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Travellers are forced to walk in knee-deep water as they disembark from a ferry on the Payra river in Purakata area of Amtali, Barguna. Elevating the approach road by a few feet can save the travellers from the inconvenience.

PHOTO: SOHRAB HOSSAIN

Level-headed development targets

Proposed ADP will be presented before NEC tomorrow

REJAUUL KARIM BYRON and DWAIPAYAN BARUA

Pragmatism was the order of the day when the finance division sat down to draft the development budget for fiscal 2021-22. While the overall budget would see the return of double digit growth in size as in pre-pandemic times, the annual development programme not so much.

A Tk 246,066 crore ADP has been prepared, which is an increase of 9.2 percent from this year's original budget – and Tk 38,699 crore less than what the ministries and divisions have sought.

In a populist move, the ADP size would invariably increase in double digits every year before the pandemic only for it to be quietly revised downwards on account of sluggish implementation.

But this time, it appears the government is resisting the urge to play to the gallery and is instead making funds available for development projects that are progressing at a brisk pace and at amounts they can absorb at best from a realistic viewpoint.

The biggest allocation, as in previous years, is going towards the Rooppur nuclear power, which is about 45 percent complete as of March and has been the top performer among the mega projects this year.

The project, which became mired in uncertainty following Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the resulting Western sanctions against Russia, is progressing as per schedule: the first unit to open by 2024 and the second unit by 2025.

But the science and technology ministry would be taking it slow now as the auxiliary project for the installation of a power line to transmit electricity from Rooppur to the national grid is progressing at a snail's pace.

That project, which is being implemented with Indian loan, took off in 2018 and has seen only 12 percent financial progress as of March, according to the Power Grid Company of Bangladesh.

As a result, the Rooppur project would be getting Tk 13,395 crore in the upcoming fiscal year, down from Tk 18,426 crore originally this year. The allocation was revised down to Tk 14,836 crore.

The project is being constructed on a build-and-finance deal with Russian state nuclear monopoly Rosatom, which is responsible for 76 percent of global nuclear technology exports. No fund comes in from Russia but equipment and technology, whose values are counted as expenditure for setting up the nuclear plant.

Which is why the project was not hampered in any way by the SWIFT ban on Russia – for now.

"Rosatom has sufficient resources and the necessary organisational

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR FY 2022-23

Budget up 9.2pc to Tk 2,46,066cr

Focus on fast-progressing projects

Mega projects to get priority

Rooppur power plant to get biggest allocation

Padma rail link and Matarbari deep sea port and power plant to get impetus

PK HALDER PROBE India on trail of his laundered money

STAR REPORT

Indian investigators are trying to trace how much money PK Halder, allegedly involved in over Tk 10,000-crore loan scams in Bangladesh, laundered to India and the amount of wealth he obtained through it.

During an interrogation yesterday, PK Halder told India's Directorate of Enforcement (ED) that he held passports of India and Grenada apart from that of Bangladesh, according to sources.

"Besides Bangladesh and Indian passports, he [PK Halder] was also found in possession of a Grenada passport," reads a statement issued by the ED.

Hours after Halder's arrest, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said the Indian side had not yet officially informed Dhaka about the arrest.

"We learnt from the media that PK Halder, a wanted accused in Bangladesh, was arrested... We will take the next steps as per the law," he said at a programme yesterday afternoon.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 5



CUMILLA POLLS NOMINATION AL picks No 1 patron of narcos

RASHIDUL HASAN and KHALID BIN NAZRUL

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her government have declared zero tolerance against narcotics. But the ruling Awami League has picked a top listed patron of the illegal drug business as its mayoral candidate for the Cumilla city polls.

Arfanul Haque Rifat is listed number one among 16 patrons of drug dealers and smugglers in the district.

The Prime Minister's Office with the assistance of a government intelligence agency listed drug traders, smugglers, their patrons and law enforcers involved with them across the country.

On January 9, 2018, the PMO sent the home ministry a letter along with the list of Chattogram division and requested actions against the persons following scrutiny.

The list, a copy of which has been obtained by this newspaper, mentions Rifat as the general secretary of Cumilla city AL,

hailing from Monohorpur area.

The party's Local Government Nomination Board finalised his nomination through a meeting at the Gono Bhaban on Friday, with AL President and Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair.

Party sources say Rifat is also a former senior vice-president of Cumilla district Jubo League and currently member of Jubo League central committee. He is very close to AL lawmaker from Cumilla-6 AKM Bahauddin Bahar, they add.

A special extended meeting of Cumilla city AL, with Bahar in the chair, sent a proposal to the AL central committee to nominate Rifat as the party's mayoral candidate for the polls, slated for June 15.

Sources close to Rifat and AL insiders alleged that he maintains contacts with local drug dealers and criminals as he gets commission from illegal drug business.

SEE PAGE 2 COL 1



Techies worry as a2i set to enter IT fray

With govt weight behind, it'll become Agency to Innovation

ZYMA ISLAM

The government's a2i programme is set to become a full-fledged agency, entering the software and digital innovations industry as a government-subsidised player, but creating uncertainty for local tech companies.

The cabinet earlier this month approved in principle the Agency to Innovation (a2i) Act 2021 – a draft legislation that proposes to turn the a2i (Aspire to Innovate) programme into an agency called Agency to Innovation.

In response to the proposed legislation, major industry stakeholders have written to the government and communicated their fear that the subsidised national entity would emerge as a market giant and outcompete local tech companies.

The overall objective of the a2i programme – a foreign donor-supported project housed at the Prime Ministers' Office – is to innovate and digitise public services.

The programme supported the digitisation projects across the government, totalling Tk 950 crore, funded primarily by the United Nations Development Programme.

The draft law proposes that the a2i be turned into an agency empowered to accept any project or provide any consultancy needed to "establish an educated society, where technological innovations can flourish to develop citizen-friendly services".

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5



A boy holds his baby brother on his lap as they sit and wait on the grass for their mother to finish her work in the capital's Hatirjheel. They appear to be readying themselves for a nap with a small portable fan placed before them to beat the unbearable heat yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Thousands marooned as 3 rivers burst banks in Sylhet

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Sylhet

Several thousand villagers in six upazilas of Sylhet remained marooned as the flood situation worsened in the region.

The road network among Sylhet Sadar, Gowainghat, Kanaighat, Zakiganj, Jaintiapur and Companiganj upazilas has almost collapsed because of the flood.

Three major rivers in the district – the Surma, the Kushiara and the Sari-Gowain – were swelling for torrential rainfall.

The Surma was flowing 122cm above the danger level at Kanaighat upazila headquarters point in Sylhet at 9:00am yesterday, reported the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre (FFWC).

At the same time, the Kushiara was flowing 96cm above the danger level at Amolshid point in Zakiganj upazila.

The Sari-Gowain was flowing 5cm above the danger level at Sarighat point in Jaintiapur upazila, the report added.

Some 193mm of rainfall was recorded between Saturday 9:00am and yesterday 9:00am in Sylhet's Lalakhali area, while 105mm in Sunamganj's Laurergarh and 218mm in Cherrapunji in India's Meghalaya province, read the bulletin.

It also forecasted heavy rainfall would continue in the country's north-eastern region in the next 48 hours.

"The rivers of Sylhet and Sunamganj districts in the north-eastern region of the country may cross their respective danger levels at some points in the next 24 hours," read the bulletin.

"The Brahmaputra-Jamuna and Padma rivers are in a rising trend. This situation may continue in the next 72 hours," it added.

Contacted, an assistant engineer of FFWC last evening said the rivers would be in a rising trend for the next two or three days.

Then, the water level will start falling. There is no possibility of a long-standing flood right now, the official added.

Meanwhile, the Sylhet area went through immense suffering due to the flood.

"As Surma was overflowing, the river protection dyke suddenly broke at different points on Saturday and water started entering the village. We are now stuck and waiting for the rainfall to stop," said Yusuf Ahmed, a resident of Uttar Khilogram in Zakiganj upazila.

"Vast areas in our region have been submerged as Surma and Kushiara rivers are overflowing. Many people have been marooned. We are extending humanitarian support to victims," said Lokman Uddin Chowdhury, chairman of Zakiganj Upazila Parishad.

The district administration has already allocated 103 tonnes of rice to distribute among flood-hit people, said Mozibur Rahman, deputy commissioner of Sylhet.



Motorists queue to buy fuel at a Ceylon petroleum corporation fuel station in Colombo yesterday. Shortages of food, fuel and medicines, along with record inflation and lengthy blackouts, have brought severe hardships to Sri Lanka's 22 million people.

PHOTO: AFP

IMPORTING WHEAT FROM INDIA

Govt prepping for G2G deal

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh is preparing to strike a deal to import wheat from India, said food ministry Secretary Mosammat Nazmunara Khanum.

The development comes a day after India banned wheat exports to contain its domestic prices, but said it would be mindful of the needs of the neighbouring and other vulnerable countries.

Indian officials earlier said the ban on wheat export was unlikely to affect government-to-government deals.

"That's why, we are preparing to ink a government-to-government deal with India on wheat import," she said, adding, "Although India imposed an embargo on wheat export, its government still can export wheat if it wants."

Eighty-six percent of Bangladesh's annual demand for 85 lakh tonnes of wheat is met from imports. The country started procuring the cereal from India in significant volumes in 2020.

In the Indian financial year that ended on March 31, Bangladesh



was the largest importer of wheat, accounting for nearly half of its record 7 million tonnes of wheat exports, according to estimates by the Directorate General of Foreign Trade under the commerce ministry.

The secretary yesterday said the government earlier secured a contract of importing 3 lakh tonnes of the grain. "Of it, we have already received 50,000 tonnes, a shipment of another 100,000 tonnes is on the way to Bangladesh, and we will get the remaining 1.5 lakh tonnes as per the contract," she added.

Bangladesh is also finalising a deal with Bulgaria, she said.

"Since there are uncertainties over how long the war in Ukraine may continue... we are now working on importing wheat to meet the demand in the first three months of the upcoming fiscal."

Meanwhile, Food Minister Sadhan Chandra Majumder yesterday said the country will not face a food crisis and India's restriction on wheat export will not affect Bangladesh.

"Wheat export has not been banned by the Indian government. It is restricted for commercial sales. This will have no impact on Bangladesh," the minister said while visiting a government food storage facility in Sylhet.

Bangladesh used to import wheat from Russia and Ukraine before the war started between those countries, he said.

"Boro harvest suffered a little due to the recent flash floods, but the harvest was huge compared to the loss... We also have enough paddy from the last Aush and Aman seasons. The next Aman season will be good because of the sufficient early rainfall."

Level-headed development targets

FROM PAGE 1

flexibility to adapt to the new business environment," the company told The Daily Star in a written response.

The next highest allocations in the proposed ADP, which will be placed before the National Economic Council tomorrow for approval, will go towards the Matarbari deep sea port and power plant and the Padma rail link projects. They would get Tk 7,000 crore and Tk 5,800 crore respectively.

The Padma rail link project, which started on a slow note, is on great momentum, with rail movement up to Mawa expected by this year, ministry officials said.

As of March, it is about 55 percent complete.

The Dhaka metro rail project, which is about 81 percent complete, would get Tk 2,800 crore.

The project was originally allocated Tk 4,800 crore this year but was revised down to Tk 4,233 crore.

The metro rail may be opened to passengers up to Argargaon this year and fully by next year.

The Padma multipurpose bridge, which is scheduled to open to the public next month, will get Tk 2,023 crore to complete some related works like river training and others.

As of March, Tk 27,151 crore out of its total

estimated cost of Tk 30,193 crore has been spent.

The Dohazari-Gundum rail line, which has seen 35 percent financial progress until March, is to get Tk 1,450 crore next fiscal year, which is Tk 25 crore from this year's original budget. Its allocation was slashed to Tk 933 crore and as of March, Tk 552 crore could be used.

The Payra deep sea port, another priority project of the government, will get Tk 513 crore.

"We hope that the fast-track projects will be completed on time," said Mamun Al Rashid, a member of the Planning Commission.

A committee led by the principal secretary of the

prime minister monitors every stage of the fast-track projects and intervenes if necessary, he said.

In the upcoming budget proposal, the government may allocate the highest Tk 35,842 crore, which is about 14.6 percent of the proposed ADP, for the local government division.

The second highest allocation of Tk 31,295 crore may be made for the road transport and highways division, which is 12.7 percent of the proposed ADP.

Among others, the energy division may get Tk 24,139 crore, the science and technology ministry Tk 16,011 crore and the health service division Tk 15,851 crore.

Another

FROM PAGE 12

be honest," former Australia captain Mark Taylor told Channel Nine. "Another tragic day for cricket."

The larger-than-life Symonds was hugely popular, not only for his hard-hitting approach to the game but also for his easy-going personality. His demeanour and body language made him appear, as if, he was a player from the classic bygone eras.

"Hewasjustanentertainer. He wanted to go out there and have fun and play the game he remembered to play it as a kid.

"At times he got in trouble for not going to training or maybe having a few too many beers...but that is the way he lived his life and the way he wanted to play his cricket also," Taylor said.

Techies worry as a2i set to enter IT fray

FROM PAGE 1

This essentially means that a2i will become a tech agency operating similarly to any tech company with one major difference – it will be bankrolled or subsidised by the government.

According to the proposed law, government grants, donations and support will be major sources of funding for the agency, in addition to international grants, consultancy fees, income from services, and "income from own sources".

The agency will also lease out its infrastructure and use its capital for investment and trading.

Each year, the agency will present a budget to the government detailing its financial demands.

The money taken from the government will be used as per its regulations, but the rest of the capital will be utilised in any way the management sees fit.

All staffers of the agency will be public servants, according to the draft legislation.

Several tech industry leaders, all speaking anonymously, said a government-subsidised institution with limited overhead or infrastructural costs will outcompete private players.

On April 21, 2022, five major tech associations wrote a letter to the state minister of Information, raising alarm. The associations are Bangladesh Association of Software and Information Services (Basis), Bangladesh Computer Society, e-Commerce Association of Bangladesh (eCab), Internet Service Providers' Association of Bangladesh and Bangladesh Association of Call Centers

and Outsourcing (Bacco).

The letter stated that certain provisions in the law directly conflict with the business interests of the private sector.

The letter was in response to an earlier draft of the proposed law, but most of the areas of concern pointed out remain either intact, or in similar phrasing, in the finalised proposed act approved by the cabinet.

"It has been a long-standing demand to give local tech companies preferential treatment in getting government gigs and international donor projects. If a2i itself becomes a service provider and consultant, it will become a competitor to private companies," said the letter.

The finalised bill states that services and consultancies will be provided to establish "partnerships" with local and international actors.

It also states that the management will permit joint ventures and partnerships between individuals, firms, companies, and other private and government establishments.

About this provision, the tech associations' letter states that a2i is being given permission to form multiple companies and directly participate in business, which is not "expected of them".

"This will ruin the scope of business for local tech companies," said the letter.

"From the very beginning, the a2i has been providing consultation and executing projects for all ministries and government institutions, as an expert or technical committee. If they now create their own companies and implement

those business ventures, this will completely conflict with public procurement."

The bill empowers the a2i to earn fees by providing services and consultancies. "By this we understand IT consultation. The usage of these two terms [services and consultancies] creates a risk of a2i's participation and interference in all public procurement," it added.

Concerns over "the risk of interference" are compounded by the fact that the bill allows the chair of a2i to empower any officer of the organisation with any power or responsibility it sees fit.

The letter also states that that creates space for the chair to empower individuals based on his or her personal likes and dislikes. "There is a concern about how fair and impartial they can remain."

An analysis of the procurement of 41 services over the last decade shows that one software firm – SoftBD Ltd – got 34 percent of the work (14 contracts). Another firm, Orange BD, got 15 percent of the work (six contracts).

Only 14 out of the 41 contracts were given to vendors, who got one gig each.

A2i's Project Director Dewan Muhammad Humayun Kabir said impartiality would not be a concern.

"When we first started out, there were not many firms who could qualify to bid in the projects. This scenario is fast changing. There will be no concerns about impartiality in procurement."

He also said the involvement of the private sector will be ensured. "Out of the Tk 950 crore worth

Cop's hand severed by accused

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, CTG

A police constable's left hand was severed from the elbow when an accused hacked him during an arrest drive in Chattogram's Lohagara yesterday morning.

Jony Khan was undergoing treatment at the National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (Nitor) in the capital.

Atiqur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Lohagara Police Station, said the incident took place in Lalakhali village after a police team went there to arrest Kabir.

On April 24, two groups of villagers clashed over a piece of land in Lalakhali village. Kabir is an accused in a case filed in this connection, he said.

Police said during the drive, Kabir hacked Jony with a sharp weapon, leaving his left hand severed from the elbow. He also attacked another police personnel, Abul Hossen, injuring him.

Both the injured were rushed to Chattogram Medical College Hospital.

Police could not arrest Kabir till yesterday evening.

No Covid deaths for 25th consecutive day

STAR REPORT

No deaths from Covid-19 were reported in the country for the 25th consecutive day yesterday.

Thirty-three new infections were recorded in 24 hours ending at 8:00am after 3,818 samples were tested across the country.

The number of Covid-19 deaths remains at 29,127, and the mortality rate is 1.49 percent, said a press release of the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

The total number of Covid cases rose to 19,53,012.

The current positivity rate is 0.86 percent, while the overall positivity rate stands at 13.90 percent, said the release.

At least 269 patients recovered from Covid-19 during the period, taking the number of recoveries to 18,99,419. The recovery rate is 97.26 percent, added the release.

Israel reopens Gaza crossing after nearly two weeks

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel yesterday reopened its only crossing with the Gaza Strip to Palestinian workers nearly two weeks after closing it over unrest, the defence ministry said.

"Following an assessment of the security situation, it has been decided... to open Erez Crossing for passage of workers and permit holders from the Gaza Strip into Israel, beginning Sunday," said COGAT, a unit of the Israeli defence ministry responsible for Palestinian civil affairs.

The crossing is used by 12,000 Palestinians with permits to enter Israel for work.

Israel had closed the crossing on May 3 ahead of Israel's national memorial and independence days, and amid Palestinian violence in the occupied West Bank, although the Gaza front was quiet.

AL picks No 1 patron of narcos

FROM PAGE 1

The Daily Star, however, couldn't verify those allegations independently.

On October 26, 2019, a media outlet in Cumilla reported that a local leader of AL, Jahid Iqbal Shariful, who was arrested by Rab with pistol, locally made arms and 78 bullets, had close relations with Rifat.

Rifat, however, claims the allegations against him are nothing but a "dirty conspiracy".

Contacted, AL Joint General Secretary Mahbulul Alam Hanif, who is also a member of Awami League's Local Government Nomination Board, said, "We know him as a "dedicated and tested"

leader. "He joined Awami League politics from Chhatra League. He was a dedicated Awami League leader when the party was in crisis."

Hanif added, "The BNP government had filed many false cases against him. I don't know whether those cases were considered while preparing that list."

When told that it was the PMO that prepared the list, Hanif said he didn't have any idea in this regard.

Faruk Ahmed, superintendent of police in Cumilla, too said he was not aware of any such list. Lawmaker Bahauddin Bahar could not be reached for comments as he didn't receive phone calls.

Mokabbir Hossain, secretary of Security Services Division at Ministry of Home Affairs, said he wouldn't be able to make comment on this issue right now and without going through the PMO letter.

Masud Parvez Imran, who was among the 14 nomination seekers to contest the polls, said there might be some mistakes while finalising the nomination. "I Hope the prime minister will take the right decision once she comes to know about it."

Cumilla district has 106km boundaries with the India from where illegal drugs are smuggled into Bangladesh, according to law enforcement agencies.

Yet another deadline missed

BR fails to reach 2nd target of train operation on Mawa-Bhanga section thru Padma Bridge



NURUL ISLAM SUJAN
Railways Minister

As per the new plan, we will try to start the operation [on Dhaka-Bhanga section] targeting March 26 next year, our Independence Day. In case we miss the deadline, we will start the operation by June next year.

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The railways authorities aimed to start operating trains on Mawa-Bhanga section through Padma Bridge on the same day as the opening of the long-cherished bridge for the public.

However, when it was almost certain that they would not be able to meet the target, the authorities last year said they would try to start the operations on Dhaka-to-Bhanga section within December this year.

The authorities are now saying they would not be able to meet the revised target as well, mainly due to the pandemic and delay in shifting utilities from project areas.

"As per the new plan, we will try to start the operation [on Dhaka-Bhanga section] targeting March 26 next year, our Independence Day," said Railways Minister Nurul Islam Sujan yesterday.

"In case we miss the deadline, we will start the



operation by June next year," the minister told reporters while visiting the Padma Bridge Rail-link Project.

The entire route from Dhaka to Jashore would be opened by June 2024, he said, adding that installation of railway tracks on the lower section of the bridge is likely to start in July after the opening of the bridge, he said.

The bridge is expected to be inaugurated in late next month.

The double-decker Padma Bridge -- with roadway on top and railway on bottom -- is being constructed by Bangladesh Bridge Authority (BBA) at the cost of around Tk 30,000 crore.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Railway (BR) is implementing the Padma Bridge Rail Link Project, building a 169km rail line to connect the capital with Jashore via the Padma Bridge at a cost of Tk 39,246.80 crore.

Although the revised deadline of the project is 2024, the authorities planned to operate trains on the Mawa-Bhanga section, terming it a priority, on the day of the bridge's opening.

Currently, Bhanga is connected with a railway network via Faridpur.

Rail tracks on the bridge would be installed by the railway contractor. However, BBA declined to hand over the structure to railways for installing the rail track until the bridge is opened to the public "on technical and engineering grounds".

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

PRAYER
TIMING
MAY 16



	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

'Ensure benefits for non-regularised govt employees'

SC releases full text of verdict on 5 civil review petitions

ASHUTOSH SARKAR

The apex court has come forward to ensure welfare and benefits of the employees -- who are under the master roll after completion of their services -- so that they don't retire with empty hand.

In the full text of a verdict, the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court underscored the need for formulation of a separate rules to protect the future interest of such work-charged employees.

"In a welfare state of a government by the people and for the people should not return the work-charged employees at the end of the day with empty hand."

"It is the obligation of the state to take steps so that their lives do not fall in total ruin. For that reason, separate rules are required to be framed for the persons who have been working as work-charged employees, if necessary, for protecting their future interest so that they do not fall in total deserts at the end of their work," the apex court observed in the full text of verdict.

The 14-page full text of the judgement was released

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Finding shade under a tree is quite rare in Dhaka due to its scarcity. However, Dhaka University campus has always been an exception in this regard. Its century-old Koro trees, with its lush leaves and extended branches, have safeguarded the campus area under its shade for years. This photo was taken yesterday. PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

'An inside job'

DB says DSHE staffers involved in question leak

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Two employees of the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DSHE) leaked the question paper of the recruitment exam for the post of "office assistant/computer operator".

On Friday, the test was held at 61 centres in Dhaka, aiming to fill 513 vacancies.

The question papers were distributed from DSHE to the exam centres around 11:00am on the exam day.

The staffers involved with the question leak took photographs of the papers during the time.

Police's Detective Branch (DB), the agency investigating the question paper leak, disclosed the information to this correspondent yesterday.

However, detectives did not disclose the names of the involved staffers as the investigation is ongoing.

DB started the investigation after an examinee was arrested during the test from the capital's Eden College centre on Friday.

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

The invigilator of room 2237 at the centre found him answering the MCQs by copying answers written behind his admit card.

Sumon was sent to jail yesterday after a day's remand in the case filed with Lalbagh Police Station regarding the question paper leak, said police.

A DB high official involved with the investigation said that the question paper was later sent to an organised syndicate in Patuakhali on the WhatsApp.

It was solved by three to four individuals. The answers were sent to the examinee who contacted the syndicate.

"The gang has around six members," the official told this correspondent, requesting anonymity.

The syndicate is led by Saiful Islam, a teacher of mathematics at Khepupara Girls Secondary School, he added.

Investigators said the gang distributed the answers to some 10-12 examinees via WhatsApp around 42 minutes before the exam started.

The two staffers involved are also from Patuakhali.

Shahadat Hossain Sumon, DB's additional deputy commissioner, mentioned that they have

found some names involved with the question paper leak.

"We have kept some of the suspects under close surveillance, including a school teacher. The gang members went into hiding after the examinee was arrested but we are conducting drives to catch them," he said.

According to officials, several networks have been detected behind the leaks.

"Some of the syndicate's activities were found in capital's Jatrabari, Kishoreganj, Patuakhali and Tangail," said another anonymous DB high official.

The question papers were distributed from DSHE to the exam centres around 11:00am on the exam day. The staffers involved with the question leak took photographs of the papers during the time.

The official also said they are yet to know about the actual dealings but have information about an amount of Tk one to two lakh handed over to the gang in advance for the answers.

Contacted, Prof Nehal Ahmed, director general (DG) of DSHE, said, "The exam started at 3:00pm and the papers were distributed to the 61 centres at 11:00am. There was a four-hour gap in between that."

"The Detective Branch will investigate whether anything happened during that time," he added.

Asked if they will investigate the matter themselves, he said, "We do not have that capacity. We are completely depending on the Detective Branch's report in this regard. Once they give us a report, we will take the next course of action."

Asked about the involvement of DSHE staffers in question leak, the DG said, "We have a zero tolerance policy in this regard."

"Since police have found a link, we hope they will be able to find out those involved with the question leak," he added.

"We will take stern action against the perpetrators, no matter who they are," Prof Nehal Ahmed told this correspondent last night.

Increase capacity of govt, private hospitals

Say speakers on treating patients paralysed in road accidents

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The number of patients paralysed in road accidents has increased at an alarming rate, putting hospitals at stretch for quality treatment, said speakers at an event yesterday.

For this reason, both government and private hospitals have to increase their capacity to provide quality treatment to patients, they said at the two-day workshop on thoracolumbar spinal surgery for surgeons held in Dhaka, organised by Bangladesh Spine and Orthopedic Hospital.

"Surgeons have no alternative to increasing skills in treating paralysis [due to accidents]," Dr Abdul Awal Rizvi, former director of National Institute of Traumatology and Orthopaedic Rehabilitation (NITOR) and president of Spine Society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Enhancing skills of physicians
- Training surgeons in thoracic surgery
- Increasing capacity at hospitals
- Providing quality treatment

Dr Shah Alam, coordinator of the workshop, said, "It will not be possible to treat the increasing number of patients in road accidents unless private hospitals increase their capacity and skills in parallel to the government ones."

Dr Abdul Gani, director of NITOR, said around 600 bike accidents were recorded at NITOR during the last Eid holidays. "The fatality rate is higher [in bike accidents] and around 5-6 percent of the patients have a spinal injury. But it is tough for government hospitals to provide treatment to all the patients. This is where private hospitals have to come forward," he said.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Lychee -- the succulent, luscious fruit -- has finally started to arrive in the markets with summer's arrival. A crowd of customers was seen purchasing them from vendors in Gulistan area. This photo was taken recently.

PHOTO: AMRAN HOSSAIN

Seven held for selling fake Covid certificates

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

A negative certificate of the coronavirus test is mandatory for travellers going abroad, especially in the Middle East. By capitalising on this, an unscrupulous group used to take hostage the travellers and embezzle huge sums of money.

The members of the fraudulent gang used to gain the trust of the expatriates by introducing themselves as doctors, staff and nurses of their Covid-19 hospital. Later, they used to take a hefty amount of money from the passengers in exchange for fake Covid-19 certificates.

Based on these allegations, the Rapid Action Battalion arrested seven members of a gang who cheated passengers travelling abroad with coronavirus test certificates, from Mohakhali area in the capital on Saturday night. Rab-1 Commanding Officer Lt Col Abdullah Al Momen told this at a press conference held at his office in Uttara yesterday.

The arrestees are -- Jasim Uddin (28), Tarekul Islam (26), Alamgir Hossain (20), Ripon Mia (28), Ariful Islam (20) and Ahmed Hossain Shahadat (18) and Shamim Hossain (30).

SEE PAGE 4 COL 7



Kabir, Taleb president, secretary of BCS 81 Forum

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former ambassador M Humayun Kabir and Mohammad Abu Taleb have been elected president and secretary of the BCS 81 Forum.

They were elected at the annual general meeting of the forum at the Officers' Club on May 12, according to a press release.

Besides, Md Emdadul Haque and Md Sahab Ullah have been elected vice-president, while Badrul Alam Tarafdar has been elected treasurer of the forum for the next two years.

India resumes youth exchange programme from Bangladesh

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

India has resumed the Bangladesh Youth Delegation 2022, after two years of pause because of the pandemic.

Information Minister Dr Hasan Mahmud, and Indian High Commissioner Vikram K Doraiswami unveiled the official logo and launched the portal for the Bangladesh Youth Delegation, which is now active for receiving applications up to June 30, at an event at the Indian High Commission in Dhaka yesterday.

The International Youth Exchange Programme is part of an MoU signed between India's Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports and Bangladesh's Ministry of Youth and Sports on cooperation on youth matters. In the last two years, no such exchange programme for youth was possible due to the Covid pandemic.

"100 young leaders from various walks of life will be selected from Bangladesh for a hosted visit to India," said a statement of the Indian High Commission in Dhaka. To apply, candidates can visit <https://www.hcidhaka.gov.in>.



Employees of non-government educational institutions form a human chain in front of the capital's Jatiya Press Club yesterday to press home their five-point demand, including salary scale and change in designation. PHOTO: STAR

Ensure benefits for non-regularised

FROM PAGE 3

recently as a five-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by the then Chief Justice Syed Mahmud Hossain (now retired) has delivered a short verdict on November 25, 2021 after disposing of five civil review petitions regarding future benefits of the work-charged employees.

"After toiling for the benefit of the government and the people continuously for a considerable amount of time, i.e. for 20 or more

years, if the government leaves a work-charged employee to face the wrath of unpaid, uncertain and bleak retirement period, and we turn a blind eye to his miserable condition that would be totally unethical and wholly contrary to the constitutional philosophy of socio-economic justice," the SC judges said in the full text verdict.

The apex court judges said in the verdict that the work-charged daily wage and contingent paid employees are generally hired for a short time to

execute a specific work. But quite a large number of such employees have been working for indefinite time spans stretching over years, they said.

"Since the writ petitioner respondents (work-charged employees on master roll under the housing a public works department) have been working for a long time, it shows that the posts they were occupying were permanent in nature and not casual or temporary. It further indicates that the services of the respondents are not only

required but also beneficial to the department.

Given the lengths of service actually rendered by them, those posts have to be considered to be permanent nature," the SC said in the full text of the verdict.

Contacted, Additional Attorney General Sk Morshed told The Daily Star yesterday that the attorney general's office has already sent a copy of the full text verdict of the SC to the ministries concerned for taking necessary steps in line with its observations.

3 of family die

FROM PAGE 5

DMCH doctors declared Ambia dead around 9:00am, said Inspector Bachchu Mia, in charge of the hospital's police outpost.

Ambia's younger son Mohiuddin is currently receiving treatment at a local hospital.

hospital, while Shamsuddin and his father escaped unhurt. Ambia's body was sent to the hospital morgue for autopsy.

[Our staff correspondents in Rajshahi and Dhaka contributed to the report]

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Unite against Farakka Increase

FROM PAGE 5

Bangladesh, 40 million people in southern region and 65 percent areas of Ganges-Kobadak irrigation project of the country have been suffering from a lack of irrigation water.

Siddiqui said, on May 16, 1976, Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhasani led

Rakhines cast aside for tourism

FROM PAGE 5

"But the renter is claiming that they're the land owners," said Mongla Ching, president of the temple management committee.

Selim Munshi, the accused grabber, claimed that about a decade ago, he had bought 2.66 acres of the temple land from the mother of Mongla Ching and had all the documents.

"The land constituting temples, ponds and burial places are not sellable property as they belong to the community," said Dhaka University Prof Robaet Ferdous.

He said the number of Rakhine villages has been reduced to 26 from 144 in Patuakhali and 13 from 93 in Barguna since 1948.

Yet another

FROM PAGE 3

While visiting the project site in September last year, the minister said if they fail to launch train operation on day-1 of the bridge's operation, they would try to start the operations on Dhaka to Bhangha section within December next year (this year).

However, the project document shows Dhaka-Mawa section saw 55 percent progress till April, while Mawa-Bhangha section saw 78 percent progress and Bhangha-Jashore section saw 49.5 percent progress.

The overall physical progress of the project was 57.5 percent till April this year. The project witnessed 11.5 percent progress in the last six months (October to April) since the minister visited the site.

The October to April period is the prime time for construction works as the country sees less rain during this time.

Asked about the reasons behind the changing deadline, the railways minister said they faced problems in shifting utility services from project areas inside Dhaka. Although the construction did not stop due to Covid-19, it has been slowed down, he added.

Asked whether the June 2024 deadline for the entire project would be changed, the minister said the project is still running within the deadline.

Railway Director General Dharendra Nath Mazumder, Maj Gen F M Zahid Hossain, chief coordinator of the construction supervision consultant team of the project, and project director Afzal Hossain, among others, accompanied the minister.

Seven held

FROM PAGE 3

Photocopies of positive and negative certificates of fake Covid-19 test, two SIM cards, tokens containing three mobile numbers of expatriates, a pen drive and Tk 41,869 in cash, an ATM card and eight mobile phones were retrieved from their possession.

The Rab CO said a negative certificate for the coronavirus test is mandatory for passengers. Taking advantage of this, a fraudulent group has been extorting money from them. Following this, some fraudsters were stationed in front of Mohakhali Covid-19 Hospital to collect mobile numbers of passengers.

'We want to be part of Bangladesh's success story'

Says ambassador Kelly Keiderling

UNB, Dhaka

Ambassador Kelly Keiderling, the US deputy assistant secretary of state for South Asia and Public Diplomacy, has said the Americans want to be a part of the success story of Bangladesh that is becoming an economic power house.

The ambassador appreciated the socioeconomic development Bangladesh has achieved in the span of a generation.

The Embassy of Bangladesh in Washington, DC celebrated the Bangla new year and Eid reunion on Friday, said the embassy in a message yesterday.

Kelly joined the event as the guest of honour. Bangladesh Ambassador to the US M Shahidul Islam delivered the welcome remarks. Diplomats from South Asian countries and US officials and guests from Bangladesh diaspora attended the event.



water," said Luma Rakhine. In the masterplan, it's mentioned that only one historical well is owned by the Rakhines, two temples and two residential areas whereas according to local Rakhines, they have four residential areas including Keranipara, Noyapara, Panchayetpara and Motholpara.

"We have another 11 Rakhine-palli (villages) in Latachapple union and four temples in the municipality area which were unmentioned in the masterplan," said Maung Miya. "When the masterplan was introduced, nobody from the administration asked for our opinion. Rakhines were ignored at that time and till today," he added.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
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"উন্নুক্ত দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি"

স্মারক নং-১৭৪১/১ম খন্ড, তারিখঃ ১২/০৫/২০২২খ্রিঃ।

২০২১-২০২২ অর্থসনে গোপালগঞ্জ জেলা পুলিশের বিভিন্ন ইউনিটের মেরামত ও সংস্কার কাজ বাস্তবায়নের জন্য ঠিকাদার নিয়োগের লক্ষ্যে "দি পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট বিধি/২০০৮" (সর্বশেষ সংশোধনীসহ) অনুসারে নিম্নবর্ণিত শর্ত সাপেক্ষে সীলমোহরকৃত খামে প্রতিযোগিতামূলক দরপত্র আহবান করা যাচ্ছে।

পুলিশ অফিস বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং-০৫/২০২১-২০২২।

১. মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রণালয়/জননিরাপত্তা বিভাগ।
২. সংস্থা	বাংলাদেশ পুলিশ।
৩. দরপত্র সম্পাদনকারী প্রধান	পুলিশ সুপার, গোপালগঞ্জ।
৪. কি কারণে দরপত্র আহবান	গোপালগঞ্জ জেলা পুলিশ অফিসার্স মেসের ১ম ও ২য় তলার টয়লেট মেরামত ও সংস্কার এবং ইলেকট্রিক কাজ।
৫. দরপত্র সূত্র নম্বর ও তারিখ	পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, গোপালগঞ্জ এর স্মারক নং-১৭৪১/১ম খন্ড, তারিখঃ ১২/০৫/২০২২খ্রিঃ।
৬. বাজেট ও অর্থনৈতিক খাত	রাজস্ব খাত, পুলিশ হেডকোয়ার্টার্স হতে বরাদ্দ প্রাপ্ত সাপেক্ষে।
৭. দরপত্রের পদ্ধতি	উন্নুক্ত দরপত্র (OTM)।
৮. দরপত্র জারীর তারিখ	১২/০৫/২০২২খ্রিঃ।
৯. দরপত্র সিডিউল বিক্রয়ের শেষ তারিখ	০৭/০৬/২০২২খ্রিঃ তারিখ অফিস চলাকালীন সময় পর্যন্ত (পত্রিকায় প্রকাশের পর হতে)।
১০. দরপত্র দাখিলের শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	০৮/০৬/২০২২খ্রিঃ তারিখ ১২.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
১১. দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	০৮/০৬/২০২২খ্রিঃ তারিখ ১২.৩০ ঘটিকা।
১২. দরপত্র মূল্যায়নের তারিখ ও সময়	১২/০৬/২০২২খ্রিঃ তারিখ ১১.০০ ঘটিকা।
১৩. দরপত্র সম্পাদন অফিসের নাম ও ঠিকানা	পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, গোপালগঞ্জ।
১৪. দরপত্র সিডিউল বিক্রয়কারী অফিস	১। ডিআইজি, ঢাকা রেজ, ঢাকা এর কার্যালয়। ২। পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, গোপালগঞ্জ করিদপুর ও মাদারীপুর।
১৫. দরপত্র দাখিলের স্থান/অফিস	পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, গোপালগঞ্জ।
১৬. দরপত্র খোলার স্থান/অফিস	পুলিশ সুপারের কার্যালয়, গোপালগঞ্জ।
১৭. দরপত্রাদাতার প্রাথমিক যোগ্যতা	হালনাগাদ ট্রেড লাইসেন্স, ভ্যাট নিবন্ধন সনদ, আয়ের সনদ, ব্যাংক স্বাক্ষরিত সনদ, NID এর কপি, সর্বশ্রেষ্ঠ কাজের অভিজ্ঞতার সনদ দাখিল করতে হবে (বিস্তারিত সিডিউলে উল্লেখ থাকবে)।
১৮. দরদাতার আর্থিক স্বচ্ছলতা	দরপত্র জারীর তারিখ হতে দরপত্র দাখিলের তারিখ পর্যন্ত সময়ের মধ্যে ব্যাংক হতে ইস্যুকৃত Liquid Asset এর বিবরণী দাখিল করতে হবে।

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দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি নং-০৩/২০২১-২০২২

রাজস্ব তহবিলের এর আওতায় সিলেট জেলার ওসমানীনগর উপজেলা নিম্নবর্ণিত কাজগুলি বাস্তবায়নের জন্য সিলেট জেলার এলজিইডি'র তালিকাভুক্ত ঠিকাদার/ঠিকাদারী প্রতিষ্ঠানের নিকট হতে The Public Procurement Rules-2008 অনুযায়ী সীলমোহরকৃত খামে দরপত্র আহবান করা যাচ্ছে।

ক্রম নং	মন্ত্রণালয়/বিভাগ	স্বাধীন সরকার পত্তা উন্নয়ন ও সমবায় মন্ত্রণালয়।
১।	সংস্থা	উপজেলা পরিষদ, ওসমানীনগর, সিলেট।
৩।	ক্রম/সংগ্রহ পদ্ধতি	সীমিত দরপত্র।
৪।	বাজেট ও অর্থের উৎস	পরিচালনা বাজেট "পণ্য ও সেবা বাবদ সহায়তা"
৫।	দরপত্র সভার তারিখ ও সময়	২১/০৪/২০২২ইং সময় সকাল-১১.০০টা উপজেলা প্রকৌশলীর কার্যালয়, এলজিইডি, ওসমানীনগর, সিলেট।
৬।	দরপত্র বিক্রির স্থান, শেষ তারিখ ও সময়	১। নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, এলজিইডি, সিলেট। ২। উপজেলা প্রকৌশলীর কার্যালয়, এলজিইডি, ওসমানীনগর, সিলেট। ৩/০৫/২০২২ইং (অফিস চলাকালীন পর্যন্ত)।
৭।	দরপত্র দাখিল, তারিখ ও সময় এবং অফিস	১। উপজেলা প্রকৌশলীর কার্যালয়, এলজিইডি, ওসমানীনগর, সিলেট। ৩/০৫/২০২২ইং দুপুর ১.০০ ঘটিকা পর্যন্ত।
৮।	দরপত্র খোলার তারিখ ও সময়	নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারীর দপ্তর, তারিখঃ ৩১/০৫/২০২২ইং বিকেল ৩.০০ ঘটিকা।

প্যাকেজ নং	কাজের নাম	প্রাক্কলিত মূল্য	বায়নার টাকা	দরপত্রের মূল্য	কাজের সময়সীমা
২০২১-২২/ওসমানী/ইউপিএম-০১	১নং উমরপুর ইউনিয়ন পরিষদ মেরামত ও সংস্কার	৭,৭৪,৯০০.০০	১৯,৫০০.০০	১০০০.০০	৩০ দিন
২০২১-২২/ওসমানী/ইউপিএম-০২	২নং সাদিপুর ইউনিয়ন পরিষদ মেরামত ও সংস্কার	৮,০৬,৩৪৫.০০	২০,৫০০.০০	১০০০.০০	৩০ দিন
২০২১-২২/ওসমানী/ইউপিএম-০৩	৩নং পশ্চিম পৈলনপুর ইউনিয়ন পরিষদ মেরামত ও সংস্কার	৭,১১,৭৮ ৭.০০	১৮,০০০.০০	১০০০.০০	৩০ দিন
২০২১-২২/ওসমানী/ইউপিএম-০৪	৭নং দয়ামীর ইউনিয়ন পরিষদ মেরামত ও সংস্কার	৪,৪১,৪০৬.০০	১১,৫০০.০০	১০০০.০০	৩০ দিন
২০২১-২২/ওসমানী/ইউপিএম-০৫	৮নং উছমানপুর ইউনিয়ন পরিষদ মেরামত ও সংস্কার	৬,৯৬,৫৮৪.০০	১৭,৫০০.০০	১০০০.০০	৩০ দিন

দরপত্রের কার্যকরতার মেয়াদ ৩০ দিন। দরপত্রের সহিত বায়নার টাকা উপজেলা প্রকৌশলী, ওসমানীনগর, সিলেট বরাবরে বিডি/পি-অর্ডার আকারে বাংলাদেশের যে কোন তহসিলভুক্ত ব্যাংক হতে দাখিল করতে হবে। দরপত্র প্রাক্কলিত মূল্যের চেয়ে ৫% (শতকরা পাঁচ ভাগ) এর অধিক কম/বেশী দরে প্রস্তাবনা গ্রহণ করা যাবে না। দরপত্রের অতিরিক্ত শর্তাবলী দরপত্রের অংশ হিসাবে বিবেচিত হবে। অত্র দরপত্র বিজ্ঞপ্তি সম্পর্কিত বিস্তারিত শর্তাবলী/তথ্যাদি নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারীর দপ্তর হতে (অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে) জানা যাবে। কর্তৃপক্ষ কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকে যে কোন/সকল দরপত্র বাতিল বা গ্রহণ করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।

জিডি-৯৭০

এস এম আব্দুল্লাহ আল মামুন
উপজেলা প্রকৌশলী (অঃ দাঃ)
মোবাইলঃ ০১৭০৮-১৬১৬৯৫
Email: ue.osmaninagar@lged.gov.bd



A major part of this Rakhine burial ground in Kuakata's Latachalee area remains encroached by local influentials in the name of tourism expansion. Not just this one, many such lands belonging to the indigenous community in Kuakata and Barguna have suffered the same fate.

PHOTO: STAR

Rakhines cast aside for tourism conquest

Authorities turn a blind eye to indigenous communities' protests

ASIFUR RAHMAN and SOHRAB HOSSAIN,
Back from Kuakata

Kuakata, the country's second largest sea beach, is being turned into a tourist destination without a structured plan, kicking out the native Rakhine population in the process.

Since December, in several visits to Patuakhali's Kuakata, The Daily Star found that influential people are building different structures, grabbing the indigenous population's living space, temples and even burial grounds.

Rakhines have lost 70 percent of their burial grounds and 50 percent of temples in the past three decades, according to a non-government organisation's survey.

Locals said it was the result of

According to the Integrated Community Development Project, only 22 burial grounds remained intact in 39 Rakhine villages in Patuakhali and Barguna. The rest are either grabbed or encroached.

administration's failure as they didn't consider the Rakhine people in the planning process.

Kuakata was announced as a tourist spot in 1998, according to the Kuakata municipality. The authorities said the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) approved a master plan in 2013, but they couldn't start its implementation till now.

"We couldn't start the implementation as we're yet to form a Kuakata Development Authority like Cox's Bazar," said Harun Or Rashid, executive engineer of the Public Works



Department (PWD) of Patuakhali. The Housing and Public Works Ministry formed a five-member Patuakhali Development Authority in 2011. The following year, PMO instructed the district commissioner (DC) saying, permission from the DC's office is a must to build structures, sell or buy land in Kuakata municipality, Latachalee, Kawar Char, Gangamati and Char Chaplee villages.

The ministry issued another gazette in 2016, forming a nine-member committee headed by the divisional commissioner of Barishal. It said this committee will approve all the establishments and land related issues in those areas.

"As many as eight buildings in Kuakata took approval from this committee till 2019," said Md Anwar Hossain, mayor of Kuakata municipality, recently.

The Daily Star found hundreds of newly built constructions in the

municipality area and at least 10 under construction buildings.

According to locals, there are at least 123 hotels, 3,000 business establishments and over 3,000 residences built since 2010.

Last February, Luma Rakhine, a rights activist, complained to the DC that an influential group is building establishments by grabbing a portion of Rakhine land in the Keranipara area.

The DC directed Upazila Nirbahi Officer (UNO) Abu Hasnat Mohammad Shahidul Haque to investigate.

Contacted, the UNO said he asked for all the documents from both the parties. "After checking the documents, we will move forward," he said.

The UNO said the same group made a "Coffee House" by grabbing a portion of sea beach, which was government property. "We will evict the establishment soon," he said.

This newspaper visited six Rakhine villages including Kuakata's Kalapara

and Keranipara, Latachalee union's Misreepara, Mithaganj Union's Tulatalipara and Madhupara, Tiakhali union's Choyanipara and Choyapara recently and found several such allegations.

The Rakhine burial ground in Kalapara's Nachnapara area, was trashed with garbage. The front portion of the land was blocked by some tin-shed shops and a madrasa.

"Once we had over 30-decimal land here which has now become only five decimals. We can't follow the proper rituals in such a small place," said Koa Koa Mung, a member of the Rakhine community. He said by dumping the garbage here, some are violating the sanctity of the place.

The Daily Star talked to two shopkeepers Idris Mia and Chand Miya, and Muhtamim of the madrasa Mawlana Al Amin. They claimed that the place is not owned by the Rakhine.

"It's a khas land," claimed Al Amin. When asked if they have any permission from the government, he said, "No, there's no practice of such a permission to build madrasa."

According to the Integrated Community Development Project (ICDP), working for land, education and cultural rights of the Rakhines since 2007, only 22 burial grounds remained intact in 39 Rakhine villages in Patuakhali and Barguna. The rest are either grabbed or encroached.

At least a dozen villages do not have any burial ground at all. Only 20 of the 39 Rakhine villages have their temples while the rest 19 villages lost theirs.

The Misreepara Buddhist temple authority rented out a portion of land for shops about 20 years ago.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

The road of suffering

Battered clay road causes public woes

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

The only road connecting Chulabar Bazar from Sagardighi Rupali Hall intersection in Ghatail, Tangail has become dilapidated, causing immense suffering to locals.

The 6-kilometre clay road becomes unusable even after moderate rain with the authorities concerned taking no action to ease the public woes.

Hundreds of families living at Jalalpur, Pagariapara, Guaripara, Chulabor and Malirchala villages in Sagardighi union have no alternative to the earthen road plied by battery-run auto-rickshaw, rickshaw-van and horse cart.

Presently, no vehicles can move through the road as it became too muddy to use.

Locals said if they want to urgently take a patient to a hospital in Tangail town or Ghatail



upazila headquarters, they need to walk all the way. In this case, there's a possibility of the patient dying before reaching the destination.

Farmers also face difficulties to transport crops to Sagardighi market.

The battered road has brought a lot of sufferings to students as well. Liton Sarkar, a school student from Sagardighi, said they can't attend school on time as the large section of the road remains impassable.

Expressing anger over the problem, Shafiqul Islam Joy from the same area, said they want the authorities concerned to pave the road to minimise the suffering.

Contacted, Waliur Rahman, upazila engineer of Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) in Ghatail, said a project proposal will be sent to the higher authorities in this regard.

Brood fish release sample eggs in Halda



STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Brood fish in the Halda have released sample eggs – indicating full spawning – since Saturday night at various points of the river.

Egg collectors got 200-500 grammes of eggs on average since Saturday night from the river.

Ashu Barua from Madunaghat area, a seasoned egg collector, told The Daily Star that they started coming across the eggs since Saturday night and hope to see full spawning soon.

Professor Manzoorul Kibria, an eminent Halda researcher, told The Daily Star that these sample eggs are laid by brood fish in preparation for a full spawning.

3 of family die as tractor hits bikes in Rajshahi

Woman dead, son hurt in Dhaka road crash

STAR REPORT

Akter Hossain from Niamatpur upazila in Naogaon was taking his wife and four-year-old daughter to Rajshahi for their treatment yesterday.

But fate had something else altogether in store for them as they fell victim to a fatal road accident on their way through Rajshahi-Naogaon highway.

Akter, a deed writer, perished along with his wife Bithi Khatun (33) and daughter Moriam Jannat.

The accident occurred at Nawhata in Paba upazila, Rajshahi at 10:30am when a mud-laden tractor rammed two motorcycles – Akter's and another Abdul Mannan's – while taking a turn from the opposite direction, said police and eyewitnesses.

Mannan, who was going to attend a marriage ceremony in Naogaon, also lost his life, said police.

The tractor ran over Mannan first and hit Akter's motorcycle while trying to flee

the scene.

Akter's daughter and Mannan died on the spot and Bithi was declared dead when she was taken to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital.

At 4:00pm, Akter was announced dead while he was undergoing treatment at RMCH.

Police seized the tractor, but could not arrest anyone.

Meanwhile, a woman died and her 16-year-old son suffered injuries after a truck hit them in Dhaka's Turag yesterday morning.

The deceased was identified as Ambia Begum (48), wife of Mozammel Haque from Chandpur.

The accident occurred around 6:30am at Kamarpara when Ambia, her husband and two sons were walking to a nearby bus stoppage.

"We were walking along the road to catch a bus to go to our village home. Suddenly, a truck hit my mother

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Holding candles and incense sticks, children pray at Nandankanan Bouddha Bihar in Chattogram on the occasion of Buddha Purnima. The biggest religious festival of the Buddhist community was celebrated across the country yesterday amid festivities after two years of Covid-induced restrictions. Buddha Purnima marks the birth, enlightenment and death of Gautama Buddha.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

'Unite against Farakka barrage'

46th Farakka Long March Day today

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

The 46th Farakka Long March Day Celebration Committee in Rajshahi yesterday called upon people to unite to demand demolition of Farakka barrage and asking India to compensate for the damages the barrage makes every year.

Addressing a press conference in the city, the committee convener Mahub Siddiqui said Bangladesh is losing Tk 5,000 crore a year due to water retrieval by India through the Farakka barrage.

Reading out a statement, he said some 20 million people in northern

SEE PAGE 4 COL 2



PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

STAND UP DHAKA Bangladesh's first vertical panoramic exhibition

"Stand Up Dhaka" is Bangladesh's first-ever vertical panoramic exhibition. It showcases the living chaos experienced by city dwellers.

RAKSHANDA RAHMAN MISHA

Bashir Ahmed Sujan's solo panoramic photography exhibition "Darao Dhaka" (Stand Up Dhaka) began on May 13 at La Gallerie, Alliance Française de Dhaka, Dhanmondi. A book of the same name was also launched at the event.

Khondoker Mostafizur Rahman, Director General, Bangladesh National Museum graced the inaugural ceremony as the chief guest. Eminent photographer Nasir Ali Mamun was also present at the event as the special guest. Francois Grosjean, Director, Alliance Française de Dhaka, and architect Nurur Rahman Khan attended the event as the guests of honour.

"Stand Up Dhaka" is Bangladesh's first-ever vertical panoramic exhibition. It showcases the living chaos experienced by city dwellers.

The images have been presented in such a way that it resembles the cityscapes of one of the biggest and busiest metropolises in the world, Dhaka.

Photographer Bashir Ahmed Sujan has been working on this project for almost 15 years now. "I have worked with a Hasselblad XPan, a manual



panoramic film camera, to capture the diversities of city life through my lens,' said the photographer who processes his photographs manually and even converts them into digital formats himself. "It is not easy working to capture a vertical panoramic shot as the framing needs to be set perfectly."

This exhibition has been organised by Duniyadari Archive and curated by Amirul Rajiv and Naim Ul Hasan. Rajiv emphasised on how various photos shot at different times coincides with each other in paired

frames.

"The photos are presented in multiple series of diptychs and triptychs (an artwork made up of 2-3 panels)," shares the curator. "The shadows on the walls represent the landscape of buildings and monuments in Dhaka. Each picture highlights the similarities and contrasts while creating an unconscious yet a spontaneous sense of harmony."

The exhibition is open till May 21 from 3 pm to 9 pm, except Sundays.

Bangladeshi artistes honoured in India

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The 19th installment of the Tele Cine Awards was conferred on Saturday at Kolkata's Nazrul Mancha. Bangladeshi celebrities Momtaz Begom, Azmeri Haque Badhon, Mir Sabbir, Deepanwita Martin, Masud Hasan Ujjal, and Anika Tasnim, among many were honoured with the award.

Eminent Bangladeshi artistes Runa Laila and Alamgir were honoured with the Lifetime Achievement award in the ceremony.

Last year, noted actor and the Member of Parliament, Akbar Hossain Pathan Farooque won the Lifetime Achievement award at the Tele Cine Awards. Bangladeshi artistes SI Tutul, Chanchal Chowdhury, and Zakia Bari Mamo were also conferred with awards at the event.



Make as many people smile as you can: SRK to Suhana

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Shah Rukh Khan's daughter Suhana Khan made headlines recently with "The Archies" teaser, with good wishes pouring in from all over the internet. Shah Rukh Khan shared his teaser, leaving some advice for her.

"Remember @suhanakhan2 you are never going to be perfect... but being yourself is the closest to that," he wrote on Instagram.

Shah Rukh, one of the most popular film stars of the world, further said, "Be kind and giving as an actor...the brickbats and applause is not yours to keep...the part of you that gets left behind on screen will always belong to you."

This led to a wholesome conversation on Instagram. "I miss being with you. Take a day off from work come and give me a hug and go back," wrote SRK, to which Suhana replied, "@iamsrk miss you more, no days off I'm a working actor now, just kidding on my way!!"



Bashir Ahmed Sujan

COUNTRYWIDE

Farm labourers plagued by seasonal job crisis

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

A large number of farm labourers in five upazilas under Lalmonirhat and Kurigram districts are passing a hard time amid a seasonal job crisis that will continue until the start of Boro paddy harvest in the last week of this month.

Every year there is no farm job in the region during the Bangla months of Chaitra and Baishakh (April-May), and so, most of the labourers are going to different areas including the capital Dhaka in search of a job, locals said.

"I along with 50 other farm labourers in the village preparing to go to other areas in search of a job as there is no work here this time," said farm labourer Haider Ali, 55, of Gorokmandol in Phulbari upazila of Kurigram.

"After working for two weeks elsewhere, we will return to the village as paddy harvest would start in our area by then," he said.

"We will harvest paddy in Bogura, Sherpur, Tangail and other areas as harvesting has already started there," said Mafizul Islam of Shimulbari village in Kurigram's Phulbari upazila.

"On average, we can earn Tk 700 each by harvesting paddy daylong," he said.

"Although we through the labour markets of



PHOTO: STAR

the town, most of the time we don't find work. Many are compelled to sell labour lower than usual wages," Akkas Ali of Kulaghat village in Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila said.

Farmer Ataur Rahman in Kurigram's Rajarhat said farm workers are now temporarily jobless as Boro harvest is yet to start. "Some workers selling their labour in advance," he said.

Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) officials said there are around two lakh farm workers in Lalmonirhat and Kurigram.

Lalmonirhat DAE Deputy Director Shamim Ashraf said there has been a delay in Boro harvest as the crop was planted late.

From the mid of Bangla month— Chaitra to Baishakh— there are hardly any available jobs in the farmlands, he said.



The paved road constructed by Ghatail municipality in Tangail through the playground of Ratanpur Government Primary School is a flagrant violation of the ban imposed by the district administration.

PHOTO: STAR

ROAD THROUGH SCHOOL PLAYGROUND

Banned yet reconstructed in dead of night

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

The construction of a paved road through the playground of Ratanpur Government Primary School, which was banned by the district administration, has been reconstructed on the night of May 2.

Finger has been pointed to Ghatail municipality authorities for stealthily doing the work in the dead of night before Eid-ul-Fitr. However, the road was decreed to be demolished after its first construction in July last year.

Immediately after its construction, protests were lodged from different quarters, including the teachers and students of the institution, for constructing the road through the middle of the playground of the school. Then the upazila primary education

officer made a written request to the upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) on July 29 last year to stop the construction of the road.

The UNO then informed the matter to the deputy commissioner and wrote a letter to the then mayor Shahiduzzaman Khan to stop the work.

However, the road was built along the middle of the ground of the school ignoring all. In this situation, Shariful Islam, the then additional deputy commissioner (Education and ICT) in Tangail, in a letter to the mayor on October 25, directed to remove the road within seven working days.

The then-mayor of Ghatail municipality, however, disobeyed that instruction. Later, the administration demolished the road on November 14.

This time as well the road has been constructed in the same place on the night before Eid. The permission from the school authorities has not also been taken this time.

Nazrul Islam, the headmaster of the school, said the matter has been informed to the upazila primary education officer and the chairman of the education committee.

Upazila Primary Education Officer Masudur Rahman said the work on the road was completed hurriedly on the eve of Eid. The matter was already informed to the UNO and upazila assistant commissioner (land) in Ghatail.

Asked if they have any permission from the municipal authority to rebuild the road, Ghatail Municipality Executive Engineer Mizanur Rahman said that

they do not have any documents in this regard.

"I did not know anything about the matter," he claimed.

Newly-elected Municipal Mayor Abdur Rashid Miah also claimed that he came to know the matter after the completion of the construction work. No one from the administration and municipality knows about the road reconstruction work, then how the work could have been completed.

In response to such a question, contractor Kazi Nasim said, the municipality has been informed about it.

Asked about the matter, UNO Munia Chowdhury said, the matter has been informed to the deputy commissioner.

"Of course, the road will be removed," she added.

INTERNATIONAL

'RACIALLY MOTIVATED' SHOOTING
Ten killed at US
grocery store

AFP, Buffalo

A heavily armed 18-year-old white man shot 10 people dead on Saturday at a Buffalo, New York grocery store in a "racially motivated" attack that he live-streamed on camera, authorities said.

The gunman, who was wearing body armor and a helmet, was arrested after the massacre, Buffalo Police Commissioner Joseph Gramaglia told a news conference.

Gramaglia put the toll at 10 dead and three wounded. Eleven of the victims were African Americans.

The gunman shot four people in the parking lot of the Tops supermarket, three of them fatally, then went inside and continued firing, Gramaglia said.

He added that when police arrived, the shooter put the gun to his neck, but was talked down and surrendered.

Stephen Belongia, special agent in charge of the FBI's Buffalo field office, told the news conference that the shooting is being investigated as a hate crime.

US media outlets have reported officials are investigating a detailed "manifesto" posted online before the shooting, in which the suspect outlines his plans and racial motivations for the attack. Quoting from the manifesto, the New York Times reported the suspect had been "inspired" by white supremacist acts of violence, including the massacre of 51 Muslims in Christchurch, New Zealand in March 2019.

District Attorney Flynn's office said in a tweet that the suspect — identified as Payton Gendron of Conklin, New York — had been arraigned on a charge of first-degree murder, which carries a sentence of life without parole. He is being held without bail.

The US suffered 19,350 firearm homicides in 2020, up nearly 35 percent compared to 2019, data showed.



Palestinian wave national flags and carry giant mock keys (a widely used symbol of the Nakba, as many Palestinians kept the keys to their homes when they were forced into exile in 1948), as they march in a rally marking the 74th anniversary of the "Nakba" or "catastrophe", in the occupied West Bank town of Ramallah, yesterday. Each year Palestinians commemorate the "Nakba" on May 15, the official date of Israel's creation, as a result of which more than 760,000 Palestinians were pushed into exile or driven out of their homes. The annual demonstrations across the occupied West Bank, annexed east Jerusalem and inside Israel came with tensions high over the killing of 51-year-old Al Jazeera reporter Shireen Abu Akleh.

PHOTO: AFP

Rallies held
across US for
abortion rights

AFP, New York

Thousands of activists chanting, banging drums and wielding placards flooded streets across the United States on Saturday in a national day of action calling for safe and legal access to abortion.

The mass demonstrations were a response to a leaked draft opinion showing the Supreme Court's conservative majority is poised to overturn Roe v. Wade, a landmark 1973 ruling guaranteeing abortion access nationwide.

"Nobody has the right to make a decision on somebody else's body," said Hanna Williamson, 20, who drove three hours to join several thousand protesters in Washington.

Thousands more people assembled in a central square in Brooklyn, New York, to carry a giant pink banner that read: "Our Bodies. Our Futures. Our Abortions."

Thousands of people also rallied in Texas and Kentucky, with smaller events elsewhere in the country.

Sri Lanka lifts curfew
for Buddhist festival

New PM holds talks with World Bank, ADB

AGENCIES

Sri Lankan authorities lifted a nationwide curfew yesterday for an important Buddhist festival, but celebrations were muted as the island nation's new premier struggled to find his footing and tackle a worsening economic crisis.

A countrywide stay-home order has been in place for most of the week after mob violence left nine dead and over 225 wounded, sparked by attacks on peaceful demonstrators by government loyalists.

Protesters across the Buddhist-majority nation have for weeks demanded the resignation of President Gotabaya Rajapaksa over Sri Lanka's worst-ever economic crisis. Shortages of food, fuel and medicines, along with record inflation and lengthy blackouts, have brought severe hardships to the country's 22 million people.

Sunday marks Vesak, the most important religious event on Sri Lanka's calendar, which celebrates Buddha's birth, enlightenment and death.

The government has declared a two-day holiday and announced it was lifting the curfew for the day without saying when or whether it would be reimposed.

Newly appointed PM Ranil Wickremesinghe is struggling to form a unity government ahead of tomorrow's parliamentary session, the first since he took office.

Opposition leader Sajith Premadasa has already formally rejected an overture to join the new administration. But he added that his party would not block legitimate "solutions to the economic problems" in parliament.

Rajapaksa on Saturday appointed four new ministers, all from his own Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP) party, but the all-important

finance ministry remains vacant.

Official sources said the new prime minister could take the finance portfolio to spearhead ongoing negotiations with the International Monetary Fund for an urgent bailout.

Wickremesinghe, a veteran politician who was sworn in as prime minister for a sixth time on Thursday, has already met with diplomats from Britain, the United States, Japan, China and India to seek financial aid.

Wickremesinghe yesterday held discussions with the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank, his office said in a statement.

"The discussions with the organizations focused on assistance for the issues facing the supply of medicine, food and fertiliser," the statement said.

Hit hard by the Covid pandemic, rising oil prices and the Rajapaksa government's populist tax cuts, Sri Lanka is in the midst of its worst economic crisis since independence in 1948, with rampant inflation and shortages of fuel and other essentials.

A consignment of diesel using an Indian credit line arrived in Colombo on Sunday, New Delhi's embassy said in a tweet.

He said last week that shortages will get worse in the coming weeks, with reserves of useable foreign exchange needed to import essential goods falling below \$50 million.

His appointment has so far failed to quell public anger at the government for bringing Sri Lanka to the brink of economic collapse.

"All these people are hand-in-glove," Fareena, a resident of the capital Colombo, said of the new premier.

"When one goes, they bring another one of their guys in," she told AFP. "But to us, they are all the same."

Colombo to
probe LTTE
attack reports

THE HINDU ONLINE

Sri Lanka yesterday said it will "duly investigate" information flagged by Indian intelligence agencies — that ex-LTTE were "regrouping to launch attacks" in the island — and "strengthen security", a day after authorities denied the claim reported in The Hindu.

On May 13, The Hindu, citing Indian intelligence sources, reported that "some erstwhile cadre" had entered Tamil Nadu to "plan and execute" attacks in Sri Lanka.

The attacks were being timed with the 'Mullivaikkal anniversary', sources had indicated. They were referring to the civil war anniversary marked by Sri Lanka's Tamils on May 18 every year, to remember the tens of thousands of Tamil civilians who were killed during the final stages of Sri Lanka's civil war in May 2009.

Sri Lanka's Ministry of Defence on Saturday denied the claims, calling the report "baseless".

However, the ministry yesterday said in a statement that upon inquiry, "the Indian intelligence services have informed Sri Lanka that the information has been given as general information and further informed that the investigations will be carried out in this regard and action will be taken to inform Sri Lanka about it."

Suicide blast kills
6 in Pakistan

AFP, Islamabad

A suicide bomber killed three children, age between 4 and 11, and three soldiers in an attack on a military vehicle in Pakistan's restive northwestern region bordering Afghanistan, officials said yesterday. The mountainous frontier separating Pakistan and Afghanistan has long been a hive of militant activity, with fighters using the porous border to escape state security forces. On Saturday evening a suicide bomber detonated in a small market near Miran Shah in North Waziristan, just 26 kilometres southeast of Afghanistan. The attack has not yet been claimed by any militant groups.

Lebanon eyes
change in polls

AFP, Beirut

Lebanon yesterday voted in its first election since multiple crises dragged it to the brink of failed statehood, a major test for new opposition groups bent on removing the ruling elite. Observers have warned not to expect any seismic shift, with every lever of power firmly in the hands of traditional sectarian parties and an electoral system rigged in their favour. A new generation of independent candidates and parties are hoping to kindle the change that an unprecedented anti-corruption uprising in 2019 failed to deliver. Once described as the Switzerland of the Middle East, Lebanon ranked second-to-last behind Afghanistan in the latest World Happiness Index released in March. More than 80 percent of Lebanon's population is now considered poor by the United Nations. The Lebanese pound has lost 95 percent of its value and most of the population only gets two hours of electricity a day.



Talks with US begin

FROM PAGE 12
The bilateral relations saw strains, especially due to the US sanctions against Rab and seven of its current and former officials imposed on December 10 last year.

The US and Bangladesh held Partnership Dialogue in Dhaka on March 20, foreign ministerial-level meeting on April 4 marking the 50 years of diplomatic relationship and Security Dialogue in Washington on April 6.

The US officials during their meetings made it clear that they want Bangladesh to be on its side over the Ukraine that was invaded by Russia, while also seeking to sign GSOMIA, a legally-binding agreement that ensures governments understand and commit to protecting classified military information in the case of purchasing defence equipment.

Signing such a deal is required for buying sophisticated defence equipment from the US. During the Security Dialogue in Washington

DC, Dhaka observed that the US equipment was very expensive. Washington responded that it could consider the aspect.

Diplomatic sources said the US also discouraged Bangladesh in the case of buying defence equipment from Russia. It is likely that these issues will be coming up in the dialogue.

Asked on the Indo-Pacific, a foreign ministry official said overall security environment in the Indo-Pacific region would be discussed and how the two countries could cooperate towards this end.

"Bangladesh is more interested in the economic framework of the Indo-Pacific. So, we will focus on it. We want prosperity of our people and people of the region," the official said. The US wants free and open Indo-Pacific that will be governed by international rules-based system.

A foreign ministry official said Bangladesh will strongly raise the Rohingya repatriation issue as the stay of more than a million

Rohingyas for long in the camps in Bangladesh could turn out to be a serious security concern.

Diplomatic sources said the US determining Myanmar's persecution against the Rohingyas a genocide and Biden's summit with Asean leaders last Friday are some important developments that can help create pressure on Myanmar.

In terms of countering terrorism, foreign ministry officials said Bangladesh is a success story of combating terrorism and would continue to do the same. US assistance towards this will be welcome.

Bangladesh and US armed forces also took part in a number of joint exercises on disaster management, and its importance is growing as cyclones and other disasters are a regular phenomenon in the country.

"Military to military exercise means that the two countries can cooperate when the need arises," said a diplomatic source.

Finland

FROM PAGE 12
period from their application for membership to accession, he said, adding that doors are open for both countries to join the alliance.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he had spoken to his Turkish counterpart on Ankara's concerns and he was confident a consensus could be reached.

Finland's parliament will convene to debate the membership proposal today.

Russia lost

FROM PAGE 12
Ukrainian troops on the eastern front in the Donbas.

Izium straddles the Donets river, about 120 km from Kharkiv on the main highway heading southeast.

"The hottest spot remains the Izium direction," regional governor Oleh Sinegubov said in comments aired on social media.

India on trail of his laundered money

FROM PAGE 1
Earlier on Saturday, Halder was arrested in Kolkata's Ashoknagar along with his five cohorts. All of them were produced before a special court dealing with cases filed under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act. It approved five-day remand for five of them including Halder under the ED custody and one under judicial custody.

Public money that Halder and his associates siphoned off to India and other countries would be repatriated upon confiscation of his properties, said Attorney General AM Amin Uddin.

Asked under what process he would be brought back to Bangladesh, he said that hopefully it would be possible to bring him back soon.

"... we have a money laundering case [against Halder] pending here. Steps will be taken to bring him back to complete the trial in that case. The issue will be discussed tomorrow," he

told journalists at his office yesterday.

"He was arrested based on the information provided by our Anti-Corruption Commission and Bangladesh Financial Intelligence Unit..."

ACC lawyer Khurshid Alam Khan said it's possible to bring back the money that Halder had laundered to India. But that would be a complex and time-consuming process.

It could take three to six months to bring Halder back to Bangladesh, said the lawyer adding that if he is not tried in India, it wouldn't take that long to repatriate him.

It's essential to bring him back because he was at the centre of scams involving huge amounts of money, Khurshid pointed out.

"It was not possible for him to do that alone. Others were also involved in those scams and their identities will come to light through his [Halder] interrogation."

ACC Deputy Director Gulshan Anwar Proddhan

said Halder took bribes for facilitating loans through forgery.

"We have traced Tk 250 crore in Halder's salary account," he said adding that charges were pressed against PK Halder in a case filed for amassing Tk 426 crore illegally.

So far, the ACC has found that Halder had investments of Tk 200 crore in a five-star hotel in Cox's Bazar, 10,000 decimals of land in Narayanganj's Rupanji, four acres of land in Mymensingh, over 60 bighas of land in Purbachal, an 11-storey market on a nine-katha plot worth around Tk 40 crore, Tk 300 crore investment in resorts in Rangamati, several flats worth about Tk 20 crore and around Tk 100 crore in different bank accounts.

Under the alias "Shibshankar Halder", PK Halder forged documents including ration card in West Bengal, Indian Voter ID card, Permanent Account Number and multi-purpose Aadhar

card. He used those to buy properties in India with the laundered money.

Halder's name came up for discussions during the "anti-casino" drives in Bangladesh in 2019.

There are allegations that he embezzled Tk 10,200 crore from People's Leasing and Financial Service (PLFS), International Leasing and Financial Service Limited, FAS Finance, and Reliance Finance.

The ACC has so far filed 36 cases over the scams and Halder has been made the prime accused in those. PLFS is now in the process of liquidation while the rest are in a bad shape.

Fossils

FROM PAGE 12

The 9-foot-long Deinonychus, which roamed western North America, was named for its distinctive and deadly claw on each foot, says the auction house. Deinonychus means "terrible claw" in ancient Greek.

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

India's ban on wheat export is disconcerting

But there is a silver lining too

IT is distressing news that our single biggest exporter of wheat, India, has put a curb on export of the food grain. Bangladesh happens to be the single biggest importer of Indian wheat. Wheat is the second most consumed grain item in Bangladesh, and after the edible oil crunch, which was partly man-made, it is alarming that we must now brace for a spike in wheat price as well. In fact, no sooner had India announced the shocking news on May 14 that prices in the wholesale market in Chattogram shot up by as much as 25 percent.

Economists had predicted that the Russian aggression on Ukraine—a conflict that has the potential to be long-drawn—would have severe consequences on the world economy. But apart from the war, which involves Russia—the largest wheat exporter in the world, and which is facing international sanctions—on the one side, and Ukraine—which produces a staggering six percent of food calories traded around the globe—on the other, a concatenation of events has combined to adversely affect the wheat market. There was poor harvest in China, the largest wheat producer in the world, and severe drought in India. All this, as the world was already facing severe supply chain pressure caused by the pandemic and rise in fuel and food prices.

However, there is a ray of hope, held out in the assurance of the Indian commerce secretary that India's neighbours as well as the needy countries would receive special dispensation. Given that we import more than 80 percent of our requirement of wheat from India, we believe that the Bangladesh government should take it up with its Indian counterpart to initiate deals at government level for wheat import. It should also request India to ensure shipment of the amount of wheat for which letter of credit has reportedly been issued already.

There is a silver lining, too, because the next harvest of wheat in Bangladesh is due soon and the product will be in the market by the end of May. But the most important job for the administration in the interregnum is to prevent panic-buying. And even more importantly, it must launch an anti-hoarding drive straight away to prevent the repetition of what we experienced with edible oil. The government may even consider legislating laws that would make hoarding of fast-moving food items a grievous penal offence, meriting the highest degree of punishment.

Introducing school buses is the need of the hour

It will not only reduce traffic jams, but will also ensure children's safety

IT is good to know from Dhaka North Mayor Atiqul Islam that they are planning to introduce buses for different schools, especially the English-medium ones, to reduce traffic congestion in the city. While we appreciate the mayor for suggesting this big step, we would also like to add that the government should introduce school buses in both English and Bangla medium schools. Designated school buses will not only reduce traffic jams in the city, but it will also ensure safety of the schoolchildren on the road.

Dhaka's traffic congestion has become literally unbearable over the last one decade, due mainly to an increasing number of personal cars and various infrastructure development projects going on across the main thoroughfares of the city. While we are hopeful that these development projects, such as the metro rail, will end soon, can we hope to see a reduced number of private cars on our streets in near future? No, not until our public transport system becomes safe and convenient for the commuters.

According to a study by Bras Institute of Governance and Development (BIGD), traffic congestion in Dhaka eats up around five million working hours every day and costs the country USD 11.4 billion every year. If we want to reverse the situation, we need to make some vital changes in our public transport system. Since private cars are a major reason for the crippling traffic jam on an average work day, we need to come up with good plans to reduce their number on the road.

The affluent citizens of the city generally send their children to school by car. And, often, one car carries only one child. This creates a mad rush of privately-owned cars during school hours, bringing the main roads of the city to a standstill. Some of the residential areas in Dhaka have become difficult to live in due to day-long traffic congestions, caused by the unlimited number of cars parked on the roads. If all the schools in the city have their own buses for carrying students, the situation will significantly improve. Fewer cars on the streets will also mean better air quality.

But how the government will make the schools agree to their plan is the question here. The DNCC mayor has said that the government will reduce taxes for those who will introduce school bus service. While this may encourage some schools to take this major step, more incentives are needed for this initiative to be an all-out success.

We hope the government will seriously consider this issue and come up with a well-thought-out plan with participation from all the stakeholders involved.

Are some people always trying to 'oust' the government?

Our PM's remarks should engage our thoughts



STRATEGICALLY SPEAKING

Brig Gen Shahedul Anam Khan, ndc, psc (ret'd) is a former associate editor of The Daily Star.

SHAHEDUL ANAM KHAN

EARLIER this month, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina made a remark that assumes significance given the rueful undertone that her statement conveyed. This was a follow-up of her statement last month. She is reported to have said, "Some people are always trying to regroup and oust the government." That despite all the developments that have taken place in the last decade under her watch. She also alluded to the effort of some political parties to seek help from foreigners, "hoping that someone abroad will hold their hands and put them on the throne." She had reportedly said in end April that a group of political parties had joined hands with the BNP-Jamaat alliance to try to oust her government. And she wondered what the fault of the Awami League government was, and why they wanted to oust it. Here is my tuppenny worth of opinion.

Let's pose a counterquestion: Why, indeed, would anyone try to "oust" a political party that is well ensconced in power, and has so much to show on the economic front? In this regard, we would like to believe that the parties that the prime minister named and the people she mentioned in her remarks are well established and recognised political parties and people with long political credentials. Hence, the term "oust" that denotes a more sinister intention than a legal political process of replacing a party in power through elections does not apply here. "Unscat," perhaps, may be more appropriate here. We are totally opposed to supra-political means of changing government and would like to believe that all legal political parties—which all opposition parties are—also subscribe to this principled view. Anything contrary must be curbed ruthlessly. The last such intervention was that by Gen Moin in the political process in 2008. The Awami League continues to enjoy the fruits of that intervention. Some of the above-mentioned changes were welcomed with the comment of the Awami League leader that "we are not unhappy," and in 2008, the party assured that all the ordinances of the caretaker government would be

validated if the party was elected to office, nay "power." And indeed, most of those were.

The economic story is astounding, but who will answer for the thousands of crores of taka that has been siphoned off from the country? Despite the not-so-sound condition of the banking sector, more and more private banks were allowed to open—an example of

will hold their hands and put them on the throne," running to the foreigners has been the cheap stock-in-trade of all our political parties. But the only direct involvement in our elections that one can recall was when Indian Foreign Secretary Sujatha Singh personally tried to prevail on Ershad to join the 2014 parliamentary polls when all the other opposition parties had boycotted it (*Dhaka Tribune*, July 1, 2014). Without an opposition, the election would have been far more questionable than it was.

Then there is the issue of the rule of law, which has severely eroded the ruling party's image. There is nothing wrong with the law, but everything with the order. When law is applied selectively, it becomes the rule of men. When a convicted person belonging to the ruling party can go abroad for treatment without any impediment, while another has to wait for government benediction, it betrays the attitude of the administration towards the rule of law, and does nothing to enhance the government's image. There are examples where law has been applied depending on who the alleged accused was.

Last, but not the least, let's restate that it is the constant effort of the opposition in any country to unseat the party in power through elections by exposing the failures of the incumbent and offering better alternatives to the public. And anti-government utterances and criticisms are absolutely the established norm in a free political system. This cannot be painted as anti-state activities, which has been done during the tenure of the current regime. Criticism of anyone remotely associated with the high-ups of the party in power has invited the wrath of the administration, as was the case with writer Mushtaq and cartoonist Kishore. The former died in custody in February 2021, and Kishore's case lingers. The Digital Security Act, and the proposed Data Protection Act—which is seen as being legislated with next year's parliamentary elections in mind—have curbed and will curb the freedom of expression even more. The worst sufferer has been the media, whose self-censorship has reached to a weird level, and criticism of political personalities has come to be regarded as *lese-majesty*.

Have the people really swallowed the ruling party's mantra of Development before Democracy? That is what the Awami League should ask itself.



Sheikh Hasina, prime minister of Bangladesh and chief of the Awami League.

FILE PHOTO: BSS

crony capitalism. And most of those who deliberately violated banking rules are yet to be brought to justice.

The less said about shrinking political space to the opposition, the better. Thus, when the ruling party taunts the main opposition party for the lack of its presence on the streets or losing political relevance, they know one of the main reasons why. Even a gathering of politicians within the walls of a house is considered clandestine and, in some cases, forced to break up.

The politicisation of the administration, particularly the police, has set a very bad precedence. For example, did the Rab chief not exceed his remit when he warned against protesting the scrapping of Article 370 in India in Bangladesh (*New Age*, August 10, 2019)? Some of the recent comments of senior police officials sound like those of party cadres. The regression of law and order is exposed by the way law enforcers have acted on a selective basis in many instances.

As for "hoping that someone abroad

Let's capitalise on the booming RMG business

RMG NOTES

Mostafiz Uddin is the managing director of Denim Expert Limited. He is also the founder and CEO of Bangladesh Denim Expo and Bangladesh Apparel Exchange (BAE).

MOSTAFIZ UDDIN



TWO years ago, garment order books were empty as Covid broke out and shut down the main global markets for Bangladesh. Two years on, those order books are full. Our ready-made garment (RMG) industry has come full circle, following what we will surely look back upon one day as one of the most extraordinary periods in our history.

Nobody knows how the next few months or years will pan out. There are talks of global inflation leading to higher interest rates, which will be required to put the brakes on rising prices. Higher interest rates often slow down the economy. Others think inflationary pressures might ease off on their own once the global supply chains begin to move properly and the bottlenecks clear up in major logistics hubs, such as China.

The picture of uncertainty prevails, but we must be grateful that, amid these volatile times, business is good. But what now? I think we have an opportunity that we should not allow to go to waste. Bangladesh must strike while the iron is hot and capitalise on healthy order books by making investments and changes that will serve us well in years to come.

Somebody asked me just recently about how I think the next 12-18 months would go. That is anyone's guess. That said, our business has been fairly robust since late last year, and I don't see why this would change anytime soon. The reason I say this with a fair degree of confidence is China, the world's largest textile market, which has adopted a "zero Covid" strategy, closing down

whole cities due to a small number of infections.

These issues have major implications for Bangladesh. Our own government has taken a light-touch approach to the pandemic, balancing the need for public health safety with the necessity of having a healthy economy. China continues down its path of zero Covid, which shows no sign of being discontinued.

next 12-18 months.

The first of these areas is technological upgrading in our factories. Productivity rates remain low in our industry compared to that of our rivals. Better operational management, better layout, more modern machinery—all these can enable us to improve productivity and bottom lines. They can also ensure that we continue to meet customer requirements and be more flexible to changes in orders.

Another factor is training manpower. Good people make a successful business. Attracting decent talent is a huge challenge at any time, particularly when order books are full to the brim. Now is the time to invest in people and their training, and to forge stronger links with our colleges and universities.

The third point is, of course, sustainability. One thing I have witnessed this past year is that our customers are doubling down on their demand for sustainability now more than ever. We are seeing big fashion retailers rationalising their supply bases, getting rid of suppliers that cannot meet their criteria for sustainable production. Some of our factories risk being left behind in the new landscape if they don't invest in, for instance, energy and water-saving technologies.

The final area I believe we need to focus on is promotion and marketing. I see so much interest in Bangladeshi products right now, there is such a huge groundswell of goodwill towards our industry. Fashion brands saw during the pandemic that we can be relied upon as a trusted sourcing partner, and I now believe we are reaping the rewards of that.

Let's not waste this goodwill, and let's all focus on the same key factors: quality, consistency and sustainability. Some people believe a shift of production from China to Bangladesh might be temporary. It's up to us to make sure this is a permanent shift, and for that, we need to invest.



Bangladesh has been presented with a great opportunity to grab a larger share of the global market for its RMG exports. Making use of that will require timely investments in both manpower and technology.

FILE PHOTO: AFP

The upshot of all this is that China is becoming a serious sourcing risk for all retailers, including those in fashion. When people ask how I see the near-future unfolding, it is difficult not to see a further decoupling between China and fashion brands and retailers, and more business for its closest rivals, such as Bangladesh.

So it is high time now for our garment suppliers to take steps and turn this short-term opportunity into a long-term business strategy. The sun won't shine forever on our industry, and there are steps we can take to capitalise on the healthy revenue streams we are experiencing right now. We must not waste this opportunity.

Investment in key, business-critical areas is a must-do for our industry in the

So what if taka slides against dollar?



BIRUPAKSHA PAUL

Dr Birupaksha Paul is a professor of economics at the State University of New York at Cortland in the US and former chief economist of Bangladesh Bank.

There is nothing to be panicked about if taka slides further against the dollar. It's not only that the market demands it, but it is also the penalty the nation must pay for the government's wrong policy on the exchange rate in the first place. Since the early 2020s, taka was wrongly overvalued, hurting exports and remittances and boosting imports for long. These widened the current account deficits and depleted the foreign currency reserves. Sliding of taka would help reset these trajectories and leave the central bank in a better shape than before.

Some people misconstrue the value of taka and wrongly tie it with the strength of the government. It's the opposite for a developing nation like Bangladesh. Let me explain the case particularly for those who mix taka's value with politics. The exchange rate is the amount of foreign currency that one unit of domestic currency can buy. It's the amount of US dollar that one unit of taka can buy, which is \$0.011494252 (=1/87) or close to 1.15 cents when one dollar is sold for Tk 87.

Next, if one dollar is sold for Tk 91, both the exchange rate and the value of taka go down to \$0.01098901 (=1/91) or close to 1.1 cents. Now, taka's purchasing power has fallen from 1.15 cents to 1.1 cents—which we term as devaluation of local currency. Some people take this weakening of taka as a sign of weakness in the economy, and even go as far as to blame the government for making the nation weaker on the global stage. Is that so?

Like the interest rate, the exchange rate is a tool for the central bank to regulate the economy and guide it in the right direction, so that inflation is controlled and employment is maximised. In any journey, reaching the destination is the main objective. Passengers hardly care about how the driver is using the clutch, brake, and accelerator. Of course, we

always need to appoint an experienced and efficient driver to avoid accidents. And herein lies the importance of policymaking and having the right people in the driving seat.

Since the early 2000s, the government committed to the regime of floating exchange rates. Essentially, it remained highly administered and artificially

VISUAL: STAR



managed—a style often termed as a “dirty float”. The central bank can iron out the day-to-day volatility of taka's value, but it shouldn't stay too far away from the interbank value, or the market value determined by a fair play of demand and supply. The kerb-side or street market value which the brokers determine unofficially is often a reflection of the market value.

To illustrate a case, Bangladesh Bank (BB) assigned the rate for importers—called BC rate or bills for collection rate—at Tk 86.75 on May 9, 2022. This rate assignment is impractical and has no connection with what is going on in the market. Importers had to buy dollars at as high a rate as Tk 95 to pay import bills. Banks were compelled to collect high price for the dollar because the demand far outstripped the supply. BB has a research division that is capable of analysing the dynamics to reflect a

Knowledge or expertise takes a back seat, while obedience to the finance ministry—which is supposed to be guided by political judgment—matters the most. Hence, BB's mistakes in policymaking seem unavoidable.

fair exchange rate. But who cares about research? Knowledge or expertise takes a back seat, while obedience to the finance ministry—which is supposed to be guided by political judgment—matters the most. Hence, BB's mistakes in policymaking seem unavoidable.

Taka has long remained artificially overvalued, and thus deprived millions

BB advisers must come out of that mindset and devise ways on how to ensure a fair play of demand and supply to determine interest rates, exchange rates, and a correct value of taka. A fair price never requires a subsidy or an incentive. Vitamin tablets are redundant if someone takes natural healthy foods. Controls are the mantra of the mediocre because controls make them feel important.

Our foreign reserves stood at USD 46 billion in December 2021, and it has slid to USD 41 billion—equivalent to roughly 6 months' imports given the current pace. It's still fine. But if taka isn't allowed to reflect its real value by sliding further against dollar, foreign reserves will reach an alarming low in a year or so. Why? At the end of FY 2022 in June, imports may hit up to USD 80 billion and exports USD 50 billion. A major part of this trade deficit of USD 30 billion will be offset by the expected remittance of USD 20 billion. Since balance of services is in deficit, the total current account deficits are expected to be USD 18 billion or so. If capital accounts can't offset the deficits, the reserves' coverage length of import bills will shrink further.

But if taka depreciates against the dollar, the rise in both exports and remittances will outpace that in imports, dwindling the current account deficits and boosting foreign reserves. The government's recent ban on luxury imports seems to be politically popular, but it is also losing its import duties which are much higher on luxuries. The widening tentacles of import restrictions will add further salt to the injury of our fiscal capacity, which is one of the lowest in the world. The government will then resort to using more of its favourite tool—Sanchayapatra—another example of non-market pricing and the most expensive deficit financing of the government.

Coming closer to the market in fixing both exchange rates and interest rates is the best answer to avoiding all ad hoc circulars, frills, subsidies, incentives, and restrictions—which engender policing, rent-seeking, and corruption. Taka's value may rise or fall based on its market value, and the economy will either gain or lose at times. But keeping its value artificially too high is foolish. It will do more harm than good to the economy by damaging its balance of payments.

POTENTIAL OVERTURNING OF ROE VS WADE

Let women have agency over their own bodies



GEMINI WAHHAJ

Gemini Wahhaj is an associate professor of English at Lone Star College in Texas, US.

A leaked draft opinion shows that the US Supreme Court is set to overturn Roe vs Wade and Planned Parenthood vs Casey, two Supreme Court decisions that guarantee the federal constitutional protection of the right to abortion. The striking of Roe vs Wade would be the final blow to abortion rights in the US, following several recent state legislations against abortion, including regulation of the stages of pregnancy at which abortion is legal. If Roe vs Wade is overturned, we are likely to see an overhaul of most reproductive rights of American women, resulting in state control, surveillance, and criminalisation of women's bodies.

But the effect of the law will not be the same everywhere. The language of the draft opinion is very deliberate that the court will be returning the power of abortion legislation to elected representatives in the states. The fate of women's access to abortions will be dependent on the political affiliation of their state. If the 1973 decision in Roe vs Wade is overturned, abortion will likely become illegal in at least 26 states, leaving abortion legal in the coastal blue states. As in the days before Roe vs Wade, the removal of the constitutional right to abortion will have a disproportionate effect on the young, on poor women, and on women of colour. Wealthy women will still be able to travel to safe places for abortion.

US Supreme Court Associate Justice Samuel Alito's draft opinion and recent court battles rely on the personhood of a foetus to bring charges against pregnant women for ending their pregnancies before birth, thus stripping their civil rights. Law professor Michele Goodwin pointed out on Democracy Now that black and brown women were already being criminalised for terminated pregnancies. Pregnant women have been charged with crimes of attempted feticide, manslaughter, or endangerment of a foetus when their pregnancies ended after falling down the stairs or in a shooting.

If the Supreme Court overturns Roe vs Wade, we are likely to see an intensification of the efforts to strip abortion rights that are already present in several anti-abortion bills. Alito's opinion

cites the Mississippi bill, which aims to make abortion illegal after 15 weeks of pregnancy. In 2021, the Supreme Court upheld an anti-abortion law in Texas banning all abortions after six weeks of pregnancy. In 2022 alone, 82 new abortion restrictions were introduced in 30 states.

The language in the leaked opinion

at dangerous psychological and physical risks, especially in communities with high maternal morbidity.

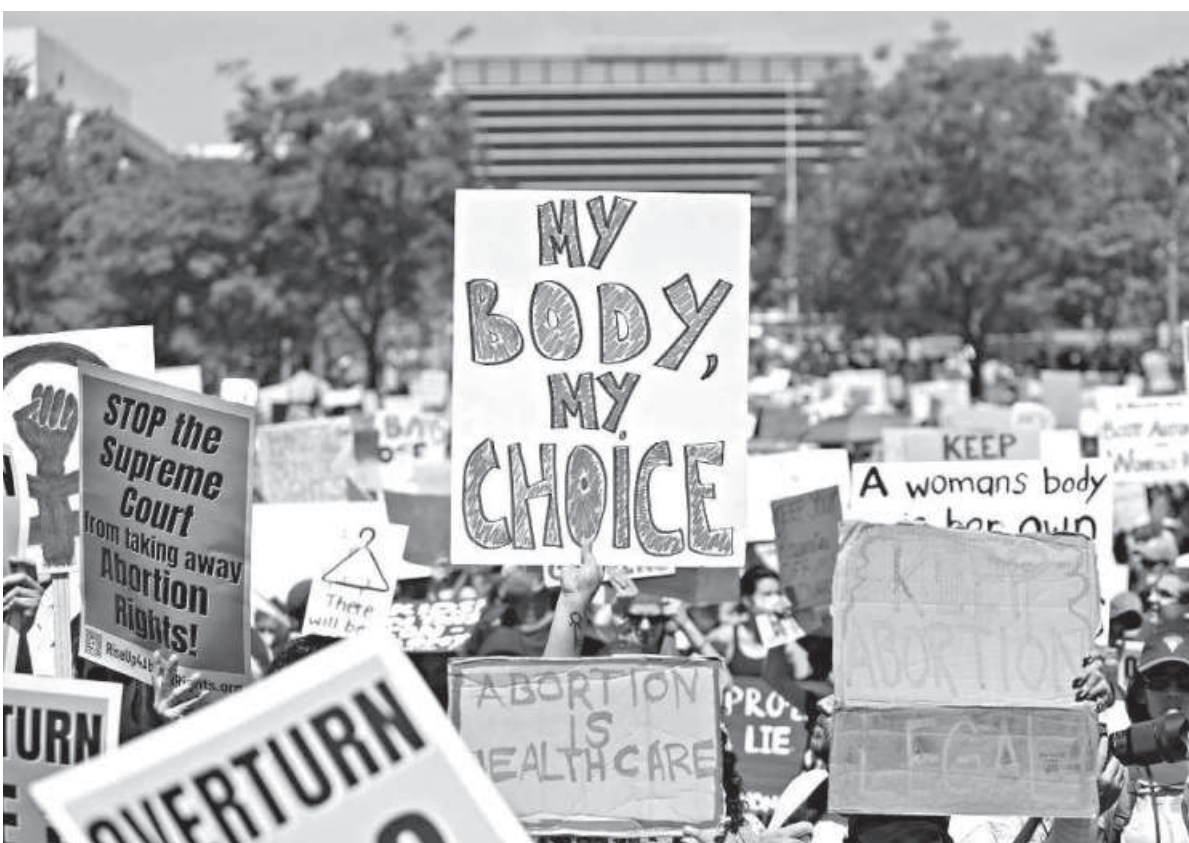
Some activists are saying that many women in the US have never had real access to abortion. Abortion is already restricted at the federal, state, and local levels. Almost immediately after Roe vs Wade passed, abortion rights were

the filibuster with 50 votes, but two Democratic senators, Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema, may not vote to end the filibuster. Meanwhile, powerful democrats like Nancy Pelosi and Jim Clyburn have endorsed anti-abortion Democrat Representative Henry Cuellar against the progressive pro-choice candidate Jessica Cisneros in an important primary election in Texas.

Abortion has always been marginalised on all sides of the political spectrum. In his presidential campaign, President Barack Obama promised to codify Roe vs Wade into law, but he did not do so during his term when Democrats held a filibuster-proof 60-40 supermajority in the Senate, saying it was not his highest legislative priority and that abortion was a divisive issue. Instead, he focused on reducing teen pregnancy. In 2016, presidential candidate Hillary Clinton chose the anti-abortion Tim Kaine as her running mate. And President Joe Biden voted against Medicaid funding for abortion in 1977, voted against federal workers using health insurance on abortion in 1983, and openly opposed abortion many times as a devout Roman Catholic.

Many young people are saying that no matter how many times you vote or seek to reform through elections, people's choices will never be reflected. How can we seek reform through the Supreme Court, when the court has itself imposed cruel rules? The leaked opinion argues that the court can only make a decision based on the rights already protected by the constitution and historical precedent, but America is a country with a deeply troubled, racist past still codified in law.

Black, brown, and poor women, whose reproductive rights will be most affected by an overturn of the decision in Roe vs Wade, are already denied access to abortion and other reproductive rights. Black women not only have an extraordinarily high maternal mortality rate, but also suffer from systemic racism, lack of safe water, food and shelter, incarceration, and police violence. Indigenous women are routinely abducted, raped, and murdered. Women in Appalachia suffer from horrific reproductive health outcomes and high environmental pollution, from fracking, water and air pollution, and earthquakes. Many women don't even have access to healthcare. In a country with so little regard for the reproductive rights of its black, brown, and poor women, the overturning of Roe vs Wade would only be the final strike against women's freedom, dignity, and well-being.



hints at the attempt to use pregnant women's bodies as sources of supply of infants, by pressuring women towards adoption through illusive claims of safe child welfare programmes that profit off taking away children for adoption. This language to move from abortion to adoption proposes that young mothers carry a pregnancy to term and then give up their babies for adoption. Trump judge Amy Coney Barrett suggested that abortion is unnecessary since mothers can use the safe haven law to safely give up their babies. Activist Rebecca Nagle tweeted that crisis pregnancy centres often act as decoy centres to persuade women through deception and coercion to give up their babies for adoption instead. Soon, anti-abortion states will dictate that a pregnant woman should carry her pregnancy to term. Aside from the loss of freedom, the dictate to carry a pregnancy to term will put young women

Abortion rights protesters participate in nationwide demonstrations following the leaked Supreme Court opinion suggesting the possibility of overturning the Roe vs Wade decision, in Los Angeles, California, US, on May 14, 2022.

PHOTO: REUTERS

regulated out of existence for poor women when the Hyde Amendment passed by Congress in 1976 (and in effect since 1980) blocked federal funds from being used for abortion—specifically Medicaid-funded abortion. Writer Yasmin Nair writes, “Abortion rights were watered down long ago. Restrictions on access to abortion clinics can be incredibly onerous, requiring some women to make long trips, return for second visits, or observe waiting periods of up to 72 hours.” Even the draft opinion concedes that state legislation in some states has always tightly restricted abortion at all stages of pregnancy.

Democrats now control the House and the Senate, but they don't have the 60 votes necessary to codify abortion rights into law (Democrats only have 50 senators). The filibuster is a Senate rule that requires 60 votes to pass most legislation. Democrats could end



SOURCE: PHOTOGRAPHIC ALBUM OF OLD DHAKA, BANGLADESH NATIONAL MUSEUM, 2003.

Zamindar Narendra Narayan Roy Chowdhury (front row, fourth from right) with prominent personalities at Baldha Garden premises in the 1920s. He established the garden in 1909.

Floral economy of Bengal

James Taylor wrote in details about safflower cultivation in Dhaka in his book 'A Sketch of the Topography & Statistics of Dacca' (1840). He noted, "The Dacca safflower, however, is superior to any that is grown in India, and ranks next to China safflower in the London market."

HOSSAIN MUHAMMED ZAKI

During the Mughal period, gardens were a ubiquitous element of the city landscape. Dhaka, once capital of the Bengal Subah, was no exception, and the names of some areas of the city such as Shabbag, Lalbag, Golapbag, Malibag, Malitola and Fulbaria bear testimony to this heritage. There are also numerous historical references to the widespread cultivation of various types of flowers in Bengal.

We find interesting details about an exceptional flower of Bengal and the fragrance prepared from it in the book titled *Travels of Fray Sebastien Manrique (1629-1643)*. However, the author does not mention the name of the flower. He informs that this flower used to be cultivated in Medinipur. Oil could be made from it. It was also exported to different states.

James Taylor wrote in details about safflower cultivation in Dhaka in his book 'A Sketch of the Topography & Statistics of Dacca' (1840). He noted, "The Dacca safflower, however, is superior to any that is grown in India, and

century can be inferred from 'Fuler Mulyo' (The Price of Flowers), written by Prabhat Kumar Mukherjee. It was published in 1904. The main character of the story is Maggie, a poor British teenage girl. When she gave the writer a shilling for offering a floral tribute at his brother's grave in India, the writer's soliloquy read: I thought I would return this hard-earned shilling of the girl. I said, "Flowers are available in abundance in our country, you don't have to buy them with money."

The flower industry gained momentum during the British period through the importation of foreign flowers from England and other countries, the establishment of organizations such as the Calcutta Botanical Garden and the Agriculture Society Calcutta and the collection of local flowers from different regions. Kamini, kanchan and gandharaj blossomed alongside the exquisite and colorful seasonal British flowers.

Miscellaneous features related to the cultivation, marketing and usage of flowers in Bengal can be gleaned from various



Stuart Hog Market, popularly known as New Market. The picture was taken in 1905.

SOURCE: LOOK & LEARN / VALERIE JACKSON HARRIS COLLECTION.



(L) Shahbagh Garden, Dhaka, 1904. (R) Poush 1311 issue of Krishak, an agricultural magazine edited by Shri Nagendranath Swarnakar.



An organisation named Krishi Bagicha Samiti was established with the aim of improving the cultivation of fruits, flowers and vegetables. The institution undertook research projects in collaboration with local and foreign experts.

ranks next to China safflower in the London market."

During the 1860s, James Wise was the Civil Surgeon of Dhaka. His book, 'Notes on the Races, Castes and Trades of Eastern Bengal,' published in 1883, provides a detailed account of the types of flowers available in the area and the activities of gardeners in the nineteenth century. The author shares that there were numerous Muslim gardeners in Dhaka during this period. They used to nurture flower seedlings and sell them in the market. They were involved in the production of different varieties of Jasmine, Royal Jasmine, Arabian Jasmine, Marigold and Rose Saplings. Besides, they used to fashion diverse kinds of flower garlands, flower bracelets and flower sticks for Muslim women to use. Bouquets of flowers were highly regarded by aristocratic Muslims. Flowers were offered at the shrines of the saints.

There were also Hindu *Malakars* (makers and sellers of garlands). They were known for decorating houses, shops and boats with flowers. They used to supply flowers to temples. Special flowers such as Champak, Royal Jasmine, Arabian Jasmine and Gandharaj were offered to specific god and goddesses in Puja. Garlands made by anyone other than Malakars were not considered sacred. The Malakars were also entrusted with tying the chignons of brides. Arabian Jasmine and Rose were the customary components of chignons.

Shri Jatindra Mohan Roy, in his book 'History of Dhaka (Volume 1)' (1912), provides a long list of flowers that were produced in Dhaka during that period: Marigold, Jasmine, Arabian Jasmine, Malati, Butterfly Pea, China Rose (white and red), Spanish Cherry, Champak, Rotunda, Golden Champak, Giant Calotrope, Oleander (blood red and white), Fringed Rosemallow, Lotus, Philippine Violet, Bhat, Tuni, Hazra, Nandadulal and Grape Jasmine.

The fact that the flower trade did not flourish in India at the beginning of the twentieth

agricultural periodicals published from the region. The pictorial monthly, *Krishi-Samachar*, was published under the editorship of Shri Nishikanta Ghosh. It had its office in Dhaka. Later, the journal was renamed 'Krishi-Sampad'. Another magazine titled 'Krishikatha' used to be published from Faridpur during the same period. Examples of other agricultural periodicals include *Bhumilakshmi* (Birbhum), *Prakriti* (Kolkata) and *Krishak* (Kolkata). One of the recurring topics in these magazines was rose cultivation. Relevant magazines contained instructions on how to nurture rose plants and apply fertilizers.

A news item titled 'Rose Flower Fair' was published in *Krishak* on January 31, 1901. The fair was held at Alipore Garden. In another issue of the magazine, a report was published on a flower show which was held in Shillong in 1905. Medals and prizes were distributed at the flower fair. The curiosity of the people was so great that about 240 people bought tickets for this exhibition. A wide array of gardening instruments was displayed there. In those days, rows of fruits and vegetables also made appearances at flower exhibitions. Additionally, new and rare trees were also exhibited. The Gorer Math of Kolkata was the designated space for many such flower fairs.

An old issue of 'Krishak', published in 1911, contains some interesting facts about the sales of flowers. In Kolkata, flowers like China Rose, Gandharaj, Chrysanthemum, Marigold, Ground Lotus, Lotus and Champak used to be sold at a great number of temples. Profits from selling flowers were generally good. The main location for selling Arabian Jasmine and Jasmine flowers was Mechuabazar, which later came to be known as Jorasanko. Gardeners and wholesalers used to purchase flowers through arrangements with garden owners. These flowers would then be sold to buyers on the street.

As the Falgun season embarked, Arabian Jasmine would be sold for six to eight rupees

per seer. Saheber Bazaar was the locality where Rose, Tuberose, White Champak, Magnolia and British seasonal flowers were sold. The market was named after Stuart Hogg, the then chairperson of the Kolkata Corporation. Although its official name was Stuart Hogg Market, it was renamed as 'New Market,' and came to be known as such to the people of Calcutta.

An organisation named 'Krishi Bagicha Samiti' was established with the aim of improving the cultivation of fruits, flowers and vegetables. The institution undertook research projects in collaboration with local and foreign experts.

Alkananda Patel's autobiography, 'Prithibir Pothe Hetey,' provides an account of flower gardens in Dhaka in the 1930s and 1940s. She writes, "My first memory revolves around House no. 5 of Purana Paltan. The quiet neighborhood. Houses were mostly single storied with a lot of land. In addition to Star Jasmine, White Garland-Lily, Hiptage, Jasmine and Dwarf White Bauhinia, many houses had seasonal flower gardens. My father

blended fragrances. Besides, there were flowers such as Marigold, Crape Jasmine, Red Rose, China Rose, Double Petal Hibiscus, Tuberose, Arabian Jasmine, Star Jasmine and Dwarf White Bauhinia. Some of my favorite sights were bunches of Hiptages, Wild Passions and Night-Blooming Jasmynes scattered on the green grass. The Night-Blooming Jasmine makes one reminiscent of the soft, golden sun of autumn and the reverberations of the drums of Durga Puja - the call of festival and joy. Most of the houses within the vicinity of the university had beautiful gardens. The garden of Nilkhet was famous. Professor Satyen Bose's garden, where he used to take strolls, was well-known. Even though gardeners were pivotal, it was more often than not the householder who enhanced the beauty of gardens - that was the perspective of my father."

Speaking of Dhaka, Mohammad Abdul Qayyum shares in his book, 'History, Tradition and Culture of Dhaka,' that the use of flowers on the occasion of marriages was common. A *Dala* used to be sent from the groom's house to the bride's residence. The basket was made of raw jackfruit leaves and contained garlands, bangles and flower chains for the bride. However, no large-scale flower cultivation existed back then and flower shops were also not widespread. Malakars were available at Chawkbazar and Shankhari Bazar, where they had opened their own flower stalls.

Mizanur Rahman, in his book 'Dhaka Puran,' refers to another flower market which was located near Babubazar outpost. The buyers were mainly those who were traveling to Kumartuli. Some buyers would gift their purchases to sex workers.

Syed Ali Ahsan writes in his book 'Sixty Years Ago Dhaka' that large, red roses used to be sold outside the gates of the Baldha Garden early in the morning. There were around 200 varieties of roses in Baldha's Rose Garden.

Hrishikesh Das, the zamindar of Dhaka, built a splendid 'Rose Garden' by collecting varieties of roses from home and abroad. The smell of roses had inspired the poet Shamsur Rahman. In the poem 'Ei Matowala Rait,' he describes the sentiments of a disorderly person:

*I am alive now
The scent of roses still comes to my nose.
Fragrances were also produced from flower extracts in Dhaka. A lane was named 'Gandhi Goli' in homage to a perfume maker popularly known as Gandhi. Notable for having invented a refining method, he had an assortment of perfumes, including Champak, Arabian Jasmine and Jasmine. His products had gained popularity in the local market. He would also manufacture rose perfume and rose water. Nazir Hossain described the techniques of Gandhi in his book 'Kingbodontir Dhaka'.*

In course of time, commercial floriculture became popular in Bengal and flower trade grew in volume. Today, Bangladesh can boast of a strong flower industry.

Hossain Muhammed Zaki is a Researcher. He can be contacted at zakiimed@gmail.com

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was passionate about gardening. He would measure the diameter of the chrysanthemum. Even in his last days, he would write to us enthusiastically, describing sizes of flowers. Many people brought seeds from overseas and planted foreign flowers to fulfill their hobby of gardening. At House No. 5, during the winter season, the creeper of the Sweet Pea flower climbed the bamboo as the smaller flowers flickered and stared."

"Nasturtium, Phlox and Petunia spread the

SCORES IN BRIEF

Bangladesh vs Sri Lanka (Day-1)
Sri Lanka: First Innings- 258 for 4 in 90 overs (Mathews 114 not out, Mendis 54, Fernando 36; Nayeem 2-71, Shakib 1-27, Taijul 1-73)



Angelo Mathews' [inset] unbeaten 213-ball 114 allowed the visitors to land on a solid ground, at 258 for four, after the first day's play in the Chattogram Test. However, Bangladesh would not be too displeased with their performance, thanks largely to Shakib Al Hasan and Taijul Islam. The hosts' left-arm spin duo were able to weave sticky strands around the Lankan batters to make sure the opening day presented no clear winners.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



Don't think of winning, Fahim advises Tigers

SPORTS REPORTER

Centurion Angelo Mathews will hold the key for the Sri Lanka as the visitors attempt to post a big first-innings total after reaching 258 for four on the first day of the first Test against Bangladesh at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday.

Bangladesh have only themselves to blame for their predicament as Mahmudul Hasan Joy missed a straightforward catch in the slip cordon off the bowling of Taijul Islam, which would have sent Mathews back for 69.

The three specialist spinners – Nayeem Hasan, Shakib Al Hasan and Taijul – shared the four wickets that fell on the first day while pacers Khaled Ahmed and Shoriful Islam will get the chance to utilise the second new ball today.

Despite the two seamers going wicketless on a relatively batting-friendly track on the first day, prominent coach Nazmul Abedeen Fahim believes they can still make an impact and bundle Sri Lanka out below the 350 mark.

"There was hardly any swing or seam for the pacers on the first day. The pitch looked good for batting and is expected to remain the same over the coming days and spinners will play a big role in picking up wickets. But I think the two pacers can provide a platform by bowling tight and not giving the Sri Lankan batters opportunities to score freely. It will help mount pressure on batters and spinners can cash in on that," Fahim said during the discussion for a multimedia segment at The Daily Star premises yesterday.



"After the first day, the visitors are in a better situation. But if our bowlers can restrict them below 350, it will be a big psychological boost for the hosts moving forward."

He also prescribed that it would be unwise for the Tigers to start thinking about the result. Instead, he urged them to play for a draw, which could help Bangladesh stay in the game for a longer period.

"When you think too far, it can backfire. We can learn from the historic Mount Maunganui Test against New Zealand. We never thought of winning that Test match. We grinded it out session by session and that kept us in the game. Once we reached a certain position, only then we started to believe that there was a possibility of winning the Test. And we eventually won," he said.

I think the two pacers can provide a platform by bowling tight and not giving the Sri Lankan batters opportunities to score freely. It will help mount pressure on batters and spinners can cash in on that.

Nazmul Abedeen Fahim

HERATH SATISFIED by shrewd variations

SPORTS REPORTER FROM CHATTOGRAM

Four years since a drawn Test at Chattogram's Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium against Sri Lanka, the surface still kept its end of the bargain for the batters, as expected. In-between comfortable stroke-play and solid defence, the Bangladesh spinners were able to have their say on a surface that does not have much for pace and had very little for spinners in terms of spin on Day One.

Nayeem Hasan, returning to the Test squad after more than a year, got the better of Dimuth Karunaratne after both Lankan openers had gotten off to a solid start. He then accounted for Oshada Fernando.

Spin coach Rangana Herath complimented his spinners' ability to get a grip on the game as Sri Lanka ended at 258 for four with Shakib Al Hasan Taijul Islam using their experience to good effect and complementing Nayeem Hasan's attacking mindset.

"I am happy with how the bowlers did, especially considering it was the first day of a Test match. Shakib and TJ [Taijul] bowled well. Nayeem took two wickets. He [Nayeem] hasn't played

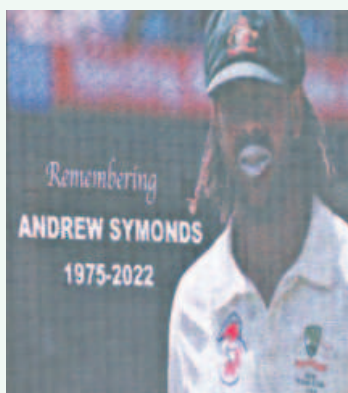
much cricket in the last 18 months but he has been practicing a lot. Because of that, I saw he needed a bit of confidence, but when he got that wicket off the first ball, his confidence [was restored]."

Shakib and Taijul were instrumental in bringing Bangladesh back into the game after the second session saw the game veer towards the visitors, with Kusal Mendis and Angelo Mathews putting on 92 for the third wicket.

The duo worked to a plan and Bangladesh capitalised with crucial breakthroughs after creating pressure. The deliveries from Shakib in particular had a little more air than usual.

With the lack of pace on the wicket in mind, Shakib bowled at 81 km/h in his first spell. The Lankans' run-rate came down from 3.04 at lunch to 2.82 at tea. Taijul used his pace variations to good effect, being quicker in the air than Shakib by bowling at an average of 87 km/h. But the variation of his slower and faster deliveries kept batters guessing.

Herath was happy that the bowling plan came off, especially with Shakib only just returning after testing negative for Covid-19. "We discussed that the bowlers should have a bit of pace and also bowl slower at times. I think Shakib and TJ used their pace very well."



TRIBUTE TO SYMONDS

A minute's silence was observed yesterday in memory of Andrew Symonds, considered as one of Australia's greatest allrounders in limited overs cricket, before the start of the first Test. Symonds passed away in Queensland on Saturday following a car accident.

However, after the Lankans were eventually able to get on top of Nayeem, Herath saw opportunity for the lanky spinner to improve on his game plan.

"It depends on their bowling actions," he said of the pace variations employed by Shakib and Taijul. "Shakib can easily bowl slower. Taijul varies his pace well too. Nayeem needs to understand the situation and his role. He has to improve in that case."

Taijul almost had the breakthrough he needed when the umpire raised his finger in the 44th over as a magnificent delivery in the third session took an edge, but Mathews escaped as Mahmudul Hasan Joy could not latch onto the chance. That would have made the difference on a flat surface, especially given Mathews went on to complete his ton.

Shakib bowled seven maidens, giving away just 27 runs, and accounted for Dhananjaya de Silva. The Tigers see further opportunity to make inroads on the second day.

"They are 258 four so I am sure we need two quick wickets as soon as possible tomorrow morning. We want to keep them under 400, so we have to get them out for another 120-130 runs," Herath said.

Taskin doubtful for WI Test series

SPORTS REPORTER from Chattogram

Bangladesh pacer Taskin Ahmed is doubtful for the two-match Test series against West Indies as he will be in rehabilitation, recovering from the shoulder injury sustained in South Africa.

Taskin was ruled out of the ongoing Test series against Sri Lanka and went to England to get an assessment on the injury. The pacer has been rehabbing for a month, but the BCB medical team now must wait at least another four weeks for him to make a complete recovery.

"We are looking at conservative management, which includes physiotherapy and rehabilitation, plus or minus regenerative injections, which we are not using right now. We will go for conservative management for the next four weeks and see what happens," BCB chief physician Debashish Chowdhury told The Daily Star yesterday.



"We consulted one of the best shoulder surgeons, who also operated on Mustafizur [Rahman]. He suggested to wait and see with conservative management. If that doesn't work, then a surgical procedure will be needed. Surgery is our last resort."

Bangladesh are slated to play the first Test in Antigua from June 16 and are expected to leave in the first week of June. But Taskin could be included for the shorter-format games in July.

"We can't be certain if he will miss whole series. We can't say a month before the series whether he will be ruled out. The team will leave on June 8 so it may be that we will think of his inclusion for the shorter versions," Debashish said.

He was also encouraged by the fact that the conservative approach had seen Taskin's improve over time.

"He is a lot better now and doesn't feel pain while doing daily activities. So let's see how much he can heal through the natural processes.

We are not thinking of a difficult thing like surgery because the outcome of surgery is very unpredictable. No one can guarantee that he will be able to bowl at 140km/h after surgery," Debashish concluded.



West Ham United striker Jarrod Bowen celebrates after scoring one of his two goals against league leaders Manchester City in their Premier League fixture in London on Sunday. Bowen's brace gave the Hammers a 2-0 lead in the first half before the Cityzens scored twice in the second half to leave with a share of the spoils.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Swiatek retains Italian Open title

REUTERS

World number one Iga Swiatek retained her Italian Open title after overwhelming Ons Jabeur 6-2, 6-2 in Rome on Sunday, clinching her fifth consecutive WTA crown and winning her 28th match in a row. Having swept the titles in Doha, Indian Wells and Miami, Swiatek has now won every WTA 1000 tournament she has contested this season and will be the favourite to add to her 2020 French Open success when the Grand Slam tournament begins next week. Swiatek outmanoeuvred Jabeur to snap the Tunisian's 11-match winning streak, which began in her title run in Madrid, to level their head-to-head record at 2-2 after having lost both 2021 meetings at Wimbledon and Cincinnati.






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SHAH CEMENT



Ignoring court directives, political leaders use posters and placards at the Kadamtoli roundabout in Keraniganj, Dhaka, blocking the view of motorists. Also in blatant disregard of the traffic rules, vehicles are seen plying on the wrong side of a road that connects the capital with the soon-to-be-inaugurated Padma bridge. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

DEFENCE DIALOGUE

Talks with US begin in Hawaii today

PORIMOL PALMA

Bangladesh and the US are holding the ninth defence dialogue in Hawaii today as the two countries seek to strengthen security cooperation in the changed geopolitical landscape.

Security environment in the Indo-Pacific, military-to-military joint exercise, forces modernisation, General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSMIA), countering terrorism, humanitarian and disaster management are some of the highlights in the meeting, said diplomatic sources.

"This is an annual routine dialogue, mostly on military-to-military level operations to further strengthen and explore areas of cooperation," said Maj Gen ANM Muniruzzaman (ret'd), president of Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Security Studies.

He said the US is expected to prominently bring up the issue of security and prosperity of the Indo-Pacific region, which has become the focus of the global powers.

Bangladesh Armed Forces Division Director General (Operations and Plan Directorate) Brig Gen Husain Muhammad Masihur Rahman will lead the dialogue scheduled from May 16-20.

This comes following a series of engagements between Bangladesh and the US at a time when

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

Another Aussie champ departs

AGENCIES

Australian cricket was reeling Sunday after swashbuckling former all-rounder Andrew Symonds was killed in a single-car accident outside Townsville in Queensland state on Saturday night.

Symonds was a key part of Australia's back-to-back 50-over World Cup triumphs in 2003 and 2007. The 46-year-old, who played 26 Tests and 198 one-day internationals from 1998 to 2009, was widely considered one of the most skilled all-rounders Australian cricket has seen. He bowled both off-spin and medium pace with similar effectiveness, fielded exceptionally and played many match-winning hands with his explosive middle-order batting.

Symonds' fatal crash comes just months after the deaths of fellow Australian greats Warne and Marsh, who both died unexpectedly from heart attacks.

"Unfortunately I've been here too often this year under these circumstances. I actually can't quite believe it, to

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



Finland confirms its bid for Nato membership

Sweden to follow suit; Nato chief says doors open for both countries to join the alliance

AGENCIES

Finland yesterday confirmed its bid for Nato membership as a bulwark against Russia, redrawing the balance of power in Europe after decades of military non-alignment.

Sweden, which has been militarily non-aligned for more than two centuries, will follow suit with a similar announcement, as public support for membership grown amid security concerns.

Sweden's ruling Social Democrats said yesterday they backed the country joining Nato, abandoning decades of opposition and creating a large parliament majority in favour of membership.

Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson said she will go to parliament today aiming to

secure support for an application to join Nato.

The announcement came just hours after neighbouring Finland announced its official intention to apply for membership.

"Today, the President of the Republic and the Government's Foreign Policy Committee have jointly agreed that Finland will apply for Nato membership, after consulting parliament," Finnish President Sauli Niinisto told reporters at a joint press conference with Prime Minister Sanna Marin yesterday.

"This is a historic day. A new era is opening", Niinisto said. According to recent polls, the number of Finns who want to join the alliance has risen to over three-quarters, almost triple the level seen before the war in Ukraine.

In Sweden, support has also

risen dramatically, to around 50 percent -- with about 20 percent against.

Despite last-minute objections by Turkey, Nato members are on "good track" in their discussions on welcoming Sweden and Finland into the Western military alliance, Croatia's Foreign Minister, Gordan Grlic Radman, said in Berlin.

Nato membership needs to be approved and ratified by all 30 members of the alliance.

The Atlantic bloc's Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said that Turkey was not blocking membership bids by the two Nordic countries and voiced confidence at resolving Ankara's stated concerns.

Nato will look at providing security guarantees for Finland and Sweden during the interim

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4

Fossils that inspired 'Jurassic Park' sell for \$12.4m

CNN ONLINE

His name is "Hector," he's over 100 million years old, and his fossils sold for more than \$12 million in auction at Christie's.

Hector is the most complete skeleton of *Deinonychus antirrhopus* ever found, according to Christie's. The specimen, excavated in Montana in 2013, dates back to the early Cretaceous period: 115 to 108 million years ago.

It's in a "remarkable state of preservation," the auction house says of the specimen, consisting of 126 original fossils on a custom-built frame.

The lot was expected to net between \$4 million and \$6 million, according to Christie's.

Instead, it sold for a jaw-dropping \$12.4 million on Wednesday.

SEE PAGE 7 COL 8



Russia lost a third of its forces in Ukraine

Claims UK military intel; front lines shift in Donbas as Kyiv mounts counteroffensive

AGENCIES

Russia has lost around a third of the ground forces it deployed to Ukraine and its offensive in the Donbas region "has lost momentum and fallen significantly behind schedule", British military intelligence said yesterday.

"Despite small-scale initial advances, Russia has failed to achieve substantial territorial gains over the past month whilst sustaining consistently high levels of attrition," the British defence ministry said on Twitter.

"Russia has now likely suffered losses of one third of the ground combat force it committed in February."

It said Russia was unlikely to dramatically accelerate its rate of advance over the next 30 days.

The front lines in the Ukraine war had shifted yesterday as Russia made some advances in the Donbas and the Ukrainian military waged a counteroffensive near the strategic Russian-held city of Izium.

In the west of Ukraine near the Polish border, missiles destroyed military infrastructure overnight and were fired

at the Lviv region from the Black Sea, Ukrainian officials said.

Ukrainian forces have notched up a string of successes since Russia invaded on February 24, forcing Russia's commanders to abandon an advance on Kyiv and then making rapid gains in the northeast to drive them out of the second-biggest city Kharkiv.

Since mid-April, Russian forces have focused much of their firepower on Donbas after failing to take the capital.

On Saturday night, Ukraine received a morale boost with victory in the Eurovision Song Contest, a triumph seen as sign of the strength of popular support for Ukraine across Europe.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky welcomed the win, but said the situation in Donbas remained very difficult and Russian forces were still trying to salvage some kind of victory in a region wracked by conflict since 2014, reports Reuters.

Keeping up pressure on Izium and Russian supply lines will make it harder for Moscow to encircle battle-hardened

SEE PAGE 7 COL 4



Bangladesh players shout in joy after Nayeem Hasan's (L) dismissal of Sri Lanka opener Oshada Fernando is upheld on review during the first day of the first Test at the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram yesterday. The visitors ended the day on 258 for four, with Angelo Mathews unbeaten on 114.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED