



Sedimentation has reduced water depth in the Bhadra to such an extent that it barely looks like a river. The authorities spent crores of taka only two years ago to dredge the river. The photo was taken recently in Kharnia area of Dumuria, Khulna. PHOTO: HABIBUR RAHMAN

Rohingyas sneaking in from India now

MOHAMMAD AL-MASUM MOLLA

The illegal entry of Rohingyas into Bangladesh from India over the past three weeks has triggered a fresh concern as the new inflow will create an additional burden for the country already hosting one million of the forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals.

Police and intelligence officials said many of the Rohingyas, who lived in different places in India, sneaked into Bangladesh with the help of brokers and some were detained by law enforcers. They were later sent to the transitional camps in Cox's Bazar.

There is no official record of the numbers of Rohingyas entering so far, but officials said some 500 of them may have entered Bangladesh from India over the last one month. "We are heavily burdened with

the Rohingyas and any sort of illegal entry is a matter of serious concern. It should be stopped immediately," said a top government official engaged in the Rohingya repatriation process in Cox's Bazar, where over one million Rohingyas live in several



refugee camps.

On Tuesday, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Moment voiced similar concerns.

"Unfortunately, many Rohingyas are coming to Bangladesh from India," he told reporters, adding that

he would take up the matter with his Indian counterpart.

Bangladesh has been facing episodic influxes of Rohingyas fleeing violence in Myanmar for decades, with the largest exodus from Rakhine State taking place in August 2017. They joined the 300,000 of their compatriots already there from previous waves of displacement, causing significant economic and strategic challenges for Bangladesh.

Rohingyas who entered Bangladesh illegally from India told Bangladesh law enforcers that they had to spend around 15,000 Indian rupees to cross the border, sources said.

Take the example of Selim. In 2012, Selim went to Jammu from Maungdaw and had since been sheltered in a refugee camp with

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

Raising power, gas prices would be suicidal

Say businesspeople

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Hiking the prices of electricity and gas will be suicidal because it will significantly raise production costs, making it impossible for export-oriented businesses to compete with the other countries, said the Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industries.

If the prices rise, the production costs will nearly double, inflation will be even higher, and forex reserves will be affected, impeding the development of the country, FBCCI President Jashim Uddin told a press conference at the capital's Federation Bhaban yesterday.

Those proposing the price hikes lack understanding and they may put the government in trouble, he said, adding that the decision should be political, not bureaucratic.

The economic impact of costlier power and

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Bank borrowing may hamper recovery

REJAUL KARIM BYRON and ZINA TASREEN

When thinking outside the box was needed, the government opted for the tried-and-tested method.

At a time when foreign currency reserves are under strain and the economy is staging a recovery from the pandemic trough, a spot of creative thinking would have pointed the government in the direction of foreign borrowing in financing fiscal 2022-23's budget deficit of Tk 244,864 crore.

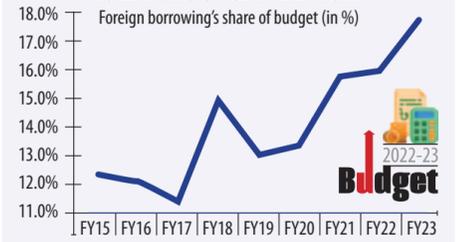
The interest rate on foreign loans is never more than 3 percent and the repayment period is as lengthy as 30 years. Then there is the bonus of a much-needed gush of foreign currency to the Bangladesh Bank's vault, which is now at an 18-month low.

But the government is being conservative with foreign borrowing, choosing instead to bump up its domestic borrowing, which comes at a higher interest rate of at least 8 percent and a shorter repayment period.

The government's bank borrowing target for the next fiscal year has been set at Tk 101,818 crore, up 33.2 percent from this year's original budget.

This will create a hurdle for recovery, according to

FOREIGN BORROWING USED MORE AND MORE FOR BUDGET FINANCING



Zahid Hussain, a former lead economist of the World Bank's Dhaka office.

The reason being it will simply crowd out private investment when it is looking up.

In March, private sector credit growth stood at 11.29 percent, the highest in three years.

Besides, there appears to be a liquidity shortage in the economy as demonstrated by the high call money and treasury bill rates, Hussain said.

And one of the reasons for the liquidity shortage is the Bangladesh Bank's sales of dollars to prop up the exchange rate of taka, which is at Tk 87.50 a dollar is its lowest in a decade.

For every dollar injected by the central bank into the open market, an equivalent amount of taka was withdrawn from the economy.

Besides, the demand for trade credit is on the rise for the surge in imports, according to Hussain.

On this path that the government has taken, it also does not have the option of borrowing from the central bank, which entails creating new money and fuelling inflation.

"Inflation is another worry," Hussain said.

In April, inflation hit an 18-month high of 6.29 percent.

The only option it has is to increase borrowing through national savings certificates.

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নিজের বাড়ি মানে
নিজের মত থাকার স্বাধীনতা

AKS - নাম থাক আজীবন

DIGITAL SECURITY ACT Despite some abuse, I don't support repeal Says law minister

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Law Minister Anisul Huq has admitted that the Digital Security Act has been misused and abused to some extent.

"But I won't support repealing the Digital Security Act. It was found earlier that a journalist was arrested immediately after the filing of a case under the Digital Security Act. In this situation, I have ensured that nobody is arrested immediately after the lodging of a case under this law. The courts concerned will take necessary steps if anyone commits any punishable offence," he said.

The minister was speaking at a views-exchange meeting with government pleaders and public prosecutors at the capital's Bangabandhu International Conference Centre yesterday. The meeting

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4

JP doubtful about free, fair election under this govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Jatiya Party Chairman GM Quader has said holding a free, fair and credible election under the authoritarian government is uncertain as the administration or constitutional institutions become helpless in front of it.

Speaking at a programme in the capital yesterday, he said the head of government has already announced that the next national election will be held using electronic voting machines (EVMs).

"Even if EVMs are not used in all electoral constituencies, the machines may be used in those where the ruling party candidates will not be able to dominate," he added.

Quader, also the deputy leader of the opposition in parliament, said his party does not want to see a farcical election.

The event was organised marking the joining of a group of women entrepreneurs to the JP. The group, led by Nazmin Sultana Tuli, founding president of voluntary organisation Alokito Manush Foundation, joined the opposition party giving flowers to Quader at the party chairman's Banani office.

The JP chief said there is no democracy in the country. Administrators have been appointed to all sectors and the politicians have no authority. That's why no one is accountable to the people of the country, he added.

Quader said although there are

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Police use tear gas to disperse Higher National Diploma (HND) students during a demonstration demanding the resignation of Sri Lanka's President Gotabaya Rajapaksa over the country's crippling economic crisis, in Colombo, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

UNMANNED LEVEL CROSSING

Three killed as train rams pickup

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Gazipur

Three people were killed after a train hit a pickup on an unmanned rail crossing in Nalchhata area of Gazipur's Kaliganj upazila yesterday morning.

Another accident happened at this very level crossing last year, which claimed the life of a retired professor of Dhaka University.

The three deceased were identified as Zakir, 22, driver of the pickup, his assistant Mrirdul, 15, and Mohsin, 50.

Witnesses said the Dhaka-bound Egarosindhur Prabhathi Express hit the Narayanganj-bound vehicle while it was crossing the rail line around 10:00am yesterday. The pickup fell into a ditch on the impact, leaving the trio dead on the spot.

Police later recovered the bodies and sent those to Narsingdi Sadar Hospital for autopsies, said Iqbal Hosen, assistant sub-inspector of Narsingdi Railway Police Camp.

There is no barrier at the level crossing either. The authorities have only put up a signboard there



cautioning people to cross it "at their own risk", said police.

Unmanned level crossings remain a major cause of increased rail-related fatalities in the country.

Around 70 percent authorised level crossings do not have dedicated manpower. Besides, there are 1,149 unauthorised level crossings which have no gateman.

Out of 1,412 authorised level crossings, 964 are unmanned, according to statistics of Bangladesh

Railway (BR).

At least nine government bodies were involved in constructing unauthorised level crossings.

Between 2008 and 2018, 263 people were killed in 297 rail-related accidents, shows BR data. But the actual number would be much higher.

At least 158 people were killed and 39 others injured in 142 train-related accidents in 2020, according to the Accident Research Institute of Buet.

Erdogan puts conditions on support for Nordic nations' Nato bids

AFP, Istanbul

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday said Turkey would not look "positively" on Sweden and Finland's Nato bids unless its terror-related concerns were addressed, despite broad support from other allies including the United States.

Turkey has long accused Nordic countries, in particular Sweden which has a strong Turkish immigrant community, of harbouring extremist Kurdish groups as well as supporters of Fethullah Gulen, the US-based preacher wanted over the failed 2016 coup.

Erdogan's threat throws a major potential obstacle in the way of the likely membership bids from the hitherto militarily non-aligned Nordic nations since a consensus is required in Nato decisions.

Bank borrowing

FROM PAGE 1

"But that would mean private savings would be diverted from banks. Given the cap on the bank interest rate, the law of demand and supply cannot take the course here," Hussain added.

And the interest rate spread, which is the difference between the interest rate a bank pays to depositors and the interest rate it receives from loans to consumers, is not favourable for the banks either to be able to compete with the government for deposits.

In simple terms, net interest rate spreads are like profit margins. The greater the spread, the more profitable the financial institution is likely to be. In March, the interest rate spread stood at 3.02 percent.

On the other hand, there is ample room to scale up foreign borrowing.

Of the budget deficit, foreign borrowing would cover Tk 120,046 crore (about \$13.95 billion), which

is an increase of 3.8 percent from this fiscal year's original budget.

There is \$48 billion in the pipeline and that could be used, Hussain said.

"Why don't the government accelerate the implementation of foreign-aid projects?"

In that way, the much-needed projects would get momentum and the pressure on the foreign currency would ease.

Besides, the International Monetary Fund has offered \$3 billion in budget support to Bangladesh provided the country undergoes some reforms in tax administration and tax policy.

"The reforms would have been good for us," Hussain said.

Instead, the government has chosen a method that would hamper recovery to some extent to finance the budget deficit, which has been brought down to 5.5 percent in the upcoming fiscal year.

Rohingyas sneaking in from India now

FROM PAGE 1

a UNHCR card along with 200-300 other Rohingya families, law enforcers said, citing Selim.

Selim claimed that recently the situation in the Jammu area became volatile. He then communicated with his sister-in-law Tomida Khatun, who lives in Kutupalong camp in Cox's Bazar.

"My sister-in-law told me that the Rohingya camp situation in Bangladesh is good and that the Bangladesh government is very kind and helpful. Then I decided to move," he said.

Selim later communicated with an Indian broker and made a deal to cross the border.

As per the deal, Selim along with his wife and two children went to Delhi from Jammu by bus on May 8. From Delhi, they came to Agartala by train, which took them 72 hours.

Around 2:00pm on May 13, they entered Feni district of Bangladesh

through an opening of the wire fence of Agartala border.

An unknown broker received them and then they went to Ramu in Cox's Bazar and reached near the camp.

"After arriving here, I phoned my sister-in-law and then she came and took us inside the camp through an opening of the barbed-wire fence," he told law enforcers.

But based on a tip-off, the Armed Police Battalion took them from the camp and sent them to the office of the Camp in Charge (CiC) in the Rohingya camp.

Naimul Haque, commanding officer of Armed Police Battalion (APBn)-14 said it is difficult to say exactly how many Rohingyas entered Bangladesh from India.

"But in my camp, we have arrested some 25 Rohingyas and they were sent to the CiC office," he said.

He also said that some of the Rohingyas who

came from India said they crossed the border as they have relatives here. Others cited the poor law and order situation in India and better living conditions in Bangladesh camps.

They said Rohingyas with the help of brokers first come to Kolkata by train. Then another group of brokers take the Rohingyas and then they were taken to Bangladesh borders in Sylhet, Cumilla and Moulvibazar by train.

There, another group of brokers near the border divide them into groups of 5-6 and help them enter Bangladesh through the barbed wire at the border.

Rohingyas who have already entered Bangladesh told the law enforcing agencies that some 2,000-3,000 Rohingyas are waiting in bordering areas to trespass into Bangladesh.

Intelligence sources said many of the Rohingyas have already spread in many parts of the country.

Md Mamunur Rashid,

Deputy Commissioner of Cox's Bazar, said, "It is a concern as Rohingyas are coming from India. They are now in the transit camps and the decisions about them will be taken soon after reviewing the overall situation."

According to Human Rights Watch, an estimated 40,000 Rohingyas are in India, at least 20,000 of whom are registered with the UNHCR.

Since 2016, ultranationalist Hindu groups have targeted Rohingya refugees in Jammu as part of growing attacks on Muslims in India and called for their expulsion from the country.

After October 2018, the Indian government deported 12 Rohingyas to Myanmar, claiming that they left voluntarily. However, the government denied repeated requests by the UNHCR to gain access to them to independently assess whether the decision was voluntary.

Contacted, Abul Basher, OC of Narsingdi Detective Branch of police, said, "The incident is being investigated seriously by the district and railway police officials."

ATM Musa also said

the scarfed woman was seen screaming slurs and sexually harassing the victim while trying to rip off her t-shirt.

The victim was then allowed to take shelter in the station master's room.

When the trio told railway police they were headed to Dhaka, they were allowed to board the train with the help of the officials.

Covid death reported after a month

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The authorities recorded one coronavirus death and 16 fresh cases in the preceding 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday.

The last coronavirus death was recorded on April 20 in the country.

The total number of Covid-19 cases reached 1,953,204 and the death toll at 29,128, reported the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

More than 97 percent of all confirmed cases have recovered, including 172 in those 24 hours yesterday.

The daily test positivity rate slightly decreased to 0.41 percent from Friday's 0.79 percent as 3,927 samples were tested.

On Thursday, 50 cases were reported with no death.

The mortality rate remained unchanged at 1.49 percent. The recovery rate remained unchanged at 97.31 percent as 172 patients recovered during this period.

Cop killed in road accident

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Moulvibazar

A police officer was killed and eight others were injured after a pickup van overturned in Moulvibazar's Rajnagar upazila early yesterday.

The dead is Somiron Chandra Das, a sub-inspector (SI) of Rajnagar Police Station.

Police said a pickup van, carrying policemen, turned turtle on the Sylhet-Moulvibazar regional highway in Moinar Dokan area around 5:00am while returning to the police station after nabbing three warranted accused.

Nine people were injured in the accident.

Police and fire service personnel rescued the injured and took them to Moulvibazar Sadar Hospital where the on-duty doctor declared Somiron dead.

2 missing as trawler capsizes in Padma

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Munshiganj

Two men went missing after a paddy-laden trawler capsized in the Padma in Louhajong upazila of Munshiganj yesterday.

The trawler capsized in the middle of the river near Padma Bridge at 6:00am. The two missing workers were not found till the time this report was filed.

The two missing men are Helal Uddin, 35, and Jobir Hossain, 28, both of Madaripur.

Abu Taher, officer-in-charge of Mawa Naval Police Station, said some 15 workers were traveling in a trawler carrying 350 sacks of paddy from Shimulia Feri Ghat to Banglabazar Ghat.

A six-member diving unit was conducting rescue operations to find the missing men but strong currents in the river kept hampering their work, he added.

Raising power

FROM PAGE 1

gas was not properly considered before the recommendations were made, he said.

A technical committee of the Bangladesh Energy Regulatory Commission (BERC) at a public hearing on Wednesday recommended increasing the bulk electricity price by 58 percent.

"This is not the right time to raise power and gas prices... This will have a serious impact on the livelihood of the people. It will be suicidal for the economy," Jashim said, adding that the Russia-Ukraine war and the Covid pandemic had already hurt the economy.

The vice chairman of Bengal Group of Industries then urged the government to shun the quick rental power plants and make use of the more efficient ones to generate electricity at lower costs.

"The industries cannot bear the brunt of the government's wrong planning."

Rather than increasing the price of electricity and gas, the government should

bring radical reforms in the energy and power sectors, he said, urging steps to snap illegal connections and reduce unnecessary consumption.

Mohammad Hatem, executive president of Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said the export-oriented businesses were still trying to turn around and the impact of raised utility prices will damage the economy.

Shahidullah Azim, vice-president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association, said a dip in export would cause depletion of the foreign currency reserves.

Mirza Nurul Ghani, president of the National Association of Small and Cottage Industries of Bangladesh; Mohammad Ali Khokon, president of Bangladesh Textile Mills Association; Anwar Ul Alam Chowdhury, president of Bangladesh Chamber of Industries; and Manwar Hossain, president of Bangladesh Steel Manufacturers Association, also spoke at the event.

UK looks to climate action with Australia's new prime minister

AFP, London

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson yesterday congratulated Anthony Albanese on his election as Australia's new leader, vowing to work together on trade, military ties and climate change.

"Our countries have a long history and a bright future together," Johnson said in a message to the Labor party leader, according to Downing Street.

Good governance crucial to end syndication

Speakers tell event on labour migration to Malaysia

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a roundtable discussion yesterday called upon the government to establish good governance in the country's labour migration sector to prevent "syndication".

"Baira Anti-Syndicate Grand Alliance", a platform of recruiting agencies, organised the roundtable at a city hotel, demanding that the government ensure participation of all valid recruiting agencies to send workers to Malaysia.

Malaysia signed a memorandum of understanding on labour cooperation with Bangladesh in December last year, lifting a three-year moratorium.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Open, transparent and free migration process
- Participation of greater number of agencies
- Strong watchdog process

“Labour-sending process should be ‘open, transparent and free’, which is not possible with only 25-50 agencies as a greater number of agencies can reduce migration cost.”

SHAMEEM HAIDER PATWARY

Chair of Parliamentarians' Caucus on Migration, Dev

However, recruitment of fresh workers has not started as the two countries are yet to finalise a labour-sending process.

At the roundtable, recruiting agency leaders alleged a "syndicate" of 25 recruiting agencies has been lobbying to get approval to send workers to Malaysia, depriving several hundred others.

Anisul Islam Mahmud, chairperson of the parliamentary committee on expatriates' welfare ministry, said, "If only 25 agencies are approved without explanation, it will not be acceptable and transparent."

AK Azad, Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry's former president, said an open market will ensure sending a higher number of workers and generating more foreign currency.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



Speakers at the roundtable on "Employers Pay Mode", jointly organised by ILO and The Daily Star in the capital's The Daily Star Centre yesterday.

PHOTO: STAR

'No worker should pay for a job'

Say ILO pilot findings on migration costs of workers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

"Employers Pay Mode" in the overseas jobs sector can be the best way forward in addressing the exploitation and indebtedness of Bangladeshi migrants, who traditionally pay very high costs, according to International Labour Organization (ILO).

It also commits to ensuring that no worker should pay for a job — a principle that the UN agency has been promoting for the last several years.

At a roundtable jointly organised by the ILO and The Daily Star at the capital's The Daily Star Centre yesterday, ILO presented the findings of a pilot project on

"Employers Pay Mode".

Policy makers and labour migration experts lauded the findings and called upon the government and relevant stakeholders to replicate them.

Presenting the keynote, Dr Ananya Rahian, CEO of iSocial Limited, said the pilot focused on the recruitment practices of Bangladeshi migrant workers in the construction industries in Qatar. Job placement companies — STS in Qatar and Bonanza Overseas in Bangladesh — and employing companies in Qatar were also involved.

In January 2018, STS, encouraged and accompanied by Qatar-based QDVC, adopted the

policy of not charging the workers with any recruitment fees or related costs.

During the pilot period, the workers learned about the work conditions and benefits in Qatar, while the employers could know their skills and expectations.

Raihan said the impact assessment indicates that the average costs of migration dropped by 92 percent after the pilot engagement, in comparison to the average costs before the intervention.

The average migration cost for Bangladeshi migrant workers is systematically higher than those of other regional countries. For

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'Where is our right to religion?' Speakers tell event marking 34th anniv of Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Even after 50 years of the country's independence, it's a shame for the state that an organisation exists solely to ensure its citizens' right to perform their religion, said speakers at a discussion marking the 34th anniversary of Hindu-Bouddha-Christian Oikya Parishad yesterday.

The discussion, titled, "Liberation War of Bangladesh: Chuknagar Massacre", was organised at Dhaka Reporters Unity (DRU).

Prof Mizanur Rahman, former Chairman of

“It is true that the country has made tremendous progress in the last 13 years but the mindset of the people has lagged far behind.”

RANA DASGUPTA
General Secretary of Oikya Parishad

the National Human Rights Commission, during his chief guest speech, said those who do not understand secularism should be called for a discussion.

"I would like to call upon the Parishad to organise a dialogue with all political parties who believe in our independence. They have to acknowledge that Hindus, Buddhists and Christians have been made second-class citizens in this country."

He also said new policies have to be made taking the new generation's opinions into account in this regard.

Pankaj Bhattacharya, president of Oikya National Awami Party, said, "The textbooks of this country have been occupied by Hefazat-e-Islam. Our children are being taught the language of hatred."

The Parishad's general secretary advocate

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PRAYER
TIMING
MAY 22



	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	4-05	12-45	5-00	6-40	8-00
Jamaat	4-40	1-15	5-15	6-45	8-30

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



Pedestrians cross puddles with much difficulty as the road near Jatrabari bus stop has become muddy and slippery due to yesterday's rain. All it takes is a drizzle to bring the road in such a condition as it has not been carpeted properly. The risks are even higher as heavy vehicles tend to use the road frequently.

PHOTO: PALASH KHAN

'It took them seconds to steal a phone'

Says DB after arresting 3 members of theft gang

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Aziz Mohammad was in Saudi Arabia for 33 years. As a hafez, the 45-year-old used to work as an imam at different mosques, and also as a driver.

This stint as a driver led him to a new way of making money: stealing cars. He used to target luxury cars, like those of BMW, Porsche, Jaguar and Lexus.

In 2015, however, he was arrested by police in Saudi Arabia in a car-stealing case and sent to jail for three years.

In 2018, he came back to Bangladesh and started working as a teacher in a madrasa at Cox's Bazar Rohingya camp. But he lost his job on charge of stealing a mobile phone.

Then, he went to Dhaka and

started living in different messes and again got involved in stealing phones, laptops and wallets.

On March 23 this year, Kamalapur Railway Station

The gang even posted phone-sale advertisements on online platforms and charged Tk 5,000 to 10,000 for a phone. If they ever failed to break a phone's lock or change IMEI, they would destroy the phone and sell parts in markets.

Manager Masud Sarwar was addressing the media on train tickets ahead of Eid. At the time, two phones, a wallet and Tk 45,000

were stolen from his office table.

While investigating the incident, police's Detective Branch (DB) found Aziz's involvement. He was then arrested on Tuesday. During primary interrogation, Aziz admitted that he stole the belongings and fled.

Mashiur Rahman, deputy commissioner of DB (Gulshan division), who supervised the investigation, disclosed the findings to The Daily Star yesterday.

Detectives also managed to arrest two of his associates, Rony Howlader (40) and Jakir Hossain (25), on Tuesday. On information from arrestees, DB later recovered around 17 stolen phones from the capital's Kamalapur and Gulistan.

Arrestees told detectives that it hardly took them four

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



DHAKA BOAT CLUB LTD.

Boro Kakor, Birulia, Savar, Dhaka

NOTICE INVITING EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)

Ref: 88.1340.100.101.205.01

Date: 22 May 2022

Name of the Project: Dhaka Boat Club Sports Complex (Phase-1)

- Dhaka Boat Club Ltd. invites Expression of Interest (EOI) for development of its 1st Phase of Sports Complex Building at Borokakor, Birulia, Savar, Dhaka from reputed and experienced contractors for following categories:

a	Category-1	Construction of 10-storied Sports Complex with 2-level basement approximately 2,25,000 sft. including Civil, Electromechanical and other ancillary works.
b	Name of Agency/ Employer	Dhaka Boat Club Ltd.
c	Procuring Entity Name	President Dhaka Boat Club Ltd.
d	Procuring Method	Open Tendering Method (OTM)
e	EOI Closing Date & Time	Date: 19 June 2022 Time: 05.00 pm
f	Eligibility of the Applicants	The Applicants must be an EPC (Engineering, Procurement and Construction) Contractor capable to undertake and implement the project as Prime Contractor or as a JV Partner/Consortium. Details of experience can be shown in request for Expression of interest.

- Applicants may obtain relevant documents and further information from the office of Dhaka Boat Club Ltd. Tel (+88) 09612-447744, Ex-257, (+88)-01324295065 or contact through e-mail at engineering@dhakaboatclub.com.
- Applicants shall have the option of submitting their applications electronically.
- Dhaka Boat Club Ltd reserves the right to accept/reject any application or cancel the invitation for EOI and to issue addendums (if necessary) without assigning any reason.

Dhaka Boat Club Authority

Doing everything to ensure 'free, fair' polls

JS body tells IRI president

UNB, Dhaka

The government is taking all measures to ensure a free, fair and participatory national election scheduled for early 2024, a delegation of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs told the International Republican Institute (IRI) president recently.

The delegation said this during a discussion with senior officials of the IRI led by its president Dr Daniel Twining on Thursday.

The delegation also had meetings with Ambassador Donald Lu, assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asian Affairs at the State Department, and Congressman Dwight Evans in the Capitol Hill.

Muhammad Faruk Khan, chair of the standing committee, is leading the delegation. Other members of the team are lawmakers Nurul Islam Nahid, Nahim Razaq, and Kazi Nabil Ahmed.

Bangladesh Ambassador to the US M Shahidul Islam and senior officials of the

embassy were present at the meetings.

During a meeting with Donald Lu, the parliamentary team discussed the entire range of issues encompassing the Bangladesh-US partnership and expressed resolve to deepen bilateral engagements.

The two sides discussed Bangladesh's potential in the IT and ICT sectors.

The visiting delegation sought the assistance of the Biden administration for the early deportation of Bangabandhu's killer Rashed Chowdhury. They also raised the issue of recent US sanctions on Rab and its senior officials.

Cooperation in the area of labour rights, Bangladesh's access to US DFC financing for larger investments in infrastructure projects, steps taken by Bangladesh to promote democracy and human rights, and the ongoing defence and security cooperation also came up for discussion.

The parliamentary committee appreciated the US humanitarian and political support extended to Bangladesh on the Rohingya issue.



People from all walks of life and age meditate on the premises of Barishal's Bangabandhu Udyan yesterday, marking World Meditation Day. The event was organised by Quantum Foundation. PHOTO: TITU DAS

AM Choudhury passes away

CITY DESK

Eminent disaster forecasting expert and space scientist Dr AM Choudhury passed away at his Dhanmondi residence on Thursday. He was 81, said a press release.



He was buried at Mirpur Intellectuals' Graveyard yesterday after his first namaz-e-janaza at Taqwa Mosque and the second one on the cemetery premises.

Choudhury was former chairman of the Bangladesh Space Research Centre.

He is famous for the development of Rose Petal Theory for the forecast of cyclone tracks. His research on long term forecasting of weather in predicting floods or droughts using the Atmospheric Teleconnection theory is also very promising.

He received the Independence Award, the highest civilian honour, from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in 1998.

He also won the NASA Group Achievement Award for his role as executive director of the Bangladesh Computer Council.

UN refugee agency chief in city

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi yesterday kicked off his five-day visit to Bangladesh to highlight the need for sustained international support for more than one million Rohingyas.



This is the first visit by the UN refugee agency chief to refugee camps in Bangladesh since the pandemic began, following an earlier trip in March 2019.

"The High Commissioner will meet with representatives of the government of Bangladesh to discuss the ongoing response for Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char," according to a UNHCR statement.

He is scheduled to meet the prime minister, officials of the foreign ministry, disaster management ministry, UN officials and the Rohingyas.

During his visit to the camps and to Bhasan Char, he will meet Rohingya refugees to discuss their needs, challenges and hopes for the future.

Indrika Ratwate, UNHCR's Regional Director for Asia and the Pacific, and Herve de Villeroche, Senior Advisor to the High Commissioner, are accompanying Grandi.

Good governance

FROM PAGE 3

Shyamal Dutta, editor of Bangla daily Bhorer Kagoj, said syndication stems from a lack of good governance. "Labour sending process should be 'open, transparent and free', which not possible with only 25-50 agencies as a greater number of agencies can reduce migration cost," said Barrister Shameem Haider Patwary, chair of Bangladesh Parliamentarians' Caucus on Migration and Development.

Referring to government data, labour migration expert Shariful Hasan said a Bangladeshi migrant worker needs nearly 18 months to recover his migration cost. Mentioning

that about 95 percent of labour migration from Bangladesh is operated by private recruiting agencies, MS Shekil Chowdhury, chairperson of Centre for NRB, said a strong watchdog process has to be ensured in the sector.

Joining the event virtually from Malaysia, Sukumaran Nair, secretary general of National Organisation of Private Service Agencies Malaysia, said they want equal participation of all valid Bangladeshi recruiting agencies in the process.

Among recruiting agency leaders, Ali Haider Chowdhury, Nur Ali, Abul Bashar, and Shameem Ahmed Chowdhury Noman spoke at the event.

It took them seconds

FROM PAGE 3

to five seconds to steal a phone from someone's pocket, said DC Mashui. Investigators said Rony used to sell the stolen phones to Jakir for Tk 1,500 to 1,800.

Jakir then kept those phones switched off for some days. Later on, he would change their IMEI numbers and sell them in different locations of the capital, said the officer, quoting arrestees.

The theft gang even posted phone-sale advertisements on different online platforms and charged Tk 5,000 to 10,000 for a phone. If they ever failed to break a phone's lock or change IMEI, the gang would destroy the phone and sell parts in different markets.

Regarding Aziz, DC Mashui said he has been involved in stealing phones and other valuables for the last three years in Dhaka. His target areas were

Dhaka Medical College, Kamalpur Railway Station, TSC, Nagar Bhaban, Gulistan, Dhanmondi lake and Jatrabari.

"The syndicate used to steal at least eight to 10 phones a week," said Mashui.

Detectives said Aziz was arrested just three months back for stealing a laptop from a shop in the capital's Baitul Mukarram market.

The shop authority then handed him over to police, and he was sent to Keraniganj central jail. He, however, managed to get free and got involved in the same crime.

After interrogating the arrestees, detectives got a list of around two dozen people who were involved in stealing valuables at Kamalpur Railway Station.

"We are trying to locate other associates of Aziz, and a drive is underway to arrest them," said DC Mashui.

ENSURING FOOD SECURITY

Need more support from developed countries

Says state minister for foreign affairs

DIPLOMATIC CORRESPONDENT

Bangladesh has called for increased investments and targeted technology support from developed countries, while promoting global solidarity to keep critical food delivery infrastructure out of harm's way during conflicts.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam made the call at the UN Security Council Open Debate on "Conflict and Food Security" on Friday.

He underscored the importance of enhancing productivity and ensuring effective food storage and distribution systems.

Judge impersonator

FROM PAGE 5

It was reported that a justice named Biplab Pramanik would enter Chandpur from Dhaka via Cumilla. He needed a security arrangement comprising two gunmen.

On information from Chandpur Police Control Room, Chandpur DIO-1 Monirul Islam contacted the fake judge on his mobile and followed through with the request.

He also informed Chandpur Superintendent of Police Milon Mahmud,

Additional Superintendent of Police (Administration and Finance) Sudipta Roy, and officers in charge of Matlab south and north police stations.

However, the Chandpur SP got suspicious about the matter, and told the additional SP to look into it. When Arif's car reached Barthila area, Matlab South Police Sub-inspector Ruhul Amin got suspicious, as there was no flag or bodyguard in the vehicle.

The police team started questioning and found that

Arif impersonated a justice and duped police. Law enforcers then took him into custody.

SP Milon Mahmud said three warrants were found against him in Matlab South Police Station.

"We suspect that he used this tactic to gain some advantage in his own area. We have filed another fraud case against him," he said. Police said Arif used to run a business in his hometown. As it did not do well, he moved to the capital.

No worker should pay

FROM PAGE 3

example, the cost of migration to Kuwait for a Bangladeshi migrant is \$3,136, whereas, for an Indian national, it is \$1,248 - almost one-third of the amount. For a Sri Lankan national, the cost is \$319.

According to a 2020 survey by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Bangladeshi workers need nearly 18 months on average to recover the migration amount. Not only does it negatively impact the economic conditions of migrant families but also leads to other forms of exploitation, including forced labour, irregular stay and labour trafficking.

ILO Country Director for Bangladesh Tuomo Poutiainen said, "Workers should not pay migration costs. If we can change this, a lot of problems related to the recruitment process can be eliminated."

Recruitment processes should be drawn considering international labour standards, labour rights principles of non-discrimination, and effective enforcement of law and regulations.

Barrister Shameem Haider Patwary, chair of the parliamentarians' caucus on migration and development, called for establishing a separate ministry for skills development.

Amid the ongoing crises, including the aftermaths of the pandemic, the war in Ukraine and unrest in Sri Lanka, it is important to observe the government's stance on some crucial aspects regarding migrant workers' rights during negotiations with the recruiting countries.

Md Shahidul Alam, director general at the Bureau of Manpower Employment and Training, said it is important to take care of every aspect of migrants' life - training, travel, post-migration period, their families left behind, saving facilities and reintegration back home.

The girl who wrote her own fate

FROM PAGE 5

"When I was selling newspapers, many people passed snide remarks at me for being a woman. But I never judged any type of work. Besides, their criticisms never paid for my food or shelter, so I never bothered to pay heed to them. I had to survive with dignity," said Champa, now in her mid-thirties.

"At the beginning, I had no fixed customers and could barely sell five to seven newspapers a day. But I never took it to heart and continued doing my job with diligence," she said.

"I started delivering newspapers on a bicycle. Within a few months, I got some customers. Now, I have a total of 275 fixed customers around the upazila."

"Now I'm earning Tk

500-550 a day selling newspapers, travelling 20-25 kilometres." Champa said, adding that those who had criticised her are now praising her.

Experiencing struggles in her own life, Champa always aimed to work for those who are neglected in society. With that goal, she chose to run in the union parishad elections.

On November, 2021, she was elected as a female member in the reserved seat of ward 3,4,5 of Parshodanga union.

"When I was struggling to survive, nobody came to help me, rather they criticised me. There are many people like me, and I always thank my voters for giving me the opportunity to serve them," said Champa.

"As a hawker, I get to go door-to-door and meet

all these voters. I try to understand their struggles and do my best to do something for them," she added.

Contacted, Md Azhar Ali, chairman of Parshodanga union, said, "Champa sets an example of how to give service to the people amidst hurdles in life."

"After serving her role as a newspaper hawker, she joined the union parishad on time and performed her duty successfully. This is inspiring to say the least," Azhar said.

"There are many people in our society who blame their fate for living lives like Champa's. But Champa never relied on her fate but worked to build her fortune," said Md Anisur Rahman, a college teacher in the area.

Where is our

FROM PAGE 3

Rana Dasgupta said despite the 15th amendment of the constitution, the nation could not be free from the damages done during the regimes of Zia and Ershad.

"It is true that the country has made tremendous progress in the last 13 years but the mindset of the people has lagged far behind," he added.

The event was presided over by Prof Neem Chandra Bhowmik, president of the Parishad. Prof Robayet Ferdous of Dhaka University and Rekha Chowdhury, vice-president of Bangladesh Mahila Parishad, participated in the discussion.

The keynote paper was presented by Barrister Tapas Kanti Ball. Nirmal Rozario, another president of the Parishad, presented the vote of thanks.

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INVITATION FOR TENDER

Memo No. 25.36.3900.164.07.001.22/1784 Date: 19-05-2022

E-tender is invited in e-GP System portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) by Executive Engineer, Jamalpur PWD Division, Jamalpur for the procurement of:

Tender Description

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Name of Work	Tender Documents Last Selling Date & Time	Tender closing Date & Time
1	701523	Establishment of 560 Modle Mosque and Islamic culture Centre in Zilla & Upazilla of Bangladesh, Head: External Electrification, Sub-Head: 150 KVA Sub-station, 30 KVA Generator, Air Cooler, 3 HP Centrifugal Pump, 5.5 HP Submersible Pump, Fire Extinguisher, Sound & PA System, Compound & Security Light, Solar Panel, CCTV System, Lightninging Arrestor for Islamic Foundation, Bangladesh. One at Sadar of Jamalpur District(Type-A)FY-2021-2022	05-Jun-2022 17:00:00	06-Jun-2022 12:45:00
2	701516	Establishment of 560 Modle Mosque and Islamic culture Centre in Zilla & Upazilla of Bangladesh, Head: External Electrification, Sub-Head: 150 KVA Sub-station, 30 KVA Generator, Air Cooler, 3 HP Centrifugal Pump, 5.5 HP Submersible Pump, Fire Extinguisher, Sound & PA System, Compound & Security Light, Solar Panel, CCTV System, Lightninging Arrestor for Islamic Foundation, Bangladesh. One at Melandaha Upazilla of Jamalpur District(Type-B)FY-2021-2022	05-Jun-2022 17:00:00	06-Jun-2022 12:45:00
3	701483	Establishment of 560 Modle Mosque and Islamic culture Centre in Zilla & Upazilla of Bangladesh, Head: External Electrification, Sub-Head: 150 KVA Sub-station, 30 KVA Generator, Air Cooler, 3 HP Centrifugal Pump, 5.5 HP Submersible Pump, Fire Extinguisher, Sound & PA System, Compound & Security Light, Solar Panel, CCTV System, Lightninging Arrestor for Islamic Foundation, Bangladesh. One at Sarishabari Upazilla of Jamalpur District(Type-B)FY-2021-2022	05-Jun-2022 17:00:00	06-Jun-2022 13:00:00
4	701488	Establishment of 560 Modle Mosque and Islamic culture Centre in Zilla & Upazilla of Bangladesh, Head: External Electrification, Sub-Head: 150 KVA Sub-station, 30 KVA Generator, Air Cooler, 3 HP Centrifugal Pump, 5.5 HP Submersible Pump, Fire Extinguisher, Sound & PA System, Compound & Security Light, Solar Panel, CCTV System, Lightninging Arrestor for Islamic Foundation, Bangladesh. One at Islampur Upazilla of Jamalpur District(Type-B)FY-2021-2022	05-Jun-2022 17:00:00	06-Jun-2022 13:00:00
5	701490	Establishment of 560 Modle Mosque and Islamic culture Centre in Zilla & Upazilla of Bangladesh, Head: External Electrification, Sub-Head: 150 KVA Sub-station, 30 KVA Generator, Air Cooler, 3 HP Centrifugal Pump, 5.5 HP Submersible Pump, Fire Extinguisher, Sound & PA System, Compound & Security Light, Solar Panel, CCTV System, Lightninging Arrestor for Islamic Foundation, Bangladesh. One at Sadar Upazilla of Jamalpur District(Type-B)FY-2021-2022	05-Jun-2022 17:00:00	06-Jun-2022 13:00:00
6	701502	Establishment of 560 Modle Mosque and Islamic culture Centre in Zilla & Upazilla of Bangladesh, Head: External Electrification, Sub-Head: 150 KVA Sub-station, 30 KVA Generator, Air Cooler, 3 HP Centrifugal Pump, 5.5 HP Submersible Pump, Fire Extinguisher, Sound & PA System, Compound & Security Light, Solar Panel, CCTV System, Lightninging Arrestor for Islamic Foundation, Bangladesh. One at Madargonj Upazilla of Jamalpur District(Type-B)FY-2021-2022	05-Jun-2022 17:00:00	06-Jun-2022 12:30:00

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(Md. Mubarak Hossain)
Executive Engineer
Jamalpur PWD Division
Jamalpur.

GD-1027



Many low-lying areas of Chattogram city were submerged yesterday, after light rain in the morning. Commuters had to wade through murky waters just to reach their destination. They said this has become a common sight since the city's waterlogging problem has not improved even after so many years.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

Port city drowns after drizzle

Mega project still hasn't improved waterlogging problem, say residents

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

A drizzle in the morning was all it took to submerge Chattogram city's low-lying areas yesterday, resulting in residents, commuters and pedestrians having to deal with muddy and waterlogged roads.

Although Chattogram Development Authority (CDA) has been implementing a Tk 5,617 crore mega project to address waterlogging in the city since 2017, city dwellers alleged that they are not seeing any benefits even four years after the project's commencement.

"We see that CDA has been working on many canals [36 canals] and drains for the last four years, but the waterlogging problem did not improve in our area," said Abdur Razzak, a resident of Chawkbazar area.

Even though the mega-project was approved in August 2017, with the latest deadline being June 2022, only 65 percent of the work had been completed by April. The third extension, till December 2023, is awaiting Eccec's approval. If approved, this will increase the cost by around 70 percent, to Tk 9,526 crore.

Yesterday, it was seen that roads in low-lying areas, including Chawkbazar, West Bakalia DC Road, KB Aman Ali Road, Katalganj, Kapasgola,

CDA has been working on many canals [36 canals] and drains for the last four years, but the waterlogging problem did not improve in our area.

Abdur Razzak, Resident of Chawkbazar

Bahaddarhat, Muradpur, Sholashahar, Halishahar, Agrabad CDA, Chandgaon and Shulakbahar, went under knee-to-waist-deep water.

Chattogram Met office recorded 48 mm rain in 24 hours till noon yesterday, said Bishwajit Chowdhury, officer of Chattogram Met office. Residents of the affected areas blamed authorities for the situation, saying that they failed to improve the waterlogging situation in over a decade.

Contacted, Lt Col Shah Ali, project director of CDA's mega-project, said, "The project work is ongoing, so it cannot be said that the project will not bring benefits." He claimed that people were already getting benefits. "Before the project started, rainwater used to inundate roads for hours, but now, the water recedes in 20 minutes."

Lt Col Ali said the temporary dams built in canals were being opened, so that water can flow through the canals.

The girl who wrote her own fate

Zannatul Sarkar Champa: newspaper hawker, UP member, an inspiration

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

Hailing from Pabna's Chatmohar upazila, Zannatul Sarkar Champa had to lead a hard life at a very early age. She was born in an impoverished family, at Mollikbain village in Parshodanga union.

In the middle of their childhood, Champa and her brothers were abandoned by their father, when he got married a second time. Champa was only in school back then. After a few years, her brothers went their separate ways, seeking jobs as day labourers,



while Champa started working at a textile mill.

In 2005, she got married when she was an SSC examinee. But Champa's new journeys always seemed to end on a bad note. She got divorced within a year, owing

to her husband being a drug abuser.

Once again, Champa was left stranded. This time on the streets.

But even such an obstacle couldn't break her. She landed a temporary job at an insurance company after completing her HSC exam. Fate, however, was cruel as usual. She couldn't continue her job for being transferred to another district in 2008.

A resilient Champa started selling newspaper in Chatmohar Bazar to survive, while facing widespread criticism.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



When I was selling newspapers, many people passed snide remarks at me for being a woman. But I never judged any type of work. Besides, their criticisms never paid for my food or shelter, so I never bothered to pay heed to them. I had to survive with dignity.

ZANNATUL SARKAR CHAMPA



Zannatul Sarkar Champa on her way to deliver newspaper to locals in Pabna's Chatmohar upazila. Despite countless hurdles, Champa overcame all barriers and became a Union Parishad member to further serve her community.

PHOTO: STAR

Judge impersonator sent to jail

He used police escort to avoid traffic

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Chandpur

A man called 999, the national emergency helpline, identifying himself as a Supreme Court justice, and used police escort while going to his village in Chandpur's Matlab South upazila on Friday.

But he was far from a Supreme Court judge. After realising the fraud, police arrested Arif Hossain Prokash alias Biplab Prodhan (45) from Uttar Dighaldi village on that day.



He was sent to jail yesterday. Describing the incident, Chandpur Additional Superintendent of Police Sudipta Roy said around 11:30am on Friday, Biplab got stuck in a traffic jam while leaving Dhaka in a rented car. During this time, he called 999 for police assistance to get out of the jam. The request was relayed to Cumilla Police Control Room, which informed Chandpur Police Control Room without any verification.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Two held with 3 geckos in Ctg

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Rapid Action Battalion (Rab-7) yesterday arrested two persons with 3 geckos, locally known as "takshak", in Hathazari upazila of Chattogram.

Acting on a tip off, forest officials with help of Rab-7 conducted the drive and seized 3 geckos from a microbus around 11:00pm, said Fazlul Kader Chowdhury, ranger of Hathazari Forest Range.

A case was filed with Hathazari Police Station under the wildlife act, he added. The reptiles were handed over to the forest department.



Let's Build A Beautiful Tomorrow

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Artcell



Shakib Al Hasan



Zohad Reza Chowdhury from Nemesis

A SHOWCASE OF community, brotherhood and mutual respect

Musicians came together to perform tributes to Azam Khan and Ayub Bachchu, two pillars of Bangladesh's rock music industry.

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

In a line-up full of hard-hitters like Artcell, Black, Cryptic Fate, Arbovirus, Nemesis, AvoidRafa, Mechanix, and Dreek, the most memorable moment was Shakib Al Hasan gingerly singing "Amra Korbo Joy", much to the elation of the crowd.

This could very well be interpreted as criticism, but in this instance, it was merely the cherry on top of a great show.

Concerts in the International Convention City Bashundhara (ICCB) are what I consider the acid test of a true music lover – with



Raef Al Hasan Rafa from AvoidRafa



Shakib Chowdhury from Cryptic Fate

disappoint.

As I entered the premises, the youthful exuberance was really something to behold, as sparkly-eyed teenagers younger than most of the bands themselves waited to see the heroes. I entered with the general expectation that I could see the entire line-up even after being late, I was simultaneously impressed and disappointed that I had missed Mechanix and Black (concerts are in the habit of starting very late).

It wasn't long before I kicked myself in the curb, as I got to know that Black had performed with Mila for their iconic "Tumi Ki Shara Dibe". Much like this performance, the concert lived up to its 'Hybrid' moniker – with Mechanix featuring Jamshed Chowdhury, Black covering Arbovirus' "Obhishap" and Arbovirus returning the favour with their rendition of "Aamra". AvoidRafa's rendition of Artcell's "Tomake" was magnificent, as

frontman Rafa's high-pitched voice perfectly suited the parallel scales of the song.

Musicians came together to perform tributes to Azam Khan and Ayub Bachchu, two pillars of Bangladesh's rock music industry. However, what was most refreshing to see was the tribute to Warfaze guitarist and legend Ibrahim Ahmed Kamal, as it is rare that we get to see tributes to a living, performing musician.

The organisers Full Circle and title Sponsor Daraz deserve felicitations for the execution of this wonderful idea – leaving no stone unturned in the sound, lighting or stage design.

When a concert is done well, it can hardly be rivaled by any other experience in the world – not only because of the music, but the sense of community, brotherhood and belonging in band music – one that was almost destroyed due to the pandemic.



Ibrahim Ahmed Kamal and Iqbal Asif Jewel

PHOTOS: SHEIKH MEHEDI MORSHED

commutes to the place from most of Dhaka being a torturous grind, and the sound systems always being a hit-or-miss – but "The Hybrid Experience" on Friday did not

'Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2' emerges victorious at Bollywood box office



"Bhool Bhulaiyaa 2", featuring Kartik Aaryan, Kiara Advani, Tabu and Rajpal Yadav in key roles, has been garnering positive reviews from critics and audiences alike. Collecting Rs 14.11 cr in India, the Anees Bazmee directorial has emerged as the fourth-highest opening day grosser post the pandemic. Critics are saying that the film quenches Bollywood's thirst for an ideal family entertainer

Bubly's 'Talash' to release in June

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Shobnom Bubly and A K Azad paired up for the first time in Saikat Nasir directorial film "Talash". Azad will be making his silver screen debut with this project. The trailer of the film was released on May 19. The film will hit theatres on June 17. This news was posted on Bubly's official Facebook page.

The actress is working simultaneously on silver screen and OTT platforms. Her last project, "Floor no 7", directed by Raihan Rafi, was released on Chorki during Eid.



COUNTRYWIDE

Paddy processing on roads: A DANGER INVITED

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Lalmonirhat

Regardless of smooth vehicular movement and impending danger, farmers in different areas of Lalmonirhat and Kurigram districts are using roads and highways for threshing and drying paddy as Boro harvest gains momentum.

Around 3,000 vehicles including buses and trucks ply the Lalmonirhat-Burimari highway, Kurigram-Bhurungamri highway and Rangpur-Kurigram highway and they face much hurdles negotiating the roads because of the presence of careless farmers processing paddy, said leaders of Transport Workers' Union.

Locals said very often, straw gets entangled with the wheels causing them to veer off the roads. The roads become more treacherous when rains drench the straw strewn on them. "We need to drive more cautiously because of the presence of farmers

processing paddy on the roads," said trucker Masudul Islam at Burimari Land Port in Lalmonirhat's Patgram upazila.

Farmer Delwar Hossain, who was seen drying paddy on highway in Namuri area of Lalmonirhat's Aditmari upazila said "We the marginal farmers have hardly any space for processing paddy and so, we use roads for the purpose."

"We prefer threshing and drying paddy on the paved road to keep the colour of the crops fresh. The crops get dirty and sandy if it is processed and threshed on fields or yards," said Atiar Rahman, a farmer at Sarpukur village in Aditmari upazila, who was seen drying paddy on Lalmonirhat-Burimari highway.

Aslam Hossain, a trader of Kurigram's Chilmari upazila, said he was injured as his motorbike skidded on straw while he was going to Kurigram town on Kurigram-Chilmari road on May 14.

This is just one of many such

incidents, he added.

Traffic Inspector in Lalmonirhat Abdur Rafique said it is hard for the authorities concerned to refrain so many farmers from doing such nonchalant activities.

Around 3,000 vehicles including buses and trucks ply the Lalmonirhat-Burimari highway, Kurigram-Bhurungamri highway and Rangpur-Kurigram highway and they face much hurdles negotiating the roads.

Public representatives along with all concerned citizens must play an effective role to raise awareness among the farmers to keep highways clear, he said.



Blocking half of Lalmonirhat-Burimari highway in Swarbamati Bridge area of Lalmonirhat's Aditmari upazila, farmers drying straw. A phenomenon that goes unabated during Boro harvesting season.

PHOTO: S DILIP ROY

Despite some abuse FROM PAGE 2

was organised by the Law and Justice Division of the law ministry.

Anisul said Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman had included the independence of the media in the constitution as a fundamental right. The government led by his daughter Sheikh Hasina will never formulate any such law which would damage the freedom of press and freedom of expression, he added.

Cybercrimes are not committed physically, and the Digital Security Act has been formulated to hold trials for cybercrimes, the minister said.

He urged the lawyers not to seek adjournments of case hearings repeatedly in order to reduce the backlog of cases.

Eight government pleaders and as many public prosecutors from eight divisions spoke at the meeting, presided over by Law and Justice Division Secretary Md Golam Sarwar.

JP doubtful

FROM PAGE 2 ideological differences between the Awami League and the BNP, there are no differences in their character.

He alleged that the two parties have created divisions among the people through corruption, misuse, and extortion.

"The people have no rights and security. Large buildings are being constructed for hospitals, but those do not have doctors and necessary equipment."

The JP chief said educational institutions were being set up, but there was no education there.

Quader said there is no effective initiative in controlling drug use. There are allegations that those in power are involved in spreading the use of drugs to destroy the nation, he added.

Crops damaged, fish farms

FROM PAGE 12 losses worth Tk 674 crore.

Md Abul Kalam Azad, district fisheries officer in Sylhet, said, "Fish farmers in Zakiganj, Gowainghat and Biswanath upazilas have been suffering the most. We are now expecting huge losses, which are increasing over time."

The damage to fisheries is relatively less in Sunamganj.

After a blow to the Boro harvest due to flash floods last month, a fresh blow hit the farmers just a couple of days away from harvesting the crop.

In Sylhet, 1,704 hectares of Boro were flooded, while in Sunamganj, it was 829 hectares.

Aush growers have also

been facing losses as 1,600 hectares were damaged in Sylhet, along with 72 hectares of saplings and 20 hectares of freshly cultivated paddy in Sunamganj.

Meanwhile, the water levels in the Surma and the Kushiara receded but were still above the danger marks.

The Surma was flowing at 83cm above the danger level at Kanaighat point in Sylhet at 3:00pm, after going 15cm down on Friday.

At the same time, it was flowing at 17cm above the danger level (21cm down from Friday) at Sylhet city point and 1cm above the danger level at Sunamganj town point (15cm reduced from Friday).

The Kushiara was flowing at 151cm above the danger level (18cm lower than Friday) in Sylhet's Zakiganj upazila's Amolshid point and 54cm above the danger level (4cm lower than Friday) at Beanibazar upazila's Sheola point.

The Someshwari in Netrakona's Kalmakanda at the same time was flowing 15cm above the danger level.

Meanwhile, the water of the Jamuna in Manikganj's Aricha point has increased 34cm in the last 24 hours and was flowing 250cm below the danger level at 3:00pm yesterday, said Faruk Hossain of Water Development Board in Manikganj.

5 dead as nor'wester sweeps

FROM PAGE 12

Ishwardia village; and his passenger Abdus Sahid, 47, of Char Nilaxia village in Mymensingh's Sadar upazila, police said.

On information, police recovered the bodies and handed those to the respective families. A case was lodged with the police station in this regard.

In Bogura, two people were killed during the storm, which swept the district over 88 kilometer speed per hour around 4:00 am.

The dead were identified as Md Shahin Proddhan, 42, resident of Majhgram village in Kahalu upazila, and Abdul Halim, 42 of Birkustia village under Shahjahanpur upazila in

Bogura. Shahin died when a tree fell on him and the latter was killed when he fell from an uprooted tree while it was being cleared, police said.

Near hundreds of trees have fallen around the Bogura town by the storm, while over five hundred birds and their chicks died due to this at the Bogura Municipality Park, Govt Azizul Haque college campus and some other places, said Arafat Rahman, former president of TEER (Team for energy and environmental research).

Ruposhi Begum, 45, a homemaker in Kulchra village under Shailakupa upazila in Jhenidah, died when lightning struck her home during the storm.

Besides, thousands of trees were uprooted and around five hundreds homes were damaged during the nor'wester, said Mofidul Islam Monto, chairman of no.11 Rakhalgachi union.

Citing the Met bulletin, UNB reported, "Rain or thunder showers, with intense lightning flashes and temporary gusty and squally wind, are likely to occur at many places over Rangpur, Rajshahi, Dhaka, Mymensingh, Sylhet and Chattogram divisions and at a few places over Khulna and Barishal divisions, with moderately heavy rainfall."

(Our Mymensingh, Bogura and Jhenidah correspondents contributed to the report.)

Only talks

FROM PAGE 12

historical military non-alignment and applied to join Nato, after public support for the alliance soared following Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Moscow has warned

Finland that joining Nato would be "a grave mistake with far-reaching consequences" and Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said it would respond by building military bases in western

Russia. But both Finland and Sweden are now apparently on the fast track to join the military alliance, with US President Joe Biden this week offering "full, total, complete backing" to their bids.



Portraits of people who disappeared during the last dictatorship (1973-1985) in Uruguay are held by people taking part in the Marcha del Silencio (March of Silence) in Montevideo, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

MONKEYPOX WHO calls emergency meeting

REUTERS, London

The World Health Organization was holding an emergency meeting yesterday to discuss the recent outbreak of monkeypox, a viral infection more common to west and central Africa, after over 100 cases were confirmed or suspected in Europe.

In what Germany described as the largest outbreak in Europe ever, cases have been reported in at least nine countries - Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom - as well as the United States, Canada and Australia.

First identified in monkeys, the disease typically spreads through close contact and has rarely spread outside Africa, so this series of cases has triggered concern. However, scientists do not expect the outbreak to evolve into a pandemic like Covid-19, given the virus does not spread as easily as SARS-CoV-2.

Monkeypox is usually a mild viral illness, characterised by symptoms of fever as well as a distinctive bumpy rash.

There is no specific vaccine for monkeypox, but data shows that the vaccines used to eradicate smallpox are up to 85 percent effective against monkeypox, according to the WHO.

Biden, S Korea's Yoon vow to deter N Korea

Offer aid, vaccines; US president says any meeting with Kim Jong Un would depend on sincerity



REUTERS, Seoul

President Joe Biden and his new South Korean counterpart yesterday agreed to hold bigger military drills and deploy more US weapons if necessary to deter North Korea, while offering to send Covid-19 vaccines and potentially meet Kim Jong Un.

Biden and Yoon Suk-yeol said their countries' decades-old alliance needed to develop not only to face North Korean threats but to keep the Indo-Pacific region "free and open" and protect global supply chains.

The two leaders are meeting in Seoul for their first diplomatic engagement since the South Korean president's inauguration 11 days ago. The friendly encounter between allies was clouded by intelligence showing North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is prepared to conduct nuclear or missile tests.

Yoon had sought more assurances that the United States would boost its deterrence against North Korean threats. In a joint statement, Biden reaffirmed the US commitment to defend South Korea with nuclear weapons if necessary.

The two sides agreed to consider expanding their combined military drills, which had been scaled back in recent years in an effort to lower tensions with the North.

The United States also promised to deploy "strategic assets" - which typically include long-range bomber aircraft, missile submarines, or aircraft carriers - if necessary to deter North Korea, according to the statement.

Both leaders said they were committed to denuclearising North Korea and were open to diplomacy with Pyongyang.

"With regard to whether I would meet with the leader of North Korea, it would depend on whether he was sincere and whether he was serious," Biden told a joint news conference.

He said Washington had offered Covid-19 vaccines to China and North Korea, which is combating its first acknowledged outbreak. "We've got no response," Biden said.

North Korea reported more than 200,000 new patients suffering from fever for a fifth consecutive day yesterday, but the country has little in the way of vaccines or modern treatment for the pandemic.

The US-South Korea alliance, which dates to the 1950-1953 Korean War, must further develop to keep the Indo-Pacific "free and open", Biden said.

He said the alliance was built on opposition to changing borders by force - an apparent reference to Russia's war in Ukraine and China's claims over Taiwan.

US slams UN rights chief's China trip

AFP, Geneva

The UN rights chief came under fire for announcing a visit next week to China's Xinjiang, with the United States saying she was failing to stand up for the region's Uyghur community.

After years of requesting "meaningful and unfettered" access to far-western Xinjiang, Michelle Bachelet will finally lead a six-day mission to China starting Monday, her office said.

The visit, at the invitation of Beijing, marks the first trip to China by a UN rights chief since 2005.

The United States, in forceful criticism, said it was "deeply concerned" that Bachelet, a former president of Chile, was going ahead without guarantees on what she can see.

"We have no expectation that the PRC will grant the necessary access required to conduct a complete, unmanipulated assessment of the human rights environment in Xinjiang," State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters, using the acronym for the People's Republic of China.

Price also voiced alarm that Bachelet has not released a long-anticipated report on Xinjiang, where the United States and several other Western nations say Beijing is carrying out "genocide" against the Uyghurs and other mostly Muslim, Turkic-speaking people.

Women TV presenters defy Taliban order

AFP, Kabul

Women presenters on Afghanistan's leading TV channels yesterday went on air without covering their faces, defying a Taliban order that they conceal their appearance to comply with the group's austere brand of Islam. Since surging back to power last year the Taliban have imposed a slew of restrictions on civil society, many focused on reining in the rights of women and girls. Earlier this month Afghanistan's supreme leader issued a diktat for women to cover up fully in public, including their faces, ideally with the traditional burqa. The feared Ministry for Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice ordered women TV presenters to follow suit by yesterday. Previously they had only been required to wear a headscarf. However, broadcasters TOLONews, Shamshad TV and ITV all aired live programmes with women presenters' faces on show. "Our female colleagues are concerned that if they cover their faces, the next thing they will be told is to stop working," said Shamshad TV head of news Abid Ehsas. Mohammad Sadeq Akif Mohajir, spokesman for the vice ministry, said the women were violating the Taliban directive. The Taliban have demanded that women government employees be fired if they fail to follow the new dress code. Men working in government also risk suspension if their wives or daughters fail to comply. Television channels have already stopped showing dramas and soap operas featuring women, following orders from Taliban authorities.

BLOCKING NY STATE TAX PROBE Donald Trump pays \$110,000 fine

AFP, New York

Former US President Donald Trump has paid a \$110,000 fine for obstructing a major tax evasion investigation led since 2019 by New York state authorities, a spokesperson announced Friday. Trump was ordered April 25 by New York state's Supreme Court to pay \$10,000 a day for as long as he refused to provide accounting and tax documents as part of a civil investigation by the Attorney General of the state, Letitia James, against the Trump Organization family business. James and the Republican billionaire have been engaged in a fierce procedural battle for months. The Trumps - who accuse James of a "political witch hunt" - have appealed the ruling.

PALESTINIAN JOURNO'S DEATH US lawmakers seek FBI probe

AFP, Washington



More than 50 US lawmakers have called on the FBI to investigate the killing in the West Bank of Al Jazeera reporter Shireen Abu Akleh, despite Israeli promises of

a probe. The 57 House members, largely left-leaning Democrats and led by Representative Andre Carson, noted that Abu Akleh held US citizenship and pointed to divergent accounts on how she died on May 11. Al Jazeera and Palestinians say Israeli forces killed Abu Akleh, a prominent journalist, as she covered an Israeli army raid in Jenin, in the north of the occupied West Bank. Israel says she may have been killed by Palestinian gunfire or a stray shot from an Israeli soldier.

9 Bangladeshis jailed for gang rape

FROM PAGE 12

rape first went viral in Bangladesh and was then found to have been committed in Bengaluru.

Meanwhile, Indian authorities yesterday handed over to Bangladesh a woman who was raped and tortured in Bangalore last year.

A team of Tejgaon Division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police received her on the border at Benapole, Jashore, Biplob Kumar Sarker, deputy commissioner of

DMP, told The Daily Star.

A DMP official, requesting anonymity, said details of how she was trafficked and tortured will be presented before a court later and the woman will testify in the cases filed in Bangladesh.

After the video went viral in social media, Bengaluru police found out that the incident had taken place in Kanaka Nagar in Ramamurthy Nagar police limits of Bengaluru city and arrested all the accused and booked them under

IPC, Immoral Trafficking (Prevention) Act, IT Act and Foreigners Act.

The policemen who had arrested 12 persons found that 11 of them were illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and one turned out to be a local.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (east) Bheemashankar Guled said, "To deliver speedy justice, the investigation was taken up on war footing, using all scientific aids at disposal such as DNA analysis, electronic

evidence, mobile forensics, fingerprint evidence and voice sampling.

"The Government of Karnataka appointed Special Public Prosecutor Veeranna Tigadi to conduct the prosecution and a special trial monitoring team was constituted by the Commissioner of Police, Bengaluru City, to assist and monitor the trial process, ensuring no delays are caused."

A total of 44 witnesses were examined by the judge, added Guled.

Australia ousts Conservatives

FROM PAGE 12

celebrations, said he wanted to unite the country and "end the climate wars".

"I think people want to come together, look for our common interest, look towards that sense of common purpose. I think people have had enough of division, what they want is to come together as a nation and I intend to lead that."

Albanese said he aimed to be sworn in swiftly so he could attend a meeting of the Quad security grouping in Tokyo on Tuesday. He promised constitutional recognition and parliamentary representation for Indigenous Aboriginals, as well as the establishment of an anti-corruption commission.

In results so far, Labor had yet to reach the 76 of the 151 lower house seats required to form a government alone. Final results could take time as counting of a record number of postal votes is completed.

With 60 percent of the vote counted, Labor had 72 seats and Morrison's coalition 55. Independents

and the Greens held 11, the Australian Broadcasting Corp projected. A further 13 seats remained in doubt.

The centre-left Labor had held a decent lead in opinion polls before the election, although surveys showed the Liberal-National government narrowing the gap in the final stretch of a six-week campaign.



The sisters of 17-year-old Palestinian Amjad Al-Fayed mourn his death, during his funeral in the refugee camp of Jenin, yesterday. The Palestinian teenager was shot dead by Israeli forces early yesterday during a raid in Jenin in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry said.

PHOTO: AFP

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

Why are rice prices soaring?

Reportedly, there is no shortage of it in the country

IT is concerning that prices of both fine and coarse rice have gone up in the capital's wholesale and retail markets in the last few days, despite there being no shortage of food grains in the country. According to a report published by *The Daily Star* on May 21, the price of fine rice increased by Tk 2.5 per kg in the retail market, while coarse rice price also increased. This is only aggravating the sufferings of the people who are already struggling to meet their household expenses due to the rising prices of daily essentials.

Over the last five months, prices of almost all the daily essentials such as edible oils, lentils, eggs, flour, powdered milk, etc., have increased in the market.

While prices of imported items have increased due to supply chain disruptions caused by the Russia-Ukraine war, prices of many locally produced items, such as mustard oil, have also increased for no apparent reason.

While flash floods in Sylhet and Sunamganj could be a legitimate reason for the price hike, traders have alleged that some local companies are buying paddy in bulk and creating an imbalance in the market, thereby triggering the price hike. If that is indeed the case, the government must take strict action against these companies that are hoarding paddies at the prospect of making more profit, manipulating an already volatile market.

Illegal hoarding has always been an issue for us. We had seen earlier how traders and even local politicians hoarded large amounts of edible oil in order to sell them later at higher prices. And we might be experiencing something similar in the case of rice, if the government cannot stop this buying competition among the big companies. The Directorate of National Consumer Rights Protection (DNCRP), an agency of the commerce ministry, must remain vigilant and regularly conduct drives against illegal hoarders. Since traders have claimed that there is no shortage of the staple in the market right now, it is the government's duty to keep the rice market stable.

As it seems, the global market may remain volatile for quite some time because of the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war. Therefore, the government must ensure that our food grain stock remains stable for a significant amount of time in the future. And rather than depending on the next Boro harvest—which is supposed to be a good one—the government should also look for markets to import rice and wheat from. Ensuring food security for the people is now the most difficult challenge facing the government. And it should not let the people down.

Death by pollution

The government must take urgent action to save lives

WHEN over 2.15 lakh people die in a year from pollution related ailments, one has to take the aspect of environment degradation and the resulting impact on human health extremely seriously. A new global study by the highly regarded medical journal, *The Lancet*, revealed that pollution of different elements of nature resulted in the premature deaths of over 2.15 lakh people in Bangladesh in 2019 alone. The breakdown of the figure shows that nearly 1.75 lakh people died due to air pollution, while over 30,000 deaths occurred because of water pollution—Bangladesh also ranked sixth among countries seeing premature deaths because of pollution. By any standard, these are scary numbers.

We are concerned at the deteriorating condition of air quality in the country, especially in the major cities, which is largely contributing to health impediments including deaths from respiratory tract infection. We are aware that stories of our unrestrained air pollution often hit the headlines in global newspapers, but unfortunately, many of the visible sources of air pollution continue to do damage before the very eye of the administration.

The Lancet study further tells us that pollution in the water bodies has reached a horrific level, contributing to different types of ailments and deaths as well. Many other local studies also identified contaminated water as the main contributor to life-threatening illnesses of the intestines such as diarrhoea, cholera and typhoid. We may mention the cases of the recent bout of diarrhoea and cholera in the metropolis which experts relate to polluted drinking water. In fact, the colour and smell of water in every reservoir reek of high concentration of micro-pollutants.

The environmentalists of the country also told us about the hazards of lead pollution on human health originating from the industries and small factories across the country, which is directly linked to heart disease, cancer, skin disease, respiratory problems and various other illnesses. Experts say that environment pollution has deteriorated to such a level that even unborn babies are paying the price. Therefore, the pertinent question: How to address the pervasive pollution menace? They believe considering the intensity of the problem, we seem to be inadequately prepared and concerned.

The government needs to urgently implement the laws of the land strictly in order to save our air, water, soil, fish, animals and human lives. It is a travesty that things have gotten to this point; but it would be an even bigger crime to let them continue like this.

Cumilla polls, a litmus test for EC, and the shadow of drugs



OF MAGIC & MADNESS

Badiuzzaman Bay
is assistant editor at *The Daily Star*.

BADIUZZAMAN BAY

FOR a party that is so image-conscious and so demanding of "clean image" from its candidates, the Awami League surely knows how to make a muck of things and draw unflattering attention. According to a report by *The Daily Star*, the ruling party nominated Arfanul Haque Rifat as its mayoral candidate for the June 15 election to Cumilla City Corporation. It did so despite him being named in a government list as the number one patron of drug lords and smugglers in the district. Why on earth, you wonder.

Reportedly, Rifat was backed by the long-serving member of parliament (MP) from Cumilla-6 constituency who, following the confirmation of nomination, publicly urged local leaders and activists to stand by his side. For the Awami League, Cumilla city is a rare chink in its armour. It suffered defeats in both the mayoral polls held since the corporation was established in 2011. The third time's a charm, it will hope, and Rifat's resume is full of reassuring news bites. He's got the whole Awami League spectrum covered in his career: Before serving as the general secretary of the party's city unit, he was a senior vice-president of the district unit of Jubo League. Prior to that, he was involved with the Chhatra League. But to be selected as a nominee, he'd need to survive pre-selection scrutiny. Was there any, you wonder again.

This, we don't know. What we do know—and perhaps what makes all the difference—is that he was chosen from 14 nomination-seekers by the holder of the most powerful office in the country, which marked him as a patron of criminals not long ago. The whys and hows of the decision are hard to fathom. Is it possible that Rifat was wrongly implicated? Could it be an intelligence slip-up? Or did they simply forget this had ever happened?

The list, a copy of which has been obtained by *The Daily Star*, was prepared by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) with the assistance of a government intelligence agency, as part of a countrywide drive to identify drug traders and smugglers, their patrons, and corrupt law enforcement officials involved with them. It was shortly before the "war on drugs" was launched. The PMO, in 2018, even sent the home ministry a letter along with the list of Chattogram Division,

urging it to take action following scrutiny. We don't know if the ministry did that at all. When asked for comments, a senior member of the Awami League's Local Government Nomination Board posited that Rifat's inclusion may have been a result of conclusions drawn from "false cases" filed against him during BNP's tenure. But one doubts if this is really the

constituency, who is facing trial in a graft case filed by the Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC) in 2007. Bodi is better known for having been a chief patron of yaba smugglers, and in 2015, he topped a home ministry list of 79 leading human traffickers in Cox's Bazar. We also have had the likes of Haji Salim, elected from the Dhaka-7 constituency and recently



▲ The third Cumilla City Corporation election is scheduled for June 15, 2022, the first election to be overseen by the new Election Commission.

PHOTO: SHAHIDUL HASAN ROMAN/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

case—not just because of the unlikelihood of it happening so long after that distant era in our history, but also because of the involvement of responsible government offices in the listing process.

So much for the drive for clean image and credible elections.

Not that there is any illusion left for the citizens, especially after a decade and a half in which all credibility of our electoral process has been washed down the drain. Today, elections have become more of a depressing slideshow than a democratic tool for power transition.

Rifat's alleged background is a throwback to the not-so-short and not-so-distant history of drug lords, land grabbers and human traffickers brought into the fold of ruling circles. Let's not forget the power-hungry businessmen whose bottomless money pit has funded many a campaign. But the first group—because of their open, shameless display of the close ties between politics and crimes—certainly takes the cake.

Just over the past decade or so, we've had a number of MPs falling into that category. We've had Mohammad Shahid Islam alias Kazi Papul, elected from Lakshimpur-2 constituency, who was sentenced to seven years in a Kuwaiti prison for human trafficking and money laundering. We've had Abdur Rahman Bodi, elected from Cox's Bazar-4

sentenced to 10 years in a graft case. Their exploits and machinations are well-documented, their effects palpable throughout our political firmament.

The risk of having a mayor with alleged criminal links in Cumilla is that the district shares a 106km boundary with India, from where illegal drugs are smuggled into Bangladesh, according to law enforcement agencies. It's a huge red flag if the allegations against Rifat are true, although nothing definitive can be said since those allegations were perhaps never investigated. But doesn't the Awami League owe it to the voters, and its own legacy of fighting against drugs, to get to the bottom of the matter and make decisions accordingly? Unfortunately, that there should have been a need to ask something so basic shows how little we've come to expect of our political parties, and the electoral system in general.

The ruling party, thus, also owes it to the new Election Commission to be fair and reasonable in all decisions related to the Cumilla city polls. It is, after all, the first big election to be organised by the new commission (which started work only about three months ago), and hence a litmus test for the integrity of the whole electoral process it is about to oversee in the run-up to the general elections scheduled to be held next year.

More chores for women further tilts the gender gap

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AMAL CHOWDHURY

MY husband says not to look for work too far from home since I have to do the household work as well and asks me to wait." Mita (not her real name) went on to express her frustration by saying, "If this pandemic hadn't arisen, I would have surplus money to spend on my kids, I would've had a job." Mita is a 32-year-old former garments factory worker whom we interviewed as part of a project to understand the gendered experience of Covid-19 in Bangladesh. Mita left her job during the pandemic, and when she did start looking for jobs again, she had much fewer options because of her husband's specific instructions.

A harsh fact of the pandemic is that it did not affect all groups of society equally. Women lost out on growth and employment opportunities because they are having to shoulder the heavier share of the domestic burden.

With the closure of public and private educational institutes, offices and transportation at different times during the pandemic, the labour market was disrupted for all. However, the pandemic induced an economic downturn which imposed a double burden for women.

In Bangladesh, nearly 31 percent of the informal workforce has female employees. People who worked in informal sectors lost their jobs without any prior notice and were the most impacted. Multiple studies from around the globe indicated women's careers were adversely affected even if they were able to retain their jobs and there was a trend of women decreasing their work hours

during the pandemic.

We hoped, seeing how stressful household responsibilities are first hand, being exposed to the full extent of it—men would begin to do their fair share. But they continued letting the women of the house pick up their slack. As a result, household responsibilities increased more for women compared to pre-lockdown. To explore this, we interviewed 28 female respondents and 12 male respondents in Bangladesh asking about specific effects of Covid-19 on their household responsibilities and whether there was a gendered dimension to these impacts. We found three recurring themes.

The first, families in patriarchal societies have unequal distribution of labour, with the majority of the women having double the work pressure within the household compared to men. For example, Yamin Begum, a 41-year-old housemaid, mentioned increased household workload during Covid by saying: "Yes, during the lockdown the work pressure increased. I had to boil water several times a day. I had to keep things clean a lot—with soap and water and made sure everyone washed their hands. I had to make food for everyone as well."

This was not an anomaly as 21 out of 28 of our female respondents stated that the pandemic and the initial lockdown have led to a multitude of challenges for them, including increased household work due to the extra precautions they had to take because of Covid. Even though more family members were staying at home, 16 of our female respondents mentioned that they had no additional help during this time. The other 12 female respondents got additional help from the other family members who are female.

The second theme was the perception of men about household work being less strenuous than their work and the

overriding belief that the household chores are an integral part of women's everyday life and should not be considered as a burden. Men typically think household work should be done by women, as they have always seen women spending most of their time taking care of household responsibilities. A 32-year-old tea stall owner from Kallyanpur said: "There is less pressure in housework. My work needs more energy."

The third theme was women themselves preferred for their husbands and sons to not get involved in household chores. Some of our female respondents opined that they are not used to their husband's assistance inside the kitchen or in the regular household chores.

"Have you ever seen men working in the kitchen? Never! Even though now I have a little pressure due to the lockdown, these jobs (cooking, washing, cleaning, and taking care of the house) are my responsibilities. I cannot ask my husband to do this. My mother, my mother-in-law never did this, how can I?" laughed 46-year-old Nasrin, who lives in Agargaon slum in Dhaka city.

Our findings confirmed the notion that women tend to take on more household duties than the men, and that for many women, the lockdown brought on an increased burden of responsibilities. Surprisingly, many women had to put up with this increased workload without any kind of support and that led to their low-income recovery.

Despite our shared sense of gender progress in Bangladesh, lots need to be done to bring gender equality within the household domain. These findings are direct indicators that must sway the policymakers to take into consideration the unfair distribution of domestic labour and the unpaid care labour when drafting policy responses for Covid and future pandemics.

We hoped, seeing how stressful household responsibilities are first hand, being exposed to the full extent of it—men would begin to do their fair share. But they continued letting the women of the house pick up their slack.

Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury: His journey towards 'immortality' began at 17



MAMUNUR RASHID

Mamunur Rashid is a journalist at The Daily Star.

ON February 21, 1952, police opened fire upon the Bangali population that sought their birthright—a right to use their own mother language. A boy of 17, and a Dhaka College HSC student at the time, Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury had rushed to the hospital to visit the injured.

In the OPD of Dhaka Medical College, he came across the decapitated corpse of language martyr Rafiq. The adolescent Abdul Gaffar felt waves of strong mourning; it was as if he had lost his own brother. This sorrow is what is incarnated in the timeless verses of "Amar bhaiyer rokte rangano Ekushey February."

Around the same time, this poem ended up in a manifesto; published through a clandestine meeting that took place in the capital's Gendaria area. Initially, in 1953, the poem was given a tune by Abdul Latif. In that same year, the song was performed for the first time at the Britannia Hall in Gulistan, during the inauguration ceremony of the recently elected Student Union of Dhaka College.

In March of that year, the poem was published in "Ekushey February," a historic collection edited by Hasan Hafizur Rahman. Later on, it was again given a tune by Altaf Mahmud. This tune was used for the first time when the song was performed during 1954's probhat ferry.

Since then, every year on February 21, countless Bangladeshis have sung this timeless tune while attending the probhat ferry to pay their respects to the martyrs of the Language Movement—a practice that has now spread worldwide. Later on, this song was voted the third best Bangla song in history during an audience poll by BBC Bangla.

Many consider the Language Movement to have been the first step towards the eventual struggle for freedom in Bangladesh. And Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury, who actively took part in each and every step of the Bangali nation's struggle for freedom, including the Language Movement, is said to be an ardent witness to the different twists and turns in the nation's history.

This renowned journalist and the founder-executive editor of the first registered newspaper of independent Bangladesh (established through Mujibnagar government) "Joy Bangla," passed away in a hospital in London on May 19, 2022, at the age of 88.

Even though he had lived in London since 1974, Abdul Gaffar's pen never ceased to uphold the spirit of our Liberation War and secularism. Despite being a non-residential Bangladeshi, he



COLLAGE:
AFIA JAHIN

continued writing commentary pieces on politics and various other contemporary topics for national dailies. He also wrote poetry, novels, stories, dramas, memoirs and articles.

Abdul Gaffar's write-ups were especially popular amongst the country's politically-conscious readers during the entirety of the 1980s, when the dictatorial government of General Ershad was in power.

This is how he became a household name in Bangladeshi media, and within the country's cultural, political, and intellectual spheres.

However, there is no doubt that Abdul Gaffar will be remembered most vividly for penning the timeless song that has immortalised the memories of our language struggle. Whenever and wherever this song is pronounced, speakers of the Bangla language will be reminded of him.

As lyricist Gazi Mazharul Anwar has said, "As long as Bangladesh exists, this song will exist alongside it." He adds, "This (song) had unveiled new ideological standards. (Abdul Gaffar) had fulfilled our need of the hour—which was to retaliate—through his song."

Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury was born in Ulania under Mehendigonj thana on September 12, 1934. Despite being a zamindar, his father, Wahed Reza Chowdhury, was more prominently known as a freedom fighter and a member of the All-India Congress Working Committee within British-ruled India. He

had even worked as a secretary to the then Congress minister, Motilal Nehru.

Abdul Gaffar graduated from Dhaka University in 1958. In 1950, during his student life, he joined the *Daily Insaaf* newspaper. Later on, he took charge of Mohammad Nasiruddin's monthly *Saugat*. He became the assistant editor of *Daily Ittefaq* in 1956. Two years later, he took charge of Tofazzal Hossain Manik Miah's political magazine, "Chabuk."

Afterwards, Abdul Gaffar worked for the *Daily Azad*, the *Monthly Mohammadi*, *Daily Jihad* and eventually became editor of the weekly *Shonar Bangla* in 1963. As the spokesperson for the six-point movement, he published the *Daily Awaaz* in 1966. He returned to *Daily Azad* in 1967, and subsequently re-joined *Daily Ittefaq* in 1969. After Manik Miah's passing, he joined the *Daily Purbodesh*.

Post-liberation, in 1974, he went to London with his family in order to acquire treatment for his ailing wife. There, he released a magazine named "Notun Din." He continued wielding the pen in both Bangla and English languages.

For senior journalist Abed Khan, Abdul Gaffar was the "heart" of the spirit of our Liberation War and non-sectarian beliefs. According to him, Abdul Gaffar was the "most reliable" pillar of Bangladesh's history, the history of the Liberation War and the political movements of Bangladesh.

Many literary critics also opined that, if Abdul Gaffar had focused more on literature instead of politics and column

writing, Bangla literature would have become much more enriched.

Professor Abul Quasem Fazlul Hoq was the convener for the "Rastrobhasha Bangla Rokkha Committee," formed against the backdrop of the Language Movement in 1952. According to him, "Ekushey February is our path, it's the people's path of struggle. Abdul Gaffar walked this path through his writing about Bangalis and the spirit of being a Bangali. He could have achieved fame solely as an author. However, penning the Language Movement anthem took him and his oeuvre to an unparalleled height."

Abdul Gaffar received recognition for his work in the form of the Bangla Academy award (1967), Ekushey Padak, UNESCO literature prize and the Shadhinota Padak (2009). He also received countless other prizes and awards throughout his life.

In 2014, while collecting the Sohel Samad Memorial Prize in Bangladesh Press Institute's auditorium, Abdul Gaffar had lamented about the commercialised nature of contemporary journalism. The legend had reminisced about the "ideology-based" journalism of his time.

It is undeniable, thus, that not only in the context of Bangladeshi journalism or of contemporary history, but whenever or wherever the indestructible tune of Ekushey February—mired in the memories of martyred Bangalis—is repeated, it will also be accompanied by the remembrance of the indelible Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury.

There is no doubt that Abdul Gaffar will be remembered most vividly for penning the timeless song that has immortalised the memories of our language struggle. Whenever and wherever this song is pronounced, speakers of the Bangla language will be reminded of him.

Will Ankhi be able to take the SSC exam this year?



AN OPEN DIALOGUE

ABDULLAH SHIBLI

Dr. Abdullah Shibli is an economist and works for Change Healthcare, Inc., an information technology company. He also serves as Senior Research Fellow at the US-based Sustainable Development Institute (SDI).

I have known Ankhi since she was two-years-old. She is the daughter of Ali and Kohinoor who have struggled their entire life to support their children as they climb the steps to get out of poverty through education. As a child, she was extremely curious and had a twinkle in her eyes. Ankhi started her early education in the free primary school run by the Dhaka Ladies Club in a tiny space of a garage. As a two-year-old, Ankhi would ask me questions about America and would always ask before I headed for the airport to return to Boston: "Where are you going?"

Ankhi's father took care of my bed-ridden father-in-law until he passed away in 2013. Her mother, Kohinoor, worked for my mother-in-law even after that but her health conditions prevented her from working as a cook in the latter's household. They moved to their ancestral home in a village of Alfa Danga in the Faridpur district, and I lost touch with them after that.

I recently heard that Ankhi travelled from her village to my mother-in-law's apartment in Dhaka in search of her father, because she needs a copy of her

father's NID which is required to register for the upcoming SSC exam.

Ali moved from his hometown in Sylhet to Dhaka in the 1980s in search of better opportunities. He was a pre-teen then, and connected with my in-laws and started working for them as a jack-of-all-trades. Ironically, he never got an NID even though he was one of the smartest operators I have known in the past 25 years.

Unfortunately, Ankhi needs a copy of both her parents' NIDs to register for the SSC exam. According to the government's rules, a candidate needs, among other documents, a birth certificate and both parents' NID cards. Her birth certificate was never issued even though her mother gave birth to her only daughter at a Dhaka clinic.

Ali worked hard as a young boy and in all subsequent years. After a few years of working as a handyman, caretaker, and night guard, Ali decided to seek a more lucrative job in the garments industry. He abandoned his family, and Kohinoor was left to raise her young children as a single mom. A few years ago, Kohinoor moved back to her ancestral home in Faridpur and was able to eke out a living with the assistance of her stepmother and other relatives. But, life was always tough for this frail woman who had bouts of diabetes and other illnesses. Nonetheless, she was able to garner all the resources needed to send her children to schools and penny pinched to send her children to the schools in the



PHOTO:
STAR

Ankhi's birth certificate was never issued even though her mother gave birth to her only daughter at a Dhaka clinic.

villages of Alfa Danga.

Mohsin, the eldest son, finished his SSC and HSC and moved from Faridpur to Dhaka to look for a job. He worked as a delivery man for an online grocery store in Shahzadpur, near Gulshan, but the hard routine of riding a bicycle for long hours got to his health. He left the job in Dhaka and went back to live with his mother for a few months in 2021. Now he is seeking employment again. Shakil finished high school and passed the SSC examinations. He was looking for a job that would not be very physically demanding, and without finding one, began to work on a ship as a loader for a

navigation company.

Ankhi managed to finish high school in the village and was successful in evading the eyes of "big brothers", rural morals and potential matchmakers and plans to take the SSC examination beginning in June. But, her registration is not complete yet. She still faces many obstacles. Her father Ali now works as a "darwan" in Dhaka but has neither the resources nor the connections he needs to get an NID in such a short time. So, Ankhi is going back to her village where the headmaster might be able to pull strings to get her registered for the SSC exam. The cost of these back-channel methods is beyond the family's reach, and they still might not be able to get all the paperwork finished to complete the registration process on time.

It's a familiar story for the underprivileged classes in Bangladesh. There are many Ankhis who have to overcome all the hurdles as they seek to better their lives. Even a birth certificate costs Tk 1,800 and the going rate for an NID is Tk 5,000, including the fees and middlemen's commissions. Obviously, these documents are necessary in a modern economy to buy land and for voter registration. However, there are many individuals who cannot afford the expenses and might decide to forego these perks of life. Fortunately, the backdoor channels and informal administration structure might still provide an escape route for Ankhi and others like her.

PRIMARY CARE, FAMILY MEDICINE AND FAMILY DOCTOR

A missing link in health care system

Primary medical care is recognised as a key component and foundation of health care delivery systems worldwide. It is also the most appropriate means to achieve equitable and sustainable improvements in health for the populations in developing countries. Though very similar, Primary Care and Primary Health Care often use interchangeably but have a different concepts.

DR LT COLONEL (RETD) MD KABIR AHMED KHAN

Primary Care or Primary Medical care describes a narrow concept that focuses on the person as a whole to improve the health of the individual by providing easy access to medical care. Thus, primary care is defined as "the provision of integrated, accessible health care services by clinicians who are accountable for addressing a large majority of personal health care needs, developing a sustained partnership with patients, and practising in the context of family and community." Primary Care is the first door of care and connecting link between all the higher levels of healthcare delivery systems.

Primary Health Care, in contrast, is a broader concept that includes both individual-level care and population-focused activities that also incorporates public health elements such as universal access to health care, an emphasis on health equity, and collaboration within and beyond the medical sector.

Many countries emphasise primary care and have developed strong primary care infrastructures. Examples include Britain's National Health Service (NHS), which established Primary Care Trusts (PCT) that integrate primary and hospital-based care. Canada has a more balanced primary care-specialist physician ratio. Like Brazil, Sri Lanka and Thailand, developing countries have also implemented national-level strategies to increase access to primary care services. An increasingly popular model for orienting the healthcare system to primary care is the gatekeeper model, which requires patients to select a primary care physician (PCP), known as a Family Doctor and then obtain referrals to specialists.



Logically, primary care speciality and Family Medicine are seen as crucial medical speciality and healthcare necessity because it is assumed to positively impact health outcomes in many countries of the world. Experiences in the international context suggest that primary care-oriented healthcare delivery systems can produce better health outcomes and counteract, to some extent, the negative impact of poor economic conditions on health. Increasing primary care availability in low- and middle-income countries also correlate with improved health like Bangladesh. Many countries in the world have embraced strong primary care, using a variety of structures and models. Lessons from these countries could serve as case studies for our country's healthcare system, which currently faces an imbalance between

speciality and primary care and a significant shortage and inequitable distribution in the primary care workforce. Many research suggests the need to increase the supply of primary care physicians in our country to strengthen primary medical care.

Bangladesh College of Physicians and Surgeons (BCPS) has started its membership, and fellowship examinations on Family Medicine to increase the BMDC recognised family doctors. In addition, many private organisations also started weekend diploma and certificate courses in general medicine to increase the number of competent primary care physicians. The services that fall under primary care will vary depending on the needs of different communities.

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Almost one billion children and adults with disabilities and older persons in need of assistive technology denied access

According to a new World Health Organisation (WHO) and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) report, more than 2.5 billion people need wheelchairs, hearing aids, or apps that support communication and cognition. Access to these life-changing products is as low as 3% in low- and middle-income countries.

Assistive technology provides the door to education for children with disabilities, work and social engagement for individuals with disabilities, and independent, dignified life for seniors. Denying individuals these life-changing technologies is a human rights violation and economic short-sightedness.

According to UNICEF, 240 million children are disabled. Denying children the resources they need to grow affects individual children, families, and communities. If their needs were addressed, they might contribute more.

The report notes that the number of people in need of one or more assistive products is likely to rise to 3.5 billion by 2050, due to populations ageing and the prevalence of noncommunicable diseases rising across the world. The report also highlights the vast gap in access between low- and high-income countries. An analysis of 35 countries reveals that access varies from 3% in poorer nations to 90% in wealthy countries.

A survey of 70 countries featured in the report found large gaps in service provision and a trained workforce for assistive technology, especially in cognition, communication, and self-care.

RSV responsible for more than 100,000 deaths worldwide in children under five in 2019



A new study published in The Lancet estimates that Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) attributable acute lower respiratory infection was responsible for more than 100,000 deaths in children under five globally in 2019.

RSV is the predominant cause of acute lower respiratory infection in young children, and the updated estimates reveal that children six months and younger are particularly vulnerable.

Across the globe in 2019, there were 33 million RSV-associated acute lower respiratory infection episodes in children under five years old, leading to 3.6 million hospital admissions, 26,300 in-hospital deaths, and 101,400 RSV-attributable deaths overall. This accounts for one in 50 or 2% of annual deaths from any cause in this age range.

In 2019, 6.6 million under-6-month-olds had RSV-associated acute lower respiratory infections. RSV caused 1.4 million hospital admissions, 13,300 hospital deaths, and 45,700 overall deaths in this age range, or 2.1% of annual deaths. In low- and middle-income countries, 97% of RSV deaths in children under 5 occurred.

Early identification of cases in the community and referral for hospital admission of sick children (particularly those with low oxygen saturation in peripheral blood) and universal effective and affordable immunisation programmes will be vital in the future.

Pollution responsible for nine million deaths in 2019

STAR HEALTH DESK

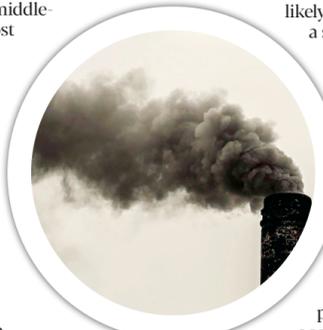
The new report updated in The Lancet Commission on Pollution and Health, published in The Lancet Planetary Health, states that although the number of deaths from pollution sources associated with extreme poverty (such as indoor air pollution and water pollution) has decreased, these reductions are offset by increased deaths attributable to industrial pollution (such as ambient air pollution and chemical pollution). Low- and middle-income countries suffer the most from pollution's health effects.

The 2017 Lancet Commission on Pollution and Health found that pollution was responsible for nine million deaths - 16% of all deaths globally. Of the nine million pollution-attributable deaths in 2019, air pollution (both household and ambient) remains responsible for the greatest deaths at 6.67 million worldwide. Water pollution was responsible for 1.36 million premature deaths. Lead contributed 900,000 premature deaths, followed by toxic occupational hazards at 870,000 deaths.

The decline in deaths from traditional pollution since 2000 (household air pollution from solid fuels and unsafe water) is most evident in Africa. This can be explained by water supply and sanitation improvements, antibiotics and treatments, and cleaner fuels.

Ambient air pollution was responsible for 4.5

million deaths in 2019, up from 4.2 million deaths in 2015 and 2.9 million in 2000. Deaths from hazardous chemical pollutants increased from 0.9 million in 2000 to 1.7 million in 2015 to 1.8 million in 2019, with 900,000 deaths attributable to lead pollution in 2019. Overall, deaths from modern pollution have increased by 66 per cent in the past two decades, from an estimated 3.8 million deaths in 2000 to 6.3 million deaths in 2019. Figures on deaths from chemical pollutants are likely to be underestimated as only a small number of manufactured chemicals in commerce have been adequately tested for safety or toxicity.



Excess deaths due to pollution have led to economic losses totalling US\$ 4.6 trillion in 2019, equating to 6-2% of global economic output. The study also notes pollution's deep inequity, with 92% of pollution-related deaths and the greatest burden of pollution's economic losses occurring in low-income and middle-income countries.

Climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss are linked. A globally supported, formal science-policy interface is needed to inform intervention, influence research, and guide funding. Pollution is usually viewed as a local issue addressed through sub-national and national regulation or regional policy in higher-income regions. But, pollution is a global problem, requiring a global response to address its causes, dispersal, and health impacts.



Tips for maintaining good health

A balanced diet, exercise, and relaxation are vital to optimal health. Here are some tips for staying healthy:

Eat healthy foods: Your body needs more than 40 distinct nutrients. Your diet should contain carbohydrates, protein, fruits, vegetables, and dairy.

Control your portion size: A medium-sized piece of fruit is one serving. A cup of pasta equates to 2 servings, and a pint of ice cream contains 4 servings.

Do not skip meals: Skipping meals can lead to out-of-control hunger and frequently over-indulging.

Drink water: Water helps not only to hydrate but also to aid in blood circulation, the removal of toxins from our bodies, and the regulation of our body temperatures. Avoid too much caffeine.

Exercise regularly: Get at least 30 minutes of activity every day. If the idea of sweating at the gym for hours on end doesn't sound appealing to you, then head outside for a game of ultimate Frisbee. Or, try going for a walk or a run. The important thing is that you get moving!

Maintain positive social health. A healthy lifestyle prevents diseases and keeps you away from chronic illnesses. Good habits strengthen your immune system and help you stay fit.

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Colaco storm flattens Kings

SPORTS REPORTER

Bashundhara Kings paid a heavy price for terrible defending in a 4-0 thrashing by ISL giants ATK Mohun Bagan in their second Group D fixture of the AFC Cup at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata on Saturday.

The Bangladesh Premier League champions, who started their campaign with a 1-0 win over Maziya on Wednesday, had enough chances to take control of the game, instead a number of ridiculous defensive errors culminated in their first defeat in Asia's second-tier club competition.

Liston Colaco scored a hat-trick before David Williams put the final nail in the coffin of Kings in the rain-affected encounter.

Kings forward Miguel Figueira had the first chance in the opening minute when he dispossessed Sandesh Jhingan in front of the box, but his effort missed the target by a few yards. Then Robson Robinho's freekick hit the far post



As Bangladesh prepare for their series-deciding Test against Sri Lanka, slated to begin from May 23 at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium in Mirpur, out-of-form Bangladesh Test skipper Mominul Haque was seen sweating it out at the nets in Mirpur yesterday before trying on some delicious street food.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

Headache arises due to lack of depth in spin department

SPORTS REPORTER

A longstanding fear regarding the Bangladesh national cricket team turned into reality as the Tigers found themselves in deep water due to a lack of depth in their existing pool of players.

As Bangladesh prepare for their second Test against Sri Lanka, starting from May 23 in Mirpur, the major concern for the Tigers remain their bowling department – more specifically, the spin department.

Off-spinner Nayeem Hasan, who was called into the squad for the Sri Lanka series as a replacement for injured Mehedi Hasan Miraz, another off-spinning all-rounder, was ruled out of the second Test after fracturing his finger on the fourth day of the first Test.

The news of Nayeem's injury came as a huge blow to the team management, who do not have another back-up off-spinner to fall back on.

The latest squad announced for the High-Performance unit, which serves to prepare players for the national team, has only four spinners, none of whom are off-spinners.

The pertinent question now is how the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB), which has time and again gloated about its

'rich pipeline', was unable to avert such a predicament despite all the warning signs over the years.

A meeting including national Test skipper Mominul Haque, national selectors and members of the team management was held at the BCB premises yesterday. Among other issues, the team combination for the Dhaka Test was discussed.

If history is anything to go by, the surface at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium is going to be conducive to spin unlike the Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram, the venue of the first Test, which ended in an expected draw.

As things stand, despite Bangladesh also missing two of their frontline pacers in Shoriful Islam and Taskin Ahmed due to injuries, the spin attack was the major concern.

If history is anything to go by, the surface at the Sher-e-Bangla National Stadium is going to be conducive to spin unlike the

Zahur Ahmed Chowdhury Stadium in Chattogram, the venue of the first Test, which ended in an expected draw.

Even in Chattogram, Bangladesh depended heavily on spinners to bowl the bulk of the overs. And even on a docile pitch, the likes of Nayeem, Taijul Islam and Shakib Al Hasan accounted for 15 of the 16 wickets that the Tigers were able to scalp.

When it comes to dependency on spinners, the second and the series-deciding Test in Dhaka will definitely see more of it from both sides. Sri Lanka have already made clear their intention to play three frontline spinners.

Even if Bangladesh had frontline pacers Taskin and Shoriful available, their involvement would have been minimal considering the trend of Mirpur surface that suggests more wear and tear with each passing day.

It is clear that the team that wins the toss and has a more productive spin attack will have a significant edge in the Dhaka Test. Will Bangladesh play batting all-rounder Mosaddek Hossain to make up for their dearth in the spin department? If they do, how much variation and support will the part-timer be able to bring in for the side? The BCB has a lot to ponder over the next few days.

Can City hold on in final-day fracas?

AFP, Manchester

Manchester City have the destiny of the Premier League title in their hands heading into Sunday's final day showdown, with the defending champions holding a slender one-point lead over quadruple-chasing Liverpool.

Pep Guardiola's men will claim a fourth English title in five years of a dominant era for Abu Dhabi-backed City with victory over Aston Villa.

"It's difficult to control your emotions when you know what you are playing for," said City manager Guardiola. "The players are human beings but it's football, when you think that it is over it is not over."

City know that to their cost, having been minutes away from the Champions League final only to blow a two-goal lead in their semi-final, second leg against Real Madrid earlier this month.

"The importance is unnecessary to tell them," added Guardiola. "They know it, they feel it." Liverpool will instead face Real in next weekend's battle to be crowned champions of Europe in Paris as they remain in contention for an unprecedented haul of four major trophies in the one season.

Jurgen Klopp's men have already lifted the League Cup and FA Cup.

"Imagine somebody tells you before the season you're going to be in all three cup finals and want to fight for the league," said Liverpool manager Klopp. "The boys did it – fed by the people here in the building, by our supporters."

Where to celebrate Milan's only concern

AFP, Milan

Europe's most dramatic title race will finally reach its climax on Sunday when AC Milan take the field at Sassuolo ready to end an 11-year Scudetto drought and announce their return to the top table.

Stefano Pioli's side are two points ahead of reigning champions Inter Milan and only need to draw to claim their first league crown since 2011, and they look almost guaranteed to do so after a hugely impressive run-in.

Consecutive wins over tricky opponents Lazio, Fiorentina and Verona were followed up by last weekend's 2-0 home victory over Atalanta, after which a packed San Siro celebrated as though the title was already theirs.

Pioli has an almost full squad to pick from against a team which beat Milan 3-1 earlier in the season and will have the backing of an estimated 18,000 fans at the Mapei Stadium in Reggio Emilia for a title party which will then spill back into Milan.

The problem is where they will be able to celebrate. Milan's iconic Piazza del Duomo is where fans gather for triumphs but on Saturday night the square hosts a concert and a huge stage has been erected which cannot be completely taken down before the end of Sunday's matches.

As of Thursday afternoon there was still no confirmed plan from the city's public order bodies of when and where to hold celebrations, as the only other viable location is the San Siro and that will be where over 70,000 Inter fans will party should Milan fail at the last.

Will Alcaraz and Swiatek steal the show?

AGENCIES

Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal, with 41 Grand Slam titles between them, will attempt to derail the growing hype surrounding teenage sensation Carlos Alcaraz at the French Open from Sunday.

All three have been placed in the top-half of the draw, meaning only one will make the Roland Garros final.

Defending champion Djokovic is seeded to face 13-time winner Nadal in the quarter-finals. Alcaraz is a potential semi-final opponent.

Djokovic, who turns 35 on Sunday, captured a second French Open title in 2021.

Djokovic has played only five tournaments in 2022 but arrives in Paris buoyed by a sixth Italian Open title, becoming just the fifth man to win 1,000 career matches in the process.

It was his 38th Masters triumph, two more than Nadal at the top of the all-time list.

Djokovic starts his French Open against 94th-ranked Yoshihito Nishioka of Japan.

Nadal began the year with a 20-match winning run, capturing a second Australian Open title to claim a record 21st Grand Slam and move ahead of Djokovic and Roger Federer.

The 35-year-old's record at the French Open stands at a staggering 105 wins and just three losses since his 2005 title-winning debut.

Nadal takes on Australia's Jordan



Thompson in the first round.

Alcaraz, just 19, has rocketed to six in the world on the back of four titles – three on clay – in 2022.

He won a second Masters title in Madrid, sweeping Nadal, Djokovic and Zverev on the way.

Alcaraz, who has 28 wins and just three

defeats this year, opens his campaign on Sunday against Argentine lucky loser Juan Ignacio Londero, ranked at 141 but who made the last 16 in 2019.

Russian world number two Daniil Medvedev, who gave up a two-sets lead to lose to Nadal in the Australian Open final, only returned to action in Geneva this week after undergoing a hernia operation.

The US Open champion has 13 titles to his name but has yet to master the draining demands of clay.

At Roland Garros, he was winless in his first four visits before managing to stop the rot with a quarter-final run in 2021.

Greek world number four Tsitsipas has enjoyed a solid clay season.

He defended his Monte Carlo title before making the last-eight in Barcelona, semi-finals in Madrid and final in Rome.

Meanwhile, Iga Swiatek is the undeniable favourite for a second French Open title after winning her past five tournaments but says she won't be "heartbroken" if her 28-match unbeaten run comes to an end at Roland Garros.

Since the shock retirement of world number one Ashleigh Barty, the 20-year-old Swiatek has swept aside all-comers and transformed herself into the player to beat in women's tennis.

The Pole hasn't lost since falling to another former Roland Garros champion, Jelena Ostapenko, in Dubai in February. Her winning streak is the longest on the WTA



"What happened in Rome is something that happened very often in my practices. But yeah, I was suffering after that for a couple of days, but I feel better. That's why I'm here."

Rafael Nadal



"I feel I am always in contention to fight for any Grand Slam trophy. Reliving the memories from last year is something that obviously gives me goose bumps and motivation to try to replicate that."

Novak Djokovic

tour since Serena Williams won 34 matches in a row in 2013.

Swiatek became only the second player to win four WTA 1000 titles in a season after defending her Rome crown last week.

Williams, who turns 41 in September, has not played since retiring in the first round at Wimbledon last year, and her long-time coach Patrick Mouratoglou is now working with two-time Grand Slam champion Simona Halep, who won her first major in Paris in 2018.



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5 dead as nor'wester sweeps thru several dists

STAR REPORT

At least five people were killed and hundreds of earthen houses damaged as the Nor'wester swept over the country yesterday morning.

At least a thousand trees were also uprooted during the storm.

In Mymensingh city's Chinamou area, a rickshaw van-puller and his passenger were electrocuted when a live electric wire snapped and fell on them.

They died on their way to Mymensingh city around 6:00am, said Shah Kamal Akanda, officer-in-charge of Kotwali Police Station.

The victims were identified as van-puller Monto Mia, 36, of Char

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5



A family takes temporary shelter in a boat in the daytime as their house lies inundated in floodwater at Islampur union in Sylhet's Companyganj upazila. The photo was taken yesterday.

PHOTO: SHEIKH NASTR

FLOODS IN NORTHEAST Crops damaged, fish farms washed away

DWOHA CHOWDHURY and MINTU DESHWARA

With rivers in Sylhet and Sunamganj still flowing above the danger level, fisheries and crop farms have been bearing the brunt.

Thousands of fish farmers have lost their fish, while hundreds of farmers lost their crops.

At least 8,772 fisheries, including ponds and hatcheries, have been washed away, while 2,534 hectares of Boro are also under water.

On top of these losses, 1,674 hectares of Aush were completely damaged, along with 1,541 hectares of vegetables and 75 hectares of peanuts.

Monowara Begum of Azampur village in Dowarabzar upazila in Sunamganj said, "I spent Tk 20,000 on peanut farming after taking a loan from an NGO. Now all the peanuts are damaged in the floods and I don't know how to repay the loan."

For Shafiqul Islam in Shaktiarkhola of Sunamganj's Bishwambarpur upazila, it's a double blow. "My Boro harvest has been damaged in the floods, while the fish in my pond has washed away. Now I have nothing left."

In Sylhet district, 8,322 fisheries are currently submerged in 11 upazilas. The fish farmers are fearing

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

MONEY LAUNDERED TO US, CANADA FBI to help ACC bring it back

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The US Federal Bureau of Investigation will help the Anti-Corruption Commission of Bangladesh bring back the money laundered to the USA and Canada.

FBI officials said this at a three-day training organised by the US Embassy in Dhaka to improve the skills of the ACC investigators for dealing with money laundering.

The training session was titled "Protecting Public Integrity: Investigating and Prosecuting Complex Corruption Cases".

Quoting the trainers, an ACC official who participated in the training, said, "They told us that the ACC can form a joint investigation team with the FBI to deal with complicated graft cases.

In such case, the FBI will help recover and freeze money laundered to the USA and Canada or sent through illegal channels. It will also send related documents to the ACC," he told The Daily Star.

The official said the FBI would send information from the USA quickly.

A total of 20 ACC investigators took part in the training that began on May 19.

FBI's supervisory special agents John Pae and Shannon Bieniek, Principal Assistant Deputy Chief of the fraud section of the Department of Justice Mark Cipolletti, trial attorneys of the Office of International Affairs of Criminal Division of Department of Justice Terry Eaton and Fred Sheffield and officer of National Crime Agency of IACCC Simon Leigh conducted the training.

... the FBI will help recover and freeze money laundered to the USA and Canada or sent through illegal channels.

Only talks can end war

Says Ukraine; Russia cuts gas supply to Finland over payment row; Moscow declares victory in Mariupol

AFP, Kyiv

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelensky yesterday warned that only a diplomatic breakthrough rather than an outright military victory could end Russia's war on his country, as Moscow cut gas supplies to Finland.

"There are things that can only be reached at the negotiating table," Zelensky said, just as Russia claimed its long-range missiles had destroyed a shipment of Western arms destined for Ukraine's troops.

After just over 12 weeks of fierce fighting, Ukrainian forces have halted Russian attempts to seize Kyiv and the northern city of Kharkiv, but are under renewed and intense pressure in the eastern Donbas region.

Moscow's army have flattened and seized the southeastern port city of Mariupol and subjected Ukrainian troops and towns in the east to a remorseless ground and artillery attack.

Zelensky's Western allies have shipped modern weaponry to his forces and imposed sweeping sanctions on the Russian economy and President Vladimir Putin's inner circle.

But the Kremlin has responded by disrupting

European energy supplies, and yesterday cut off gas shipments to Finland, which angered Moscow by applying to join the Nato alliance.

Against this backdrop, Zelensky told Ukrainian television the war would end "through diplomacy".

The conflict, he warned, "will be bloody, there will be fighting

Finland and neighbouring Sweden this week broke their historical military non-alignment and applied to join Nato, after public support for the alliance soared following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

but will only definitively end through diplomacy" -- promising only that the result would be "fair" for Ukraine.

"Discussions between Ukraine and Russia will decidedly take place. Under what format I don't know -- with intermediaries, without them, in a broader group, at presidential level," he said.

In order to side-step financial sanctions and force European energy clients to prop up his central bank, Putin has demanded that importers from "unfriendly countries" pay for gas in rubles.

Russian energy giant Gazprom said it had halted supplies to neighbouring Finland as it had not received ruble payments from Finland's state-owned energy company Gasum by the end of Friday.

Gasum supplied 1.49 billion cubic metres of natural gas to Finland in 2021, about two thirds of the country's gas consumption but only eight percent of its total energy use.

Gasum said it would make up for the shortfall from other sources, through the Balticconnector pipeline, which links Finland to Estonia, a fellow European Union member.

Moscow cut off gas to Poland and Bulgaria last month in a move the European Union described as "blackmail", but importers in some other EU countries more dependent on Russian gas plan to open ruble accounts with Gazprom's bank.

Finland and neighbouring Sweden this week broke their

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

9 Bangladeshis jailed for gang rape in India Delhi hands over victim to Bangladesh authorities

STAR REPORT

A special court in India's Bengaluru city has convicted nine Bangladeshis and punished them with sentences ranging from five years to life imprisonment in connection with the gang-rape of a Bangladeshi woman in May last year.

In a judgement pronounced yesterday, the court sentenced Chand Miya, Mohammed Rifakdul Islam, Mohammed Al Amin Hossain, Rakibul Islam, Mohammed Babu Sheikh, Mohammed Dalim and Azim Hossain to rigorous imprisonment for life, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

Among the other convicts, Taniya Khan was sentenced to 20 years in prison while Mohammed Jamal to five years.

Two other Bangladeshi nationals were convicted of offences under the Foreigners Act and sentenced to nine months of simple imprisonment.

Eleven, out of the 12 arrested and charge-sheeted, as well as the victim, were Bangladeshi nationals who had entered India and lived in Bengaluru illegally. And another arrestee is an Indian who was acquitted as he turned into an approver in the case.

The charge sheet in the case was filed within 28 days of the crime and the trial was completed in three months.

The incident came to light after a video of the

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1

Australia ousts Conservatives

Anthony Albanese set to be PM; Morrison concedes defeat, to quit as Liberal Party leader

REUTERS, Sydney

Australia's Labor Party was set to end almost a decade of conservative rule as the government was swept away in yesterday's election by a wave of support for candidates who campaigned for more action on climate change and may hold the balance of power.

Partial results showed that while Labor had made small gains, Prime Minister Scott Morrison's Liberal-National coalition had been punished by voters in Western Australia and affluent urban seats in particular.

The Greens and a group of so-called "teal independents", who campaigned on policies of gender equality and tackling climate change, put on a strong showing, tapping voter anger over inaction on the environment after some of the worst floods and fires to hit Australia.

"Tonight, I have spoken to the leader of the opposition and the incoming prime minister, Anthony Albanese. And I've congratulated him on his election victory this evening," said Morrison.

Albanese, speaking as he headed to his party

SEE PAGE 7 COL 1



The construction work of a footbridge over Foujdarhat-Bayezid Link Road remains unfinished for a long time as Chattogram Development Authority kept its height less than what mentioned in the Railways Act.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

SEE PAGE 2 COL 3

One held for harassing woman over 'outfit'

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Brahmanbaria

Police on Friday arrested a man for sexually and verbally harassing a young woman over how she was dressed at the Narsingdi Railway Station on Wednesday.

Ferdous Ahammed, officer-in-charge of Bhairab railway police, said Ismail Hossain, 38, of Narsingdi Sadar upazila, was arrested in Narsingdi town around 9:00pm and has since then been in their custody.

Several government departments have come forward to investigate the incident after a video of it went viral on social media.

ATM Musa, station master of Narsingdi railway, told The Daily Star that a mobile court conducted a drive in this regard on Friday afternoon, and police