaratne appeared fully aware of the challenges at hand, a day before his side take on Bangladesh in the first Test in Chattogram today.

While his counterpart Mominul Haque was looking to take things a day at a time, Karunaratne knew his side have the edge even in Bangladesh conditions. Sri Lanka are yet to lose to the Tigers in Bangladesh in the red-ball format, but Karunaratne believes that their experience on Chattogram surfaces can help them bring a result into the question on what, in all likelihood, will be a flat deck. While there would be more of the same approach from batters, the bowlers will have to come up with something different.

"Similar conditions here, so we know how it's going to be in these tracks. It's a flat wicket here in Chittagong, so we have to score big runs to put pressure on the opposition," said Karunaratne.

"If you look at the last Test here, there were thousands of runs scored. So, it seems a pretty flat wicket. When you do the homework right, we can make some change here. If we can do that, we can go to Dhaka on a winning note."

Plenty of runs were scored the last time Sri Lanka played here. The Lankans identified that they may need to force a result here in order to give themselves a chance to seal or at least draw the series in Dhaka. Taking 20 wickets would be the toughest job.

"It's not easy. You have to work hard. Flat wicket will not give that much to the bowlers but if you are smart enough then you can take wickets here," he said.

While Bangladesh may look to keep things simple and wait for Sri Lanka to commit errors, the Lankans want to do something out of the box in order to give themselves the best chance.

"If there is not much in the wicket, then we have to think and try something out of the box. That's what we are planning for this kind of wicket. Let's see. We think we can do much better than the previous years."

Meanwhile, having returned negative on Covid test, ace all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan got back to the side after he had been ruled out of the series on Tuesday. Karunaratne said they already had devised their plans thinking Shakib will play.

"When we came here, we knew the Bangladesh squad and Shakib was there. We knew he would play and we took preparations accordingly. If he could not play that might be an advantage for us but there is no sudden change of plans for us at the moment."



## Tigers focus to flip fortunes at home

ABDULLAH AL MEHDI FROM CHATTOGRAM

Shakib Al Hasan and a few others raised a hand in the air directed towards the sky during the practice session yesterday, pointing out the rain clouds but by then the cloud of Shakib's unavailability had left the side.

Bangladesh team had been waiting on the wings for a decision on Shakib's availability for the first Test today in Chattogram. Earlier, the all-rounder was ruled out of the first Test after returning home from the USA, having tested positive for Covid-19. Under dramatic circumstances, Shakib twice underwent tests on his own accord on Thursday and returned negative for the virus before he underwent another test at a BCB-affiliated facility on Friday to get another negative test before joining the side on Friday night.

Shakib took part in yesterday's optional practice session for the Tigers and batted at the nets for a while. He looked a little jittery and perhaps opted for a few big shots to get himself going after returning to cricket for the first time since appearing in the recently-concluded Dhaka Premier League for Legends of Rupganj. He took on the spinners, went for a few uppish drives over mid-off and although rain had interrupted proceedings, Shakib might have felt he had enough of an outing with the bat to get ready for the first Test. Later at a press conference, captain Mominul Haque confirmed that Shakib will be playing.

Mominul will be looking to turn the tides of their recent record at home, having lost all of the previous three Tests in Chattogram. The bitter defeat against Afghanistan in 2019 was followed by the embarrassment against West Indies in 2020 before they capitulated to Pakistan's Hasan Ali and Shaheen Shah Afridi in the last Test played here in 2021.

The past four years' home record is dismal and gives an idea of Bangladesh's struggles of taking advantage

**The past four years' home record is dismal and gives an idea of Bangladesh's struggles of taking advantage of home conditions. During this period, Bangladesh's home record in 12 matches stands at four wins, seven losses and a draw. Two wins apiece came against Zimbabwe and the West Indies while the defeats came against Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, Pakistan and West Indies.**



of home conditions. During this period, Bangladesh's home record in 12 matches stands at four wins, seven losses and a draw. Two wins apiece came against Zimbabwe and the West Indies while the defeats came against Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, Pakistan and West Indies. Spin or pace, the Tigers' batters have been unable to apply themselves over Tests in both innings.

Asked if they are looking to change the curve, Mominul said: "Of course, we play to win and we have the same plan. We aren't thinking of what happened before."

The wicket will be in focus but there are suggestions that it will be pretty flat. Mominul agreed that the demands from the bowlers will be more than usual but could not ignore the recent batting debacles.

He urged that his side wanted to dominate proceedings. "We are focusing on how we will play over five days and dominate. Instead of thinking of all five days, we will take it one day at a time."

"Batters want to overcome in every series and we are working on these things. We're not thinking of what happened in the previous series. The conditions are very different and what's important is how we can adapt here. What's important is how we can use the lessons from the previous series," the skipper said.

Shakib's inclusion will open up the option of five bowlers in the line-up. "Shakib bhai is mentally very strong. You can understand someone's fitness by watching their batting. I think he is a hundred per cent fit. We will decide whether we go with four or five bowlers after inspecting the pitch tomorrow morning. Shakib bhai's presence always gives us comfort in regards to team combination. We will decide tomorrow whether we pick three or two pacers."

In an attempt to change fortunes at home, Mominul and Co will have to dig deep but that Test aggression Mominul had talked about will also have to flow tactically.

## Winning is the best legacy for Pep

REUTERS, Manchester

Manchester City may appear to be a relentless winning-machine, but manager Pep Guardiola wants his side's legacy to be that their period of Premier League dominance was "fun" as the team close in on their sixth title.

City lead the standings on 89 points, three ahead of Liverpool with two games to play. Thanks to their superior goal difference, a win against West Ham United on Sunday would all but assure them of a second successive league triumph. Despite amassing eight trophies during his tenure, Guardiola, who has yet to extend his contract beyond 2023, wants his side to be remembered for their style of play and sense of joy.

"We have fun. That is the best legacy, when we are in something in our lives, doesn't matter if professional, you have fun," the Spaniard told a news conference on Friday.

"Football is nice because behind you is a lot of people, our fans. I want City fans to say in that period we were fun, we play good, this is the best legacy. Emotional, give something unique watching our games, that is the best reward."

City's title rivals Liverpool played the FA Cup final against Chelsea on Saturday and won't be in league action again until Tuesday against Southampton.

By then, City could be six points ahead but Guardiola was not taking a win at West Ham for granted.

"West Ham (have) done two extraordinary seasons, this season in the Europa League... An incredible season, so strong in all departments, set pieces, the quality upfront, with (Manuel) Lanzini, (Pablo) Fornals, (Jarrod) Bowen," he said.

"A top side, difficult, but we know how important it is to get three points. An incredible step to try and finish the job at home (in final game) with our people."



Poland's Iga Swiatek signs autographs after defeating Belarus' Aryna Sabalenka 6-2, 6-1 in the semifinal of the Rome Open in Rome on Saturday. The world number one took one hour and 16 minutes to claim her 27th win on the bounce, a tally last reached by Serena Williams in 2015.

PHOTO: AFP

## Lewandowski wants to leave Bayern

REUTERS, Wolfsburg

Bayern Munich striker Robert Lewandowski has informed the club's boss that he wants to leave and not extend his contract with the German champions, Bayern sports director Hasan Salihamidzic said on Saturday.

"I spoke with Lewa. In that discussion he informed me that he does not want to accept our offer to extend the contract and that he would like to leave the club," Salihamidzic told Sky Germany ahead of Bayern's final game of the Bundesliga season at VfL Wolfsburg.

"He said he wants to do something else. But our position has not changed. The fact is he has a contract to June 30, 2023."

The 33-year-old Pole joined in 2014 from Borussia Dortmund and has won the German league every year since then as well as the Champions League.



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# 3 couples die in freak road crash

Three more killed in the pileup in Gopalganj

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Faridpur

Lives of three couples and three others came to a tragic end in a three-vehicle pileup in Gopalganj's Kashiani upazila yesterday.

A chain of events lead to the tragic accident. Locals and sources said a couple was threshing paddy on the side of the Dhaka-Khulna highway in Dakshin Fukra area around 11:00am. Some hay eventually got on the highway which a couple on a motorbike tried to swerve right to avoid. A car was trying to overtake the bike at that very moment and it had to move right to avoid hitting the bike. But it put the vehicle squarely in front of a bus of Rajib Paribahan, which was heading for Dhaka from Pirojpur.

The head-on collision flung the car on to the motorbike and the thrashing machine the couple was using.

Bashudev Saha, 52, an anesthesiologist of Birdem in Dhaka, along with his wife Sibani Saha, 44, and son Sapnil Saha, 20, who were in the car and going to Gopalganj to visit Bashudev's ailing mother, died on the spot. So did car driver Ajijur Islam, 44.

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The mangled remains of a barely recognisable car by the side of Dhaka-Khulna highway in Dakshin Fukra area of Gopalganj's Kashiani upazila after it hit a bus and then was tossed on to a motorbike and a thrashing machine. The accident left nine people dead and 25 others injured.

PHOTO: SUZIT DAS

# Buddha Purnima today

UNB, Dhaka

Buddha Purnima, the biggest religious festival of the Buddhist community, will be celebrated across the country today amid festivities after two years of Covid-induced restrictions.

Buddha Purnima marks the birth, enlightenment and death of Gautama Buddha. On this day in 563 BC, Buddha was born as Siddhartha Gautama in Kapilabostu at the foothill of the Himalayas.

He attained supreme enlightenment at the age of 35 and finally departed into "nirvana" at the age of 80 in 483 BC.

President Abdul Hamid and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina issued separate messages greeting the Buddhist community on the occasion.

President Hamid said, "Buddhist civilization and its culture have been deeply intertwined with

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# JUBO JOTE LEADER MURDER 22 AL men sued

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Kushtia

Twenty-two leaders and activists of the ruling Awami League and its associated bodies have been accused in a case of killing Jatiya Jubo Jote leader Mahabub Khan Salam.

Mahabub's father Enamul Haque filed the case with Daulatpur Police Station in Kushtia on Friday night, a day after the murder.

Police said they arrested three of the accused in Daulatpur town on Friday night. There are also 8-9 unnamed accused in the case.

Among the 22 are Daulatpur upazila AL Joint General Secretary Selim Choudhury, his brothers Asaduzzaman Loton Choudhury, executive committee member of the same committee, Token Choudhury, president of Daulatpur upazila Jubo League, Poloton Choudhury, Tushon Choudhury and Swapan Choudhury.

The six are also brothers of the former AL lawmaker from Kushtia-1, Rezaul Haq Choudhury.

Mahabub, 37, general secretary of Daulatpur upazila Jatiya Jubo Jote, the youth wing of the Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal, died of hacking injuries at the Kushtia General Hospital early Thursday, around two and half hours after he was attacked near his home in Daulatpur town.

Speaking to The Daily Star yesterday, Selim Choudhury said the case was a "conspiracy" against his family and it was a politically motivated one. He said the family will fight the legal battle.

Jabid Hasan, OC of Daulatpur Police Station, said they started the investigation, but were yet to detect the motive behind the murder.

Police are interrogating the arrestees named Sohan, Najibul and Mehedi.

According to the case statement, Mahabub was returning home from Alla Dargah Bazar in Daulatpur town on a motorised rickshaw van around 11:00pm on Wednesday. He was accompanied by two Jubo Jote activists.

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# War could be over by year end

Claims Ukraine intel chief as resistance slows Russian advances in the east; Moscow pulls plug on power to Finland

AGENCIES

The war in Ukraine could reach a "breaking point" by August and end in defeat for Russia before the end of the year, Kyiv's head of military intelligence said yesterday, as fierce fighting raged in Ukraine's east, slowing down a hoped-for Russian advance.

The G7 group of the world's top industrialised nations meanwhile reiterated it would "never recognise" the borders Russia has attempted to redraw through aggression and pledged more sanctions to tighten the screw on Moscow.

Russia, which sent in troops to Ukraine on February 24, has increasingly turned its attention to eastern Ukraine since the end of March, after failing to take the capital Kyiv.

Western analysts believe President Vladimir Putin has his sights on annexing southern and eastern Ukraine in the months ahead but his troops have appeared to be encountering stiff resistance.

The governor of the eastern Lugansk region, Serhiy Gaidai, said Ukrainian forces had prevented Russian attempts to cross a river and encircle the

city of Severodonetsk.

"There's heavy fighting on the border with Donetsk region," Gaidai said, reporting big Russian losses of equipment and personnel.

"From interceptions (phone calls), we understand that a whole (Russian) battalion has refused to attack, because they see what's happening."

Aerial images showed dozens of destroyed armoured vehicles on the river bank and wrecked pontoon bridges.

UK military intelligence also said Russian forces had sustained heavy losses as they attempted the river crossing.

Kharkiv regional governor Oleh Synegubov meanwhile said in a video on Telegram that Ukrainian forces were counter-attacking in the direction of the northeastern city of Izium.

The Ukrainian General Staff said troops had managed to push Russian troops out of the Kharkiv, a priority target for Moscow.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Friday said his troops would fight to recapture all occupied territory, and those under siege.



SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

# COVID-19 BOOSTER Special campaign to start this month

MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN

The health directorate is going to conduct a special campaign this month to inoculate around five crore people, aged 18 and above, who have received their second dose of Covid-19 vaccines at least four months ago.

Officials said they have enough vaccines in stock for the campaign.

It will be similar to the previous special campaign, which was held at the union level in rural areas and ward level in municipalities in February and March, they said.

"The date [for the special booster doze campaign] is yet to be fixed. We have been waiting for the health minister's return from abroad to finalise it," Dr Abul Bashar Mohammad Khurshid Alam, director general of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), told The Daily Star yesterday.

The minister is expected to return home tonight from an official visit to the World Bank headquarters in New York, according to a ministry official.

As of Thursday, around 11.68 crore adults - 68.51 percent of the total population - have received the second dose of the Covid-19 vaccine. However, not all will be eligible for the booster, health officials said.

As per the DGHS's Covid-19 vaccine administration protocol, any second dose vaccine recipient can get a booster jab with an interval of at least four months - as recommended by the World Health Organization.

In that case, the number of eligible booster recipients will be around 4.6 crore, according to the DGHS data.

Around 1.35 crore people who already have

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The Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection in Chattogram conducted raids at different stores yesterday and fined several stores for hoarding edible oil and selling those at a higher price. In the photo taken during one such raid at the Karnaphuli Market in the city's Choumohoni area, people are seen elated after having been able to buy cooking oil at MRP.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

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# World's longest suspension bridge opens

CNN ONLINE

Walking from one mountain to another, suspended high above ground with only a vast valley yawning below, isn't for the fainthearted.

But thrill seekers - and lovers of infrastructure - will be flocking to the Dolni Morava vacation resort in the northeast of the Czech Republic to scale the new world's longest suspension footbridge.

Under construction for the past two years, the 721-meter-long span (2,365 feet), appropriately named Sky Bridge 721, officially opened on Friday. The walkway promises spectacular views of the cloud-shrouded Jeseniky mountains, and an overall electrifying, albeit slightly terrifying, experience.

Austrian blogger

# REPORT ON TEEN GANGS Jouno stabbed in 'revenge'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Narayanganj

A journalist and his companion were stabbed allegedly by a teen gang in Narayanganj on Friday night.

Rashid Chowdhury, 28, executive editor of Dainik Agrabani Pratidin, was attacked for publishing a news on teen gangs, said Syed Sifat Al Rahman, general secretary of Narayanganj City Press Club.

Jashim Uddin, 38, a yarn trader, who was with Rashid at the time, was also stabbed, said Sifat, adding that they were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital with critical injuries.

Quoting the injured, Sifat said the two of them were going to Chasara when a group of teenagers stopped them and stabbed them indiscriminately.

Locals rescued them hearing their screams, but the attackers managed to flee the scene, he said.

Torikul Islam, inspector of Fatullah Model Police Station, said legal action will be taken in this regard.

Earlier on May 11, video footage of teenage boys brandishing firearms and attacking other teens went viral on social media. A news article was published about the incident in Dainik Agrabani Pratidin.