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STAFF CORRESPONDENT

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The event was preceded by a government decision, it said.

“The commission is surprised by this decision of the government,” read the statement.

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PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

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REUTERS, Kyiv

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The Russian forces were likely to try to cross the river in coming days in the next phase of the Kremlin's Donbas offensive, the British defence ministry said in its daily intelligence report yesterday.

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Russian artillery was also shelling the Lysychansk-Bakhmut road, which Russia needs to take to close a pincer movement and encircle Ukrainian forces.

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The governor of Luhansk, which along with Donetsk makes up the Donbas, said on Friday Russian troops had already entered Severodonetsk. Ukrainian troops may have to retreat from the city to avoid capture, governor Serhiy Gaidai said.

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Analysts at the Washington-based Institute for the Study of War said that while Russian forces had begun direct assaults on built-up areas of Severodonetsk, they were likely to struggle to take ground in the city itself.

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“My heart was racing the entire time,” Pinky told this correspondent later.

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Locals and police said Kabir along with his two friends entered India on May 23. Khasi people opened fire on them that day, leaving Kabir hit by bullets. However, his friends managed to return to Bangladesh.

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Health officials in Tangail

shut down three healthcare organisations and fined three others yesterday, our correspondent reports.

According to the Tangail Civil Surgeon Office, a total of 181 out of around 300 private clinics and hospitals in the district had no approval.

As per the Medical Practice and Private Clinics and Laboratories (Regulation) Ordinance, 1982, private healthcare service providers must have licence from the DGHS.

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FROM PAGE 1

The facilities include Central Diagnostic Center Padma Clinic, Prime Diagnostic Center, Tamanna Digital Diagnostic Center, Medina Eye Hospital, Eye Clinic and Phaco Center, and Health Care Diagnostic and Consultation Center.

According to the Natore Civil Surgeon Office, there are around 40 unauthorised private healthcare facilities out of 200 in the district.

HealthofficialsinTangail

shut down three healthcare organisations and fined three others yesterday, our correspondent reports.

According to the Tangail Civil Surgeon Office, a total of 181 out of around 300 private clinics and hospitals in the district had no approval.

As per the Medical Practice and Private Clinics and Laboratories (Regulation) Ordinance, 1982, private healthcare service providers must have licence from the DGHS.

A fitting farewell

People pay last respects to Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

People from all walks of life gave an apt farewell to columnist Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury, best known for penning the immortal song “Amar Bhaier Rokte Rangano”, before his burial yesterday.

In 1952, the adolescent Gaffar was heartbroken by the death of Language Movement hero Rafiq Uddin Ahmed, and wrote the iconic lyrics to honour the movement’s martyrs.

So, fittingly, everyone said goodbye to Gaffar at Central Shaheed Minar, the monument built in memory of the Language Movement martyrs.

The body of Gaffar, who died on May 19 in London, was brought to Bangladesh yesterday morning. Many paid their last respects by joining janazas at Jatiya Press Club and Dhaka University Central Mosque in the afternoon.

He was buried at Mirpur’s Martyred Intellectuals’ Graveyard, beside his wife’s grave.

He was given a guard of honour by Dhaka district administration at Central Shaheed Minar.

On behalf of the president, his military secretary Maj Gen SM Salahuddin Islam, and on behalf of the PM, her military secretary Brig Gen Kabir Ahmed paid homage.

Speaker Shirin Sharmin Chaudhury paid respects on behalf of the parliament.

Led by Awami League general secretary Obaidul Quader, the party’s

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1



After the body of Abdul Gaffar Chowdhury was taken to Central Shaheed Minar yesterday, for everyone to pay their last respects, Dhaka district administration gave him a guard of honour. The premises was echoing with the tales of Gaffar, who penned the immortal song “Amar Bhaier Rokte Rangano Ekushey February”. The noted columnist was laid to rest at Mirpur’s Martyred Intellectuals’ Graveyard.

PHOTO: STAR

‘Those in power want police to do their bidding’
Says ex-IGP Shahidul Hoque at launch event of his book

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Former inspector general of police (IGP) AKM Shahidul Hoque yesterday said those in power always want police to do their bidding. And so, it is difficult to face these challenges and at the same time perform duties properly.

“In the context of Bangladesh, political forces and bureaucracy never want changes in police. The ruling party wants police to do what they say; the MPs want OCs [officers-in-charge] to do their bidding,” Shahidul said at a programme organised to launch his new book.

“It is very difficult to overcome these challenges and obstacles,” he said at the event, in which

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

A boost for battered tourism

3-day int’l tourism fair starts Thursday, participated by 50 orgs from home, abroad

RASHIDUL HASAN

With things slowly getting back to normal, airlines, tourism and hospitality sectors are expected to turn around this year, following immense loss due to the pandemic.

To kick-start that change, the 17th edition of Dhaka Travel Mart will begin on Thursday.

The three-day international tourism fair will take place at Pan Pacific Sonargaon Dhaka.

Kazi Wahidul Alam, editor of travel and tourism publication The Bangladesh Monitor, shared the

information at a press conference at a city hotel yesterday.

A total of about 50 organisations – representing airlines, tour operators, hotels, resorts, travel agencies, healthcare providers – from home and abroad are taking part in the fair, said Wahidul.

With a view to accelerate the recovery of the travel and tourism sector, The Bangladesh Monitor will organise the fair.

The adverse effects of Covid-19 were profound in Bangladesh’s hospitality and tourism sector, as it

SEE PAGE 4 COL 6

BNP trying to create anarchy: Quader

BSS, Dhaka

Awami League General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said BNP is making ill attempts to create a chaotic situation in the country in the name of mass movement.

Quader, also road transport and bridges minister, said this at a press conference at his official residence in Dhaka.

He said people are so pleased with the development and achievement that they don’t respond to BNP’s repeated calls for movement in the last 13 years.

“I believe they will do the same in future too. So, BNP’s desire for movement will turn into despair soon,” he observed.

In response to BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir’s comment that movement has spread all over the country, Quader said, “Through this comment we are noticing their evil attempts to create a bad situation in the country.”

Govt behind attacks on JCD members
Alleges Khandaker Mosharraf

UNB, Dhaka

BNP senior leader Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain yesterday alleged that the attacks on the leaders and activists of JCD were carried out by BCL in Dhaka University area at the behest of the government.

The videos containing the attacks on peaceful processions of JCD and repression on female JCD leaders by the goons of Chhatra League and Jubo League have gone viral, he said. “We would like to say the perpetrators indulged in such misdeeds at the behest of the highest leader of Awami League and the highest position of the government,” he said.

Speaking at a rally, the BNP leader also strongly condemned the attacks. Jubo Dal arranged the rally in front of Jatiya Press Club.

PRAYER
TIMING
MAY 29



	Fazr	Zohr	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
Azan	4-05	12-45	5-00	6-43	8-05
Jamaat	4-40	1-15	5-15	6-47	8-35

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION



A performance art consisting of 70 women across all generations and professions, titled “Himmati Mai”, was held on the road beside Shilpakala Academy yesterday. Performers took to the streets for an hour, jointly hitting the bamboo they were carrying in expression of anger, protesting various forms of violence against women. Himmati Mai is the Bangla translation of the play “Mother Courage and Her Children” written by German dramatist and poet Bertolt Brecht.

PHOTO: STAR

DHAKA NAGAR JADUGHAR

A museum with no visitors

DIPAN NANDY

Even on a good day, five to 10 people visit Dhaka Nagar Jadughar, the one inside Nagar Bhaban of Dhaka South City Corporation (DSCC). On some days, not even a single visitor can be seen on the premises.

Visitors complain that the museum, maintained by three staffers, does not have enough publicity as well as an adequate collection, hence the establishment’s miserable state.

Despite the situation, the museum’s trustee board did not see any measures to develop the place, even after making repeated proposals to the mayor and officials since 1996.

THE HISTORY

Dhaka Nagar Jadughar was first opened on June 20, 1986, in a



house on Panch Bhai Lane, Old Dhaka. Its main initiator was historian Muntasir Mamoon; others involved in the endeavour were historian Sirajul Islam, city expert Nazrul Islam, architect Rabiul Hussain and artist Hashem Khan.

The museum was inaugurated on July 20, 1996, by Sheikh Hasina, then prime minister. From that day, Dhaka City Corporation got the responsibility to maintain the museum. Currently, it is under the jurisdiction of DSCC.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

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Riders on the storm!

A peek into the lives of men performing inside ‘well of death’

MOSTOFA SABUB

A well-like structure, inside which a rider braces himself for what’s about to come. He starts his bike and goes around circling the well. Suddenly, he gains speed and goes higher up the structure. However, the show doesn’t end here.

Often times, he’s seen with his hands off the vehicle, sometimes even standing on it, leaving the spectators breathless and in awe.

In Bangladesh, this is a common show that is presented on regional fairs organised on different occasions. This popular show has gathered many names over the years -- metrodome, velodrome, bike stunts, etc. But the most popular and perhaps most dramatic one would be ‘Mrittu Koop’, which translates to the well of death.

The process consists of a silo- or barrel-shaped wooden cylinder, typically ranging from 20 to 30 feet in diameter and made of planks, inside which motorcyclists, drive along the vertical wall for the stunts.

Among the very few groups in the country which can

The process consists of a silo- or barrel-shaped wooden cylinder, typically ranging from 20 to 30 feet in diameter and made of planks, inside which motorcyclists, drive along the vertical wall for the stunts.

perform the manoeuvres, ‘Ma Babar Doa’ is one such group, hailing from Bogura. This correspondent came across their performance during a recent visit to ‘Bogura Taat Bostro o Kutir Shilpa Panno Mela’, arranged by different organisations, including the district administration.

Md Sirajul Islam Panna (48) from Bogura’s Shibganj upazila is the group’s leader. He has been performing for 22 years.

According to Siraj, at one point, there were around 15-20 groups in the country which performed such feats. However, many wrapped up their activities during the pandemic, as no fairs were being arranged to contain the spread of coronavirus.

“I fell in love with this activity some 25 years ago, when I first saw it in Rajshahi. I know it was risky, but the adventure attracted me. I started learning the stunts and later formed a group to perform,” Siraj said.

“Initially we used to perform motorcycle stunts only. We added small cars to the routine some 10 years ago. Now, I have 12-15 people in my team, including two motorcyclists,” he added.

Abu Bokkor Siddik (27), Siraj’s nephew, said, “My parents passed away when I was very young. I had nowhere else to go, so uncle Siraj took me in. He trained me, and now I’m part of the team.”

When asked about the risks, he said, “In my 15-year career as a stuntman, I’ve never faced a serious accident. I fell twice or thrice from the track but didn’t get any serious injuries.”

Siraj now has other disciples too. One of them is 20-year-old Md Sohanur Rahman.

“I’m staying with Siraj bhai to learn the stunts. I get a little remuneration, but the thrill is what keeps me going,” said Sohan.

“We’ve performed in almost all the districts. But the charm has been lost,” said Siraj.

“During the pandemic, I incurred a loss of Tk 8-10 lakh. I pay Tk 80,000 to 1 lakh in total to all the staffers per month,” he added.

The group also faces extortion, bringing a drastic decrease to their income per show.

“When we travel to rural areas, local goons ask for a toll of Tk 500-1,000 each day. We have to pay the organisers 25 percent of the total earnings as well,” explained Siraj.

“But everything feels worth the trouble when people applaud and bless us after the show,” said Siraj, also a father of a 19-month-old baby boy, hoping that his son will follow in his footsteps.



A motorcyclist shows off his skills inside a barrel-shaped, wooden structure, riding on its vertical walls. This dramatic stunt show, popularly known as “Mrittu Koop” used to be a common event in regional fairs. However, due to the absence of fairs amid the pandemic, many had to shift professions to survive. At present, Bogura’s “Ma-Babar Doa” is one of the very few groups that still actively performs such stunts.

PHOTO: STAR

‘Don’t turn JU into a concrete jungle’

Students, teachers against constructing new buildings without central masterplan

SHEIKH TAJUL ISLAM TAJ

Jahangirnagar University (JU) is soon going to inaugurate construction works for 14 new establishments on the campus, under a Tk 1,445 crore mega project.

However, since the university has no definite or central master plan, JU takes up projects whenever a new budget is allocated. And so, stakeholders of the campus criticised the latest step, saying that the institution is not thinking long term and is building and demolishing structures without proper planning. Therefore, a significant part of money gets wasted.

The 14 establishments include library, administrative building, sports complex, lecture theatre/exam hall, guest house, playgrounds, living quarters. Besides, construction work for Shaheed Rafiq-Jabbar Hall would be completed for 152 students.

The cabinet committee on government purchase approved purchase orders for a 10-storey administrative building (around Tk 138 crore), six-storey library (around Tk 101 crore), and three-storey sports complex (around Tk 119 crore), said Md Nasir Uddin, director of planning and development at JU.

Mentionable, JU already has two administrative buildings, and authorities are planning to demolish the existing library to make the new one, a decision that many are against.

Besides, purchase orders for a six-storey lecture theatre (around Tk 64 crore), which will also be used as an exam hall, and a 10-storey guest house (around Tk 37 crore) for post-graduate researchers have been approved by the education minister, he informed.

Purchase orders for other establishments have been approved by JU’s vice chancellor as the head of Procuring Entity, Nasir said. “The work will start soon.”

Prof Rayhan Rhyne, a faculty member and convenor of the campaign “JU against Corruption”, said, “Jahangirnagar is becoming a

concrete jungle day by day, as the university has no definite central master plan. Our demand is to save Jahangirnagar from such unplanned activities.”

“In fact, this project has been prepared by an architect, not an urban planner. Such projects should be prepared by the country’s best planners. We need specialists in this sector, who know what’s best and will do the best for us,” he said.

“No such planner was allowed to assist in this development project. Plans were made with the help of only architects, which is an unwise decision,” he added.

“We are not against development. We are against unplanned development and corruption. What if a big budget is allocated again? Will authorities then demolish these new buildings too?” he questioned.

“We are not against development. We are against unplanned development and corruption. What if a big budget is allocated again? Will authorities then demolish these new buildings too?”

Prof Rayhan Rhyne

Rakibul Rony, president of JU Chhatra Union, said, “We don’t understand the validity of constructing a new administrative building, despite already having two.”

Akhtaruzzaman Sohel, president of JU Chhatra League, proposed not to demolish the existing library from the very beginning, rather do so after ensuring a part of the new library is already prepared.

Contacted, JU VC Prof Nurul Alam said, “Until all stakeholders are satisfied, we will continue to sit with them to discuss what we can modify. A new probe committee will be formed to monitor the project work.” About another administrative building, he said, “Since we have separate buildings for administrative works, a new building is required to include all offices in one building.”

Remembering Enamul Haque



SHAH ALAM SHAZU

Today would have been the 79th birthday of renowned actor, playwright, academician and Ekushey Padak awardee Dr Enamul Haque. This is the first time his family and friends are commemorating the day without him. He passed away on October 11, last year.

On his birth anniversary, we spoke to his loved ones and colleagues from the entertainment industry to know about their fond memories with him.

I miss laughing with him: Lucky Enam

I miss him every moment of my life. I walk across his writing table, sit on his chair and even browse through his stationaries, but I can’t laugh with him, can’t share my sorrows or meals with him. I miss laughing with him. He was my companion for life. We used to surprise him on his birthday every year but this time, no one will be waiting for us to walk through the door with cakes, balloons, and gifts.

He was a true gentleman: Abul Hayat

Enamul Haque was a true gentleman. He was well-known for his kind and humble nature. I met this man with a golden heart before the country’s independence was declared. We used to work together in theatre and remained good friends since then.

I have lots of fond memories with him. I never saw him lose his temper or be rude to anyone ever. We started our own theatre troupe after the Liberation War. This is the first time he won’t be around on his birthday. May he rest in peace.

Enamul Haque was a true patriot: Asaduzzaman Noor

Enamul Haque was emerged in the essence of our Liberation War. He was a believer in humanism,

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4

Litchi galore in Ishwardi

AHMED HUMAYUN KABIR TOPU, Pabna

Sweet succulent flesh covered in a prickly red exterior -- litchis, the popular summer fruit have adorned the trees in Pabna’s Ishwardi.

Litchi farmers are likely to get record production this year, with a yield amounting to Tk 500 crore, sources said. Although litchi prices are less than previous year, that’s no issue to farmers as they’re expected to get double their usual production.

“Along with the traditional breed, we’re also cultivating a hybrid variety called as Bombay litchi (China-3), which has gained popularity among both growers and customers,” said Dr Md Saiful Alom, deputy director of Pabna Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE).

A total of 4,731-hectare land brought under litchi cultivation in the district this year is expecting to get 42,579 tonnes of litchi, he said. “We have the production target of 47,000 tonnes this year but the harvesting progress shows that the litchi output will reach more than 50,000 tonnes,” he said.

Sonju Pramanik, a litchi farmer said, “Last year I got 7,000-8,000 litchis from each tree. This year I’m getting 15,000 litchis from each tree. This is the highest ever production in the last few years.”



Ishwardi’s litchi farmers hard at work, sorting litchis in crates and shipping them to various wholesale markets of the region.

PHOTO: STAR

“Last year each 1,000 litchis was sold for Tk 3,000-3,200. This year I’m selling them at Tk 2,200-2,300, but that isn’t an issue due to bumper production,” he added.

“Litchi is the main cash crop for us. When harvesting begins, we invite our relatives for

getting a taste. It turns into a festival,” said Md Jamal Hossain, a litchi grower.

“Litchis loaded in over 150 trucks are supplied across the country from five to six wholesale markets in Ishwardi,” said another litchi grower Nayeb Ali.

Include them in govt census

Say speakers on under-represented minorities

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Various under-represented minorities of the country have been facing discrimination and marginalisation. Due to lack of government census data on them and proper recognition, these people, most of whom are ultra-poor, are now in crisis.

Speakers expressed this concern yesterday in the launching ceremony of Brattayan Resource Centre (BRC), a centre dedicated to conduct research on exclusion and marginalisation challenges in Bangladesh.

On the same day, BRC and Society for Environment and Human Development (SEHD) published 11 books and monographs on Bangladesh’s marginalised communities.

Phillip Gain, director of SEHD, said, “Monthly salary of a cleaner from the Harijan community is only Tk 550 in Sreemangal municipality. They are

not even allowed to dine in the nearby restaurants.”

Gain said the government does not have reliable data on marginalised groups.

Eminent economist Prof Wahiduddin Mahmud said compared to neighbouring countries, income inequality is comparatively low in Bangladesh. However, this fact is not applicable for minorities.

“Even our development policies and plans do not include these communities. As a result, sometimes what we consider as development projects, turn out to be a threat to their survival,” he said.

Lilly Nicholls, high commissioner of Canada to Bangladesh; Prof Tanzimuddin Khan of international relations department at DU; Dr Hossain Zillur Rahman, executive chairperson, Power and Participation Research Centre; activist Khushi Kabir; and Jeremy Opritesco, deputy head of diplomatic mission, EU Delegation, were also present.



(From Left) Anjan Chowdhury, Runa Laila, Ferdausi Rahman, Sabina Yasmin and Asaduzzaman Noor.



Afran Nisho won Best Actor (Television).



Mehazabien Chowdhury was awarded as Best Actress (Television).

Meril-Prothom Alo Awards 2021

A dazzling celebration of the best in showbiz

Runa Laila and Sabina Yasmin were visibly moved, when it was time to receive their Lifetime Achievement honours. “Why are you giving me the Lifetime Achievement Award, my life is just starting,” jested Runa Laila.



Siam Ahmed won Best Actor (Popular Choice) for his role in “Mridha Banam Mridha”

SADI MOHAMMAD SHAHNEWAZ

The image of legendary artistes Runa Laila and Sabina Yasmin being given Lifetime Achievement Awards by an emotional Ferdausi Rahman -- will be immortalised as one of the most meaningful, significant and iconic moments in the history of the Meril-Prothom Alo Awards.

The 23rd iteration of the prestigious award function was held at the Bangabandhu International Conference Centre's (BICC) Hall of Fame, on Friday night.

As stars poured in donning unique attires, the event became a melting pot of the best that our showbiz world has to offer -- actors, directors, musicians, cinematographers and journalists made it a unique entertainment hub, that went sorely missing for two years due to the pandemic.

The show opened with a heartfelt speech by Matiur Rahman, Editor of The Daily Prothom Alo, followed by a vote of thanks by the Managing Director of Square Toiletries, Anjan Chowdhury.

A minute of silence was observed for Aly Zaker, Sarah Begum Kabori, and all other stars that we lost, during the two-year hiatus of the programme.

The event, hosted by Riaz, Ferdous and Nusraat Faria, progressed with mesmerising performances, one after another. A mashup of timeless songs originally sung by the Lifetime Achievement Awardees were



For ‘Alatchakra’, Jaya Ahsan won Best Actress (Popular Choice).

soulfully voiced by Dilshad Nahar Kona and Sanzida Mahmood Nandita. Animes Roy and Pantha Kanai rocked the stage with Coke Studio Bangla's “Nasek Nasek”, on which Siam Ahmed and Bidya Sinha Mim performed a brilliant choreography.

Runa Laila and Sabina Yasmin were visibly moved, when it was time to receive their Lifetime Achievement honours. “Why are you giving me the Lifetime Achievement Award, my life is just starting,” jested Runa Laila. Eminent actor Asaduzzaman Noor adorned the awardees with ceremonial scarfs. As the legends serenaded the audience, they proved that they had not missed a beat. “Thank you Meril-Prothom Alo for this honour. The fact

that I get to receive it from Ferdausi *apa* makes it even better,” said Sabina Yasmin.

The award function in itself was a jubilant celebration of new and old, with the likes of Jaya Ahsan and Siam Ahmed establishing their dominance with their wins as best actors respectively (Popular Choice) -- and the stars of television and OTT, including Mehazabien Chowdhury, Afran Nisho, Tasnia Farin, Manoj Pramanik leaving a mark, as they were awarded for their powerful on-screen performances.

After becoming a sensation in the Cannes Film Festival last year, “Rehana Maryam Noor” bagged two awards for Best Actress (Badhon) and Best Film in the Critics' Choice category. OTT sensation “Mohanagar” director Ashfaq Nipun was also awarded in this category. Fazlur Rahman Babu added to his legacy, as he won Best Actor (Critic) for his role in “Khanchar Bheto Ochin Pakhi”. N Rashed Chowdhury was rewarded as Best Director for “Chandrabati Kotha”.

Talented rising musicians Abanti Sithi and Tanveer Evan made their presence felt, as they won awards for best singers in the Popular Choice category.

Performances continued to woo the audience, as Afran Nisho, Mehazabien, Sabila Nur and Tanjin Tisha performed in an energetic medley of songs, proving to the film fraternity that the small screen could go toe-to-toe with them when it comes to panache.

An inspired and content audience walked out of BICC on Friday -- getting to watch, interact with and even take selfies with their favourite stars -- as the industry looks to have bounced back from the dire times of the pandemic.

READ THE ONLINE VERSION FOR THE FULL ARTICLE AND LIST OF WINNERS.

Meet Sriya Lenka, the first Indian K-pop star

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

18-year-old Sriya Lenka has made history by joining South Korean group, Blackswan. She, along with new member Gabi Dalcin from Brazil, after the duo trained for months under the group's label DR Music.

After the exit of Hyeme in 2020, the label hosted global auditions to find new members to join the group. Sriya, born in Odisha, was scouted from over 4,000 applicants.

The news was announced on May 26, by the label's Instagram account.

Blackswan comprises of Youngheun and Judy from Korea, Belgium-based Senegalese rapper Fatou, and Japanese-Brazilian singer Leia. They debuted as RANIA in 2011, and then took the name of BP RANIA in 2016. They debuted as Blackswan on October 16, 2020 with the full album Goodbye Rania.



Bangladesh to be celebrated as ‘Country of Focus’ at Mumbai Int’l Film Festival

Bangladesh is the “Country of Focus” at the 17th Mumbai International Film Festival (MIFF), which begins today. India is honouring 50 years of Bangladesh's independence at the event.

Around 11 films including “Hasina: A Daughter's Tale” will be screened at MIFF 2022. Netflix's “Mighty Little Bheem: I Love Taj Mahal” will have its world premiere at the prestigious festival.

The NEAI restored version of Satyajit Ray's documentary “Sukumar Ray” is supposed to be premiered at the event.

The ‘Golden Conch’, the highest honour of the festival, will be awarded to the best film.

The MIFF 2022 will be held till June 4.



NEWS

Connectivity is a priority

FROM PAGE 1
Conclave”, in Assam's Guwahati in India yesterday.

A Shillong-based think tank called Asian Confluence, in collaboration with the Union External Affairs Ministry, Act East Policy Affairs Department of the Assam government, North Eastern Council organised the NADI (Natural Allies in Development and Interdependence) conference.

Momen said, over time much of the connectivity the two countries had between their rivers had been suspended but a lot of it is in the process of revival.

He mentioned that over the years, Bangladesh and India have re-established river, road and railway networks that are connecting India to Northeastern India.

Bangladesh, located between South and Southeast Asia, is eager to be the bridge between the rest of South and Southeast Asia, including Myanmar and Thailand, and landlocked Nepal and

Bhutan, to ease the means of trade, he said.

“River routes are more important because they are cost-effective and environment-friendly.”

India and Bangladesh have been facing similar natural disasters, Momen said, citing examples of recent flash floods in Assam and Sylhet that have caused havoc to much of the infrastructure and crops.

“We can have a strong regional weather forecasting system to take measures well ahead of time,” Momen said.

He added that Bangladesh and India have 54 transboundary rivers, and a common approach of managing the rivers and navigation can greatly help both the countries.

While meeting Jaishankar on the sidelines of the conference, Momen also spoke of signing the Teesta Water-sharing Agreement, which was left hanging due to West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's last-minute opposition.

Dhaka and Delhi are

working on the water-sharing of six small rivers.

Meanwhile, Jaishankar said an India more connected to the Northeast and Southeast more connected to India's neighbours will mean a complete transformation of the regional economy.

He also spoke of the restoration of six historical rail links with Bangladesh, overland movement of goods using 28 notified Land Customs Stations, and the Maitree Bridge over the Feni River that connects Bangladesh and Tripura.

Jaishankar added that the intricate and intertwined cross-border geography is being synergised by agreements on the movement of goods from Indian ports through the Chattogram and Mongla ports in Bangladesh, and from there overland to Tripura and other parts of the Northeast.

“What happens when the Northeast, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Myanmar get more deeply intertwined? Each of them stands to

benefit from more access, opportunities, resources, and markets. These endeavours will literally bring the ASEAN closer to us.

“It is definitely within our ability to overcome geography and rewrite recent history if only we can get the policies and the economics right.”

DHAKA SEEKS DELHI'S HELP

At the event, Momen said there are more than a million Rohingyas in the country, many of whom may turn to extremism. He sought help from India and other neighbouring countries to repatriate them to Myanmar.

“They have been temporarily sheltered in Bangladesh for the last five years and they all want to go back. Since repatriation has not yet begun, they are getting frustrated and many are getting involved in criminal activities.”

He said all should work together to maintain stability and security of this region by repatriating the Rohingyas from Bangladesh to Myanmar.

World's loneliest

FROM PAGE 12
Positioned about 10 kilometers from the nearest road, the Desert Post Office of inner Mongolia doesn't see too much human traffic. But in the age of the internet, that's not an insurmountable hurdle. Ms Zhang and her friend, Luo Meng came up with the idea of a ghostwriting business for people who wanted to send letters and postcards from the world's loneliest post office,

without actually visiting the place. Zhang's idea turned out to be a big hit, especially during the pandemic, with people unable to travel to see their loved ones. Now, she and her colleagues at the post office can hardly keep up with the online requests from people asking for cards to be shipped both around China and to countries like Singapore or Australia.

Bringing this remote post office back to life was somewhat of an adventure. First, Ms Zhang and her friend, Luo Meng, had to convince a few other people to help them rebuild it.

At first, they planned to build a wooden structure and transport it into the desert, but that proved too difficult to pull off, so they ended up transporting the building materials there and building the shack on the spot, which took 20 days to complete.

Adil Mohammad Khan, former general secretary of Bangladesh Institute of Planners, said a government body like Caab cannot violate the DAP and fill up a waterbody.

“This is an immoral practice and they cannot fill up water bodies without taking NOC from Rajuk,” he told this newspaper.

He further said many government agencies do not conduct proper impact assessment before taking up development projects. As a result, they end up filling the water bodies, he said.

Adil said there is a directive from the prime minister to keep around 12 percent waterbodies while building any housing project in any area.

It is not only Rajuk's duty, but Caab also has to keep 12 percent waterbodies in the areas that are under its jurisdiction, he added.

Councillor Anisur Rahman Nayeem said the city corporation had repeatedly requested Caab not to fill it up and also informed the matter to the DNCC mayor.

“Caab is a government organisation. If they do not follow the wetland

without actually visiting the place.

Since the official gazette on the city's Detailed Area Plan (DAP) was issued in 2010, the core city lost 3,440 out of 9,556 acres of flood flow zones, water retention areas, and water bodies till 2019, it said.

Experts say the unrelenting stress on water bodies, along with the poor drainage system, exposes the city dwellers to severe waterlogging even after moderate rain.

“The master plan of Dhaka is not safe in the hands of the government. This is because the government agencies fill up water bodies at will and tend to justify it as being done in public interest,” said Syeda Rizwana Hasan, chief executive of Bangladesh Environmental Lawyers Association.

“If filling up wetland contrary to the master plan is done by the government, it causes two long-term damages. First, it weakens the moral authority of the government to punish violators, and second, it devalues the sanctions of the master plan,” she told The Daily Star.

Both are dangerous for a city already ranking very low in the livability index,

she added.

After building the structure, they filed an application with China Post, and after review, the wooden shack became one of over 700 post offices in China. Every day, letters and postcards are written here, adorned with the post's special desert-themed stamp, transported 10 km to the nearest road, from where they are picked up by a post truck and then sent all over the world.

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Russia willing

FROM PAGE 12
he has raised in conversations with the Italian and Austrian leaders in recent days.

The Kremlin chief also warned Macron and Scholz against ramping up arms supplies to Ukraine, saying they could further destabilise the situation in the pro-Western country.

Ukraine and Western countries have accused Russia of weaponising the food crisis created by its invasion of Ukraine, which has sent the prices of grains,

cooking oils, fuel and fertilizer soaring.

Russia has blamed the situation on Western sanctions against it, and on the mining of Ukrainian ports.

The Kremlin said Putin also said Russia was willing to resume talks with Ukraine.

“Special attention was paid to the status of the negotiations that are frozen because of Kyiv. President Vladimir Putin confirmed the Russian side's openness to resume dialogue,” it said.

JCD protests go

FROM PAGE 12
of law enforcement agencies, such incidents will recur. Most of those involved in campus violence are not students there. They raise no demands on students' rights. Implementation of political parties' agenda by student bodies is creating instability on campus.”

He said law enforcement agencies and the university administration need to take adequate measures to avoid further violence. Otherwise, large clashes may take place.

Criticising the government and the university administration, he said, “Why should students carry rods, sticks, and weapons?”

DU Vice Chancellor Prof M Akhtuzzaman said, “A certain quarter always tries to destabilise the campus and create panic to make political gains. We expect that educational environment on campus will always remain favourable.”

Asked about the demand for calling a meeting of the Paribesh Parishad, he declined to comment.

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হোল্ডিং # ৩৯/এ, সড়ক # ২৫ (পুরাতন), ১৪/এ (নতুন)
সাতমসজিদ রোড, ধানমন্ডি, ঢাকা।

people, mostly Israeli civilians -- including 18 inside Israel and a Jewish West Bank settler -- have been killed in attacks in Israel by Palestinians and Israeli Arabs since late March. Thirty-five Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank during this time.

Women nation-builders are modern-day heroes

We must create an enabling environment for women

DESPITE attempts by different forces in society to keep women confined within the four walls or traditional gender roles, many have broken the glass ceiling and become self-reliant. These courageous women have shown that women and girls can do anything if allowed to take control of their own lives. We're glad to see that seven such fighters were recognised on Friday at the sixth edition of the "Unsung Women Nation Builders Awards", an initiative of *The Daily Star* and IPDC. We hope that the stories of their courage and resilience, entrepreneurial initiatives as well as contributions to building a better Bangladesh will inspire others to follow suit.

At the event, Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi, who gave out the awards, mentioned the multifaceted challenges that women and girls face while following their dreams or trying to stand on their own feet. Women are no less capable than men, he said, reminding all that the prime minister is a great advocate of women taking up important roles in various professions, including in the government.

Each of the women chosen for the award have shown unique potential. One of them—unable to walk, move her hands or speak clearly since her birth—went on to beat all the odds to become a successful entrepreneur in Bogura. Through her Facebook page "Rainbow", she sells hand-embroidered products like sarees, cushions and bedcovers which people from more than 18 countries now buy. Another woman, who sold newspapers to get by after her father's death, is an elected union parishad member in Pabna's Chatmohar upazila. Yet another woman, from the Birganj upazila of Dinajpur, challenged the long-held notion of professions in which women could work. After her husband abandoned her and their two children, she took up butchery and built a home in her village from the proceeds.

These are just some examples of what women, even those with disabilities who are particularly vulnerable in our society, are capable of doing despite facing numerous constraints and barriers. Their hard work, dedication and resilience are truly encouraging. Imagine how women and girls—who constitute half of the population—could transform our country if the right environment could be created for them with their rights ensured and their talent unleashed. Here lies the challenge: Families, social institutions, business houses and the government all must do their part to create an enabling environment for them. Women, especially those with disabilities, need the space and freedom to grow personally and academically, as well as proper policy support to pursue their career or business including bank loans on soft terms.

Break the taboos around menstruation

Make sanitary napkins affordable and available to all women and girls

IN a society where menstruation is still a taboo subject, it is only natural that the issue of maintaining health hygiene during menstruation would also remain neglected. Despite the many programmes taken up by the government and its development partners to raise awareness in this regard, studies have found that a majority of women still do not use sanitary napkins or other menstruation hygiene products. The National Hygiene Survey conducted by Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) in 2018 found that only 30 percent women in Bangladesh used disposable sanitary napkins, while only 32 percent knew about menstruation before they had it. Studies have also found that due to a lack of proper facilities, school absenteeism of girls remains a big challenge.

While many rural women, thanks to increasing awareness of late, now know about sanitary products, they simply cannot buy them due to lack of availability and also because menstruation is still a taboo topic. The price is also an issue here. How will women and girls from less privileged backgrounds afford to buy them if a single napkin cost Tk 10 and a packet of 10 napkins cost Tk 100 on average? Thus, they resort to using old clothes during their periods which is unhygienic and can lead to various infections. But, of course, there has been some progress over the last few years—around 85 percent of women used old clothes during menstruation in 2014, which reduced to 63 percent in 2019, the BBS study found.

In order to break the taboo around menstruation and educate girls about menstrual hygiene management, the subject should be included in the school curriculum in a proper way. While girls should know about menstruation before they have it, boys should also be sensitised about the subject. Moreover, all schools should have proper menstruation hygiene facilities so that girls do not have to stay at home during their period. All our educational institutions can consider setting up vending machines from where girls can get sanitary napkins whenever they need.

Moreover, in order to increase the use of sanitary napkins among women and girls, local pharmaceutical companies should come forward to produce and sell them at low cost. The government should give them the support they need to be successful in this regard. If all the stakeholders play their parts, we can hope to see a positive change in menstrual hygiene management in the country.

Our health sector needs urgent healing



Wasim Bin Habib is deputy planning editor at The Daily Star.

WASIM BIN HABIB

IT seems the country's health directorate has finally been jolted out of its stupor. At a meeting last Wednesday, the Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS) came up with the decision of shutting down all unregistered health institutions within 72 hours. The countdown has thus begun.

After the meeting, the DGHS issued a circular, saying that the decision applies to all unregistered health institutions—those that are yet to apply for licences, those that have applied for licences but are operating without it, and those whose licences have expired and are yet to apply for a renewal. The regulatory authority even warned that operations of private hospitals, clinics and diagnostic centres will be stopped if the renewal application is not received within the specified deadline of 72 hours.

Needless to say, it's a very good initiative from the regulator. But one cannot be so sure of the measures to be taken since the DGHS has some precedents which are not encouraging. Such warnings were given in the past as well, with the last one being in July, 2020, when the DGHS set a deadline for private health facilities to obtain their licences by August 23 that year.

That move came following the revelation of a scandal in a private health institution, Regent Hospital, which was found to be providing fake Covid-19 certificates, although the DGHS entrusted the hospital with the responsibility of Covid-19 testing and treatment of patients. The law enforcement agencies conducted a drive at Regent Hospital and unearthed the gross irregularities there. It was even found that the hospital's licence had expired in 2014.

The revelation prompted the DGHS to issue the deadline of August 23, 2020 for private health facilities to obtain their registrations. At that time, health officials announced that legal action would be taken against those who did not complete the registration and licence renewal process by the deadline. Following the



▲ Of the 16,132 private hospitals, clinics and diagnostic centres that have applied via DGHS's online registration system, only 10,892 have received their licences as per official data.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

announcement, several thousand private hospitals, clinics, diagnostic centres and blood banks applied online to get their licences or for the renewal of licences with the DGHS. Any private healthcare service provider is bound to obtain a licence from the DGHS as per the Medical Practice and Private Clinics and Laboratories (Regulation) Ordinance, 1982.

But the process got stuck, with the

at the local Hazi Khan Rowshon Ali Hospital and Clinic, which itself has no authorisation.

Although the DGHS has announced that it will take strict actions against errant health facilities, unfortunately, it does not know the exact number of such organisations. So, the question arises: Why does the health regulator not know the number of health organisations? This implies that the DGHS has no strong monitoring mechanism over the private organisations providing healthcare services. The lack of monitoring is also a reason why private hospitals can get away with overcharging patients.

According to the DGHS data compiled manually on November 8 last year, there are a total of 16,444 private hospitals, clinics and diagnostic centres across the country. Of those, 5,577 are private hospitals or clinics, 10,727 are diagnostic centres, and 140 are blood banks. Of all private hospitals, clinics and diagnostic centres, 10,892 have received their licences, out of the 16,132 that have applied via DGHS's online registration system.

There is no denying the fact that private hospitals and diagnostic centres have helped in supplementing the public healthcare sector in Bangladesh to a great extent over the last two decades. But it is not acceptable that countless health facilities are able to operate in the country without licences for years, while the DGHS only serves notices and warnings.

Herein lies the issue of poor governance in the healthcare sector. Despite making strides over the decades, the healthcare system of our country still lacks availability, equality and reliability. The pandemic exposed many gaps in our healthcare system, including poor governance and monitoring, corruption, and inadequate healthcare facilities.

The time has come for the DGHS to act and purge all corrupt elements that helped these dubious establishments to continue operations. For that, the government has to facilitate the DGHS with the required manpower to monitor health facilities across the country. This time, we would like to believe that the DGHS's decision would not remain ineffective like in previous cases. We would like to see an end to the nonchalant attitude of the authorities concerned in dealing with unauthorised health institutions. The directorate must stop the unregistered health facilities from playing around with the lives of innocent people.

A prescription for the FY2022-23 budget



Dr. Mohammed Parvez Imdad is an economist, governance specialist and policy analyst, and the founder-president of the Bangladesh Knowledge Forum (BKF). Views expressed in this article are the author's own.

MOHAMMED PARVEZ IMDAD

AMID the ongoing global inflation and financial instability, the upcoming national budget has to be demand-driven and needs-based. Sector allocations could be prioritised for agriculture, healthcare, energy, manufacturing, education, social safety nets, and infrastructure—and should be aligned with overall programme efficiency and sustainability.

The overall size of the budget should be increased by five percent (as compared to the previous budget) with due provisions for keeping inflation within acceptable limits. This will support the process of sustaining and accelerating macroeconomic gains achieved over the past 12 years. The budget should envision a GDP growth of 7.5 percent. And priority-driven sector allocations should be able to restore the pre-Covid growth momentum. Increased allocation for social safety nets and enhanced stimulus packages would enable mitigating the adverse impacts of Covid, reduce the mild increases in both relative and absolute poverty, and create the basis for subsequent interventions to reduce income disparities and inequalities.

Despite moderate increases in domestic resource mobilisation, tax revenues still remain inadequate to meet development expenditures. In the last budget, estimated expenditure was 17 percent of GDP, and estimated revenues 11.5 percent. It is unlikely that there will be a major deviation from this in the forthcoming budget. However, there are possibilities of moderate increase in revenues as compared to the outgoing year, and expenditure may slightly reduce. Bangladesh's tax-GDP ratio, which

For the upcoming year, it would be necessary to scale down the budget deficit to 5.5 percent of GDP. Therefore, raising the tax-GDP ratio to 12 percent of GDP, keeping the budget deficit within 5.5 percent of GDP in the medium-term, and reduced internal and external borrowing should be useful for efficient control and management of public debt.

remains one of the lowest in the region, needs to be raised to 12 percent of GDP.

Due to fiscal challenges, the government planned limiting the budget deficit to 6.2 percent of GDP in the outgoing fiscal year. For the upcoming year, it would be necessary to scale down the budget deficit to 5.5 percent of GDP. Therefore, raising the tax-GDP ratio to 12 percent of GDP, keeping the budget deficit within 5.5 percent of GDP in the medium-term, and reduced internal and external borrowing should be useful for efficient control and management of public debt.

The budget deficit should be met by domestic and external resources in similar proportions as that of the outgoing year. The budget should highlight incentives for stimulating private investment, entrepreneurship and employment expansion. Concrete incentives to boost exports (by 30 percent), reduce import costs (by 40 percent), and increase the forex reserves (by 25 percent), will add value to both stabilisation and growth. The budget should also include added provisions for food security, facilitate rural and urban consumer access to food and non-food items through rationing and improved storage, and transparent distribution. Allocations for pension and healthcare coverage for citizens over 60 years should also be reflected in the budget.

The FY2022-23 budget should aim at enhancing productive efficiency and competitiveness of sectors bearing potential to stimulate growth. Currently, we have to rely on RMG and overseas remittances, and there is a possibility that these two key sources of growth may face external challenges in the medium term. In addition, strategy and supportive measures for economic diversification will enable overcoming probable challenges and loss of benefits from Bangladesh's graduation from the LDC category. The framework to diversify growth stimulants would necessitate the much-expected financial and banking reforms and simplified procedures to ease and promote business

and investment. The income tax and VAT laws should be restructured, and should also give guidelines to significantly check unauthorised transfer of funds abroad, reduce non-performing loans, and minimise scope for illegal and non-transparent sources of incomes.

Increased allocation for expanding the current social safety net and overall social protection programmes should aim at broader coverage and easy access by the poor, especially the new poor, disadvantaged, and vulnerable segments of the population. Social protection should be aimed at extensive reduction of poverty, easier access to resources, and small-scale entrepreneurship in rural and urban areas. The emerging post-Covid urban and rural poverty due to loss of jobs and incomes can be minimised through easy access to both institutional and non-institutional credit for the minimum wage-earners and lower-range fixed income groups. Supportive framework through Consumer Access and Protection Act reinforced by setting up specialised SME Bank and Cooperative Bank branches in every district could contribute towards meeting these objectives.

To achieve overall efficiency, the budget process should be based on results-based and performance-based approaches. The results-based approach would reflect the final output as the determinant of our economic strengths and potentials for faster growth, while the performance-based approach should present the opportunity for incentives for broadened competitiveness and efficiency, which would enable key sectors to demonstrate better performance for increased economic resilience and growth. Restructuring budget-related input-output models and improved monitoring and evaluation mechanisms aimed at addressing critical constraints in every sector could be useful in ensuring appropriate budgetary and policy interventions. These approaches would also add value to the process of internal monetary and fiscal adjustments and in cushioning external shocks.

A nation bogged by pitiful pessimists



Dr Nizamuddin Ahmed is an architect and a professor, a Commonwealth scholar and a fellow, Woodbadger scout leader, Baden Powell fellow, and a Major Donor Rotarian.

NIZAMUDDIN AHMED

YOU have perhaps heard the tale of these two neighbours. On learning that the son of the man living next-door got admitted to college, the grouchy sceptic said, “He’ll not pass”. But, he did. So, the doubter observed, “He’ll not get a job”. A few months later, the qualified son got a job. Now what? With a three-line frown across his forehead, the cynic observed gravely, “He’ll not get his salary”. At the end of the month, his pay was duly disbursed. “You guys are fools,” said the serial loser, “He was not paid in full”. “But indeed, he was.” “Some of the notes are surely counterfeit.” “He was paid through a bank account.” “That bank will go bust.” “It’s a nationalised bank with over 50 years of solid reputation.” “Haven’t you heard of Sri Lanka?” You can almost not beat the pessimists, and there are some pathetic ones around us.

In the context of the last 50 years, they began by questioning the ability of our freedom fighters with “*kissu hobe na*”, and are unabated till now by wondering whether southern Bangladeshis will ever switch from launch to railway when Padma Bridge is completed. In the meantime, they had derided Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina’s resolve to go ahead with the 6.5km crossing after the World Bank had withdrawn funding against false (unproven in five years) claims of corruption. Another case to study in human (mis) behaviour is scoffers being uptight before a flight. “I heard they are always delayed”. Once airborne and on time, the worrywart will moan, “There will surely be delays on our return flight”. Why so? “*Arrey dosto*,

they do not have enough aeroplanes”. That flight too was on time. Now what? “Well, we were plainly lucky this time.” Some of these sad guys will find everything wrong with a would-be groom. His body colour (how awful?) will not match with Pinky. He should have been a shade taller; how will Sitara wear heels? I heard he has a short temper; poor Moutushi! When it was explained that the bride is perfectly okay with the guy’s everything, the grumbler goes on, “I detest his father”. On inspection it was revealed that the guy had a fling for someone in that family he abhors. It did not work out. Thank heavens! The most recent cause for joy among the unhappy Bengalis, fanned by the opposition vote bank, is of course Sri Lanka. Unfortunate though the islanders are, their economy was hugely dependent on the tourism sector, which made a nosedive under Covid. The enemies within Bangladesh have always grossly underestimated the potentiality, tenacity and determination of Bangladeshis. Throughout the pandemic, even under selective lockdown, our export-oriented garment and knit factories have remained in operation. Earning has been steady, despite which without any rhyme or reason, a selfish lobby is trying to spread panic and fear. Fortunately, not many people have the time to pay heed to their groans of despair, read frustration. You may have noticed too that, deviating from past party-political partisanship, there are now several top-notch party henchmen and the lesser ones behind bars or undergoing trial. That could not stop the chronic critics, who are largely convinced that these are just showmanship. When news breaks out of a corruption case and high-level perpetrators are named, they will say, this is nothing but eyewash. *Amra ki bujhi na?* After the big fish politician is arrested, the suspecting critics are sure he will be out on bail. No sooner is a bail denied, they are the source of a rumour that no



ILLUSTRATION: BIPOLO CHAKROBORTY

When news breaks out of a corruption case and high-level perpetrators are named, they will say, this is nothing but eyewash. Amra ki bujhi na?

trial is in the offing. The lengthy trial is again considered (by the know-alls) as only a means to let the powerful political parasite off the hook. The news of his long sentence is viewed as *tamasha* because the Appeal Court will surely set him free. But, no! The honourable jurists have signed, sealed and delivered him seven years of imprisonment. Now what? “Oh, surely he will end up in hospital!” grumble the moaners. They are finally right. Most politicians, charged with criminality, first try to take refuge in the plea that they are victims of political harassment. Failing which there is always the comfort of a bed at PG. From time immemorial, there is an immense amount of negative thinking in our society that has been crippling our nation. What is the way out of

this quagmire of unconstructiveness? Easy-peasy, as it may be obvious, but the answer is not “positive thinking”. We need to cultivate tolerance, accept each other despite our political differences, which is prevalent in any country and is a health indicator of modern citizenship. It does not help to oppose for the sake of opposition; childish, you could say. We have to shun jealousy, assuming that praising the good work of an opponent will further the latter’s career. So be it, for the sake of the country and the people. Let us educate ourselves to be happy for the success of others at all levels, personal, among groups, and nationally. For the other side shall do likewise, hopefully. If not, let us be the good guys. And, the magic will rub on, hopefully.

Playing games in Nato, Turkey eyes its role in a new world order



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JAMES M DORSEY

NATO’S spat over Turkish opposition to Swedish and Finnish membership is about more than expanding the North Atlantic military alliance. It’s as much about Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s immediate political goals as Turkey’s positioning itself in a new 21st-century world order. On its surface, the spat is about Turkish efforts to hinder support for Kurdish ethnic, cultural, and national aspirations in Turkey, Syria, and Iraq and a crackdown on alleged supporters of a preacher who lives in exile in the United States. Turkey accuses the preacher, Fethullah Gulen, of instigating a failed military coup in 2016. The spat may also be a play by Nato’s second-largest standing military to regain access to US arms sales, particularly upgrades for Turkey’s aging fleet of F-16 fighter jets as well as more advanced newer models of the F-16 and the top-of-the-line F-35. Finally, playing the Kurdish card benefits Mr Erdogan domestically, potentially at a time that the Turkish economy is in the doldrums with a 70 percent inflation rate. The battle over perceived Scandinavian, and mainly, Swedish support for Kurdish aspirations involves the degree to which the United States and Europe will continue to kick the can down on the road of what constitutes yet another Middle Eastern powder keg. Mr Erdogan announced this week that Turkey would soon launch a new military incursion against US-backed Kurdish fighters in northeast Syria. Erdogan said the operation would extend the Turkish armed forces’ areas of control in Syria to a 30-kilometre swath of land along the two countries’ shared border. “The main target of these operations will be areas which are centres of attacks to our country and safe zones,” the Turkish president said. Turkey asserts that the US-backed People’s Protection Units (YPG), a Syrian militia that helped defeat the Islamic State, is an extension of the PKK. The PKK has waged a decades-long insurgency against Turkey, home to some 16 million Kurds. Turkey, the United States, and the European Union



PHOTO: REUTERS

have designated the PKK as a terrorist organisation. Erdogan charges that Sweden and Finland give the PKK sanctuary and is demanding that the two countries extradite the group’s operatives. Turkey has not officially released the names of 33 people it wants to see extradited, but some were reported in Turkish media close to the government. Swedish media reported that a physician allegedly on the list had died seven years ago and was not known to have had links to the PKK. Another person named was not resident in Sweden, while at least one other is a Swedish national. Swedish and Finnish officials were in Ankara this week to discuss Turkey’s objections. Swedish Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson insisted as the officials headed for the Turkish capital that “we do not send money or weapons to terrorist organisations.” Conveniently, pro-government media reported the day the officials arrived that Turkish forces found Swedish anti-tank weapons in a cave in northern Iraq used by the PKK. Turkey recently launched Operation Claw Lock against PKK positions in the region. Erdogan’s military plans complicate Swedish and Finnish accession to Nato. The two Nordic states slapped an arms embargo on Ankara after its initial

Turkey’s Nato gamble is a game of high-stakes poker, given that Russia is as much a partner of Turkey as it is a threat.

incursion into Syria in 2019. The Turkish leader has demanded the lifting of the embargo as part of any deal on Swedish and Finnish Nato membership. A renewed incursion that would cement Turkey’s three-year-old military presence in Syria could also throw a monkey wrench into improving relations with the United States due to Turkish support for Ukraine and efforts to mediate an end to the crisis sparked by the Russian invasion. Turkey slowed its initial incursion into Syria after then US President Donald J Trump threatened to “destroy and obliterate” Turkey’s economy. The State Department warned this week that a renewed incursion would “undermine regional stability.” Revived US arms sales would go a long way to cement improved relations and downplay the significance of Turkey’s acquisition of Russia’s S-400 anti-missile system, even if Turkey’s opposition to Scandinavian membership will have a lingering effect on trust. The United States expelled Turkey from its F-35 programme in response to the acquisition. This week, Erdogan appeared to widen the dispute in Nato after Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis lobbied the US Congress against military sales to Turkey. “Mitsotakis no longer exists for me. I will never agree to meet him,”

Erdogan said. He said that Mitsotakis’ lobbying violated an agreement between the two men “not to involve third countries in our bilateral issues.” The US arms sales would also impact Turkish Russian relations, even if Turkey, in contrast to most Nato members, will continue seeking to balance its relationships and avoid an open rift with Moscow or Washington. “Russia’s geopolitical revisionism is set to drive Turkey and the West relatively closer together in matters geopolitical and strategic, provided that Turkey’s current blockade of Sweden and Finland’s Nato membership bid is resolved in the not too distant future,” said Turkish scholar Galip Dalay. Turkey’s Nato gamble is a game of high-stakes poker, given that Russia is as much a partner of Turkey as it is a threat. Nato is Turkey’s ultimate shield against Russian civilisationalist expansionism. Russian support in 2008 for irredentist regions of Georgia and annexation of Crimea in 2014 created a buffer between Turkey and Ukraine and complicated arrangements between Turkey and Russia in the Black Sea. Nevertheless, Erdogan risks fuelling a debate about Turkey’s membership in Nato, much like Prime Minister Victor Orban’s opposition to a European embargo of Russian energy has raised questions about Hungary’s place in the EU. “Does Erdogan’s Turkey Belong in Nato?” asked former US vice-presidential nominee Joe Lieberman and Mark D Wallace, a former senator, in an op-ed in The Wall Street Journal. Unlike Finland and Sweden, the two men noted that Turkey would not meet Nato’s democracy requirements if it were applying for membership today. “Turkey is a member of Nato, but under Mr Erdogan, it no longer subscribes to the values that underpin this great alliance. Article 13 of the Nato charter provides a mechanism for members to withdraw. Perhaps it is time to amend Article 13 to establish a procedure for the expulsion of a member nation,” Lieberman and Wallace wrote. The two men implicitly argued that turning the tables on Turkey would force the complicated Nato member back into line. Adding to that, prominent Turkish journalist and analyst Cengiz Candar cautioned that “giving into Ankara’s demands amounts to letting an autocrat design the security architecture of Europe and shape the future of the Western system.”

Booters train in Bandung

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh national football team members trained for the first time in the Indonesian city of Bandung for the first time yesterday after reaching Indonesia on the previous day.

The men in red and green, who will play the hosts in a FIFA friendly on June 1, travelled to Bandung from Jakarta after flying out of Dhaka in the wee hours of Friday.

The training session, according to video footages and messages sent by the Bangladesh Football Federation, limited to tactical work including defending and set-pieces.

Rahmat Mia, one of the defenders of the team, said after the session: “This was our first training session in Indonesia today following a long journey yesterday. So far we had trained in groups (back at home) in absence of the Bashundhara Kings players who were busy with the AFC Cup.



“We had the full team (23 members) at disposal today. We basically worked on defensive shape of the team – how we can create blocks. Towards the end of the session, we worked on set pieces, especially defending set-pieces. It was a low-intensity session,” said the Saif SC full-back.

Coach Javier Cabrera also spoke about how the hour-long session was basically focused on recovery following the long journey.

Following the friendly against Indonesia, who are 29 places above Bangladesh in FIFA rankings, Cabrera’s charges will move to Malaysia for the Asian Cup Qualifiers, where they will play against Bahrain, Turkmenistan and Malaysia on June 8, 11 and 14 respectively.

Six group winners and five best runners-up teams will join 13 teams who have already qualified for next year’s Asian Cup.



Bangladesh Test skipper Mominul Haque (C), who has been going through a lean patch for a while, will be under intense scrutiny in the Tigers’ upcoming Test series away to the West Indies next month. Apart from Mominul, left-handed batter Najmul Hossain Shanto (L) will also have to prove his worth as the best-fit for the number three position while Yasir Ali (R) will be hoping to make a statement if given a chance in absence of Mushfiqur Rahim, who is set to miss the tour for personal reasons.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED

WI tour a litmus test for fragile top-order

SPORTS REPORTER

As two successive shambolic Test series – away to South Africa in March-April and the recently-concluded home series against Sri Lanka – come to an end, the main concern for Bangladesh is the fragility of their top-order. In fact, barring a few sparse instances of it coming to life, the top-order’s struggles have been persistent.

On a pitch in the second Test against Sri Lanka that even the Bangladesh team management termed a sporting wicket, the Tigers witnessed a top-order meltdown in both innings. They were reduced to five for 24 inside just seven overs in the first innings and again were reeling at four for 23 in the second innings.

Had it not been for the heroics of Mushfiqur Rahim, Liton Das and Shakib Al Hasan, the second and final Test could have ended in a much more devastating result than a 10-wicket mauling.

If there is anything more concerning than the apparent top-order issue, it is the fact that the Tigers now have to travel to the West Indies in a few days’ time for a much tougher challenge in a multi-format series.

Bangladesh are scheduled to leave for

the Caribbean in the first week of June for two Tests, three ODIs and three T20Is. The series begins with the first Test in Antigua from June 16, which means the Tigers have limited time on hand to even somewhat mend their top-order issues. Also, the fact that Bangladesh were bundled out for 43 in Antigua – their lowest total in Tests till date – ought to impact them adversely.

Mental issues have been blamed for batting failure in recent times but while that is an aspect to ponder and address, it is poor application and an apparent lack of game sense from the top-order batters that needs more immediate attention.

The way skipper Mominul Haque, who has been enduring a lean patch for a while, played away from his body off just in his second delivery that he faced only to edge through to the wicketkeeper in the second innings of the Dhaka Test against Sri Lanka proves that the problems of the top-order batters are more than just a mental snag.

The Bangladesh skipper has scored in single digits in his past seven innings. And more than anyone, the tour of the Caribbean will be a litmus Test for the 30-year-old left-hander.

Another player that will be under intense scrutiny in the upcoming series

is Najmul Hossain Shanto. Entrusted with the role of playing at number three, Shanto has been long dubbed as the future star of Bangladesh cricket.

But despite all the talent that he is said to possess, the left-hander has yet to show the one quality that is the most basic requirement for being a successful top-order batter – consistency. The last time the 23-year-old scored a fifty in the format was during Bangladesh’s historic away Test triumph against New Zealand in January this year. But Shanto too has produced single-digit scores in his last four innings.

To add to Bangladesh’s worries, the Tigers are set to miss in-form Mushfiqur Rahim on the tour of the West Indies as the cricketer asked for leave to perform the Hajj pilgrimage. Head coach Russell Domingo mentioned that the batting order would be shuffled for the Windies Tests.

Mushfiqur’s absence could open the doors for Yasir Ali, who will go in with the agenda to cement his spot in the line-up.

As it stands, the upcoming series away to West Indies could play a huge role in assessing the role of a number of players in the long run and also show how Bangladesh plan to go ahead in the Test format in the coming days.

Rajasthan’s 2nd or Gujarat’s 1st?

AFP, AHMEDABAD

Indian Premier League debutants Gujarat Titans will take on a Shane Warne-inspired Rajasthan Royals in Sunday’s final, both teams eyeing a fairy tale victory after each enjoyed a dominant season run.

Fourteen years ago, Warne led underdogs Rajasthan to glory in the marquee T20 tournament’s inaugural season.

This year they face another set of first-timers in the final of a season that began just weeks after the Australian spin legend’s shock death.

“Shane Warne... is such an influential figure for the Rajasthan Royals and having led the team to success in that first season,” said star batsman Jos Buttler. “We will miss him dearly, but we know he is looking down on us with a lot of pride.”

In-form Buttler led Rajasthan’s fightback in the second qualifier to knock out Royal Challengers Bangalore and reach their first IPL final after they won the inaugural edition in 2008.

He equalled Virat Kohli’s record of four tons in an IPL season with 106 not out during Rajasthan’s chase, and leads the season’s batting chart with 824 runs.

Gujarat skipper Hardik Pandya has established his side as the team to beat this year after topping the league table and storming into the final when they beat Rajasthan by seven wickets in the first play-off.

“It’s really going to be a tough challenge,” Rajasthan head coach Kumar Sangakkara said of the looming showdown.

“(Pandya) is an exceptional player. He has led his side really well. They are an exceptional team, highly skilled, really well settled, performing at



peak consistently through this entire tournament.”

Gujarat will be playing at their home ground in Ahmedabad. The franchise have been a force to reckon with since their opening win over fellow newcomers Lucknow Super Giants and they were the first to book a play-off spot.

South Africa’s David Miller and Indian batsman Rahul Tewatia have been key to their success with the middle-order pair rescuing Gujarat out of tough spots.

“Killer” Miller made an unbeaten 68 to power Gujarat into the final early this week with a seven-wicket win in Kolkata. Tewatia made two sixes in the last two balls to snatch a one-run victory over Punjab Kings last month.

Mohammed Shami has meanwhile led the team’s dominating bowling charge with 19 wickets in 15 matches, ably assisted by Afghan spinner Rashid Khan.

Rashid not only claimed 18 wickets but also boosted the team’s batting at crucial moments, including two sixes on the final two balls to pull off a sensational chase in the league stage, mirroring Tewatia’s feat.

“The more important thing was the balance that we had in the team really helped us to reach this position,” said the champion leg-spinner.

Everyone on the team had been certain of what role they were to play, he added. “There was no confusion in the players’ mind.”

‘Zero problem’ as Nadal takes on Nadal

AFP, PARIS

Rafael Nadal insisted there will be “zero problem” when Toni Nadal, his uncle and coach for the best part of three decades, plots his downfall at the French Open on Sunday.

The 13-time champion tackles Canada’s Felix Auger-Aliassime who started working with Toni Nadal in April 2021.

Four years earlier, Nadal and his uncle called time on their 27-year, trophy-laden association.

“For me, it’s very simple,” said Nadal after reaching the fourth round. “He is my uncle. He will not want me to lose. He wants the best for me and I want the best for him. But he’s a professional and with another player now. I don’t know if he will be in the player’s box but, honestly, for me, it’s zero problem.”

Auger-Aliassime has only faced Nadal on one occasion with the Spaniard coming out on top in straight sets on clay in Madrid in 2019.

Into the last 16 in Paris for the first time, the 21-year-old Canadian also attempted to play down the influence of Toni in Sunday’s clash.

“We knew it was a possibility that eventually I would play Rafa when I’m working with Toni. And actually now he’s present here in this Grand Slam,” said Auger-Aliassime. “I think Toni will watch from a neutral place and enjoy the match. From my part it’s another match.

“Rafa’s career and what he did with Toni is much bigger than the match on Sunday.”

Nadal said that whatever the result, the relationship with his 61-year-old uncle will not be damaged. “He is old enough to make his own decisions,” said Nadal, who won 16 of his record 21 majors with Toni in his corner. “I cannot thank him enough for all the things he has done for me over so many years.

Nadal will be the favourite on Sunday after

taking his career record at the French Open to 108 wins against just three defeats.

He has reached at least the fourth round in 17 of 18 visits to Paris, with the exception of 2016.

Victory would put him into a quarterfinal against Novak Djokovic should the world number one and defending champion defeat Argentina’s Diego Schwartzman in his last-16 clash.

World No. 1 Iga Swiatek racked up her 31st straight win to reach the French Open last 16 on Saturday, with a 6-3, 7-5 victory over Danka Kovinic.

PHOTO: AFP



Men’s No. 2 Daniil Medvedev eased into the fourth round, defeating Serbian 28th seed Miomir Kecmanovic 6-2, 6-4, 6-2.

PHOTO: AFP



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Every Dhaka street will have CCTV coverage

Home minister says

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

All roads in the capital will be brought under CCTV camera coverage, which would benefit the city's traffic management and help control crime, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan said yesterday.

He was speaking at the ninth general assembly of "Nirapad Sarak Chai", a platform working to ensure safe roads.

"We are taking initiatives to make Dhaka a safe city. We will bring the whole city under CCTV camera coverage. If we can do it, then we will do the same for Chattogram and Rajshahi cities. We are working towards achieving that goal. It will benefit many areas, particularly in traffic and crime control," the minister said at an event held in the capital's Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy.

Asaduzzaman said many people point fingers

SEE PAGE 2 COL 4



A bit of greenery, a result of a private initiative, offering passersby shade and relief from the sun. Such foliage is hardly seen in the capital. The photo was taken on Kazi Nazrul Islam Avenue near Paribagh yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

JCD protests nationwide

BCL launches its own counter protests

SIRAJUL ISLAM RUBEL

Jatiyatabadi Chhatra Dal has staged protests across the country against the recent attacks by Chhatra League.

The BCL, however, has also announced protests against what it calls "attacks on its leaders and activists and general students by Chhatra Dal".

Educationists now fear clashes between the two major student fronts may spread across the country if the government and educational institutions don't take appropriate measures.

Amid this face-off between the BCL and the JCD, the Awami League and the BNP are also trading blame.

AL General Secretary Obaidul Quader yesterday said the BNP was making ill attempts to create a chaotic situation in the country.

Senior BNP leader Khandaker Mosharraf Hossain alleged that the recent attacks on JCD men were carried out by Chhatra League in Dhaka University area at the behest of the highest levels of the government.

BCL men attacked JCD leaders and activists on Tuesday when they tried to enter the DU campus to attend a programme. On Thursday, JCD men again came under attack by BCL activists during their protest over the previous attack.

Yesterday, Chhatra Dal staged protests at the metropolitan and district levels. The organisation



will stage protests at the upazila and college levels today.

Chhatra League yesterday announced that it would form human chains in all districts today protesting "attacks by Chhatra Dal" and demanding peace on the DU campus.

Witnesses said BCL activists yesterday took positions in different areas of the DU, including TSC, Curzon Hall, Fuller Road, near the Central Shaheed Minar and Madhur Canteen. Many of them were carrying sticks and cricket stumps.

Saddam Hussain, general secretary of DU BCL, said they will make sure that no organisation can be violent on the campus.

"We will prevent Chhatra Dal from entering the campus at any cost," he told The Daily Star.

Several JCD leaders told this correspondent that they would soon try to enter the campus again.

JCD General Secretary Saif Mahmud Jewel said they would come up with tougher protest programmes if they fail to enter the DU campus to stage protests peacefully.

"We have already urged the university authorities to call a meeting of the Paribesh Parishad to ensure peaceful coexistence of all student organisations on campus," he said.

Eight leftist student organisations have also raised the same demand.

Educationist Prof Syed Anwar Hossain said, "If the government and the university administration cannot stop clashes with the help

SEE PAGE 6 COL 3

World's loneliest post office



ODDITY CENTRAL ONLINE

Deep in the Tengger Desert of Inner Mongolia, surrounded by sand dunes as far as the eye can see, lies the world's loneliest post office, a surprisingly bustling outpost of human connection.

Measuring only 15 square meters, the wooden post office of Tengger Desert is not much to look at, but that's ok, it doesn't get too many visitors anyway. Besides, after being abandoned for over 35 years, it actually doesn't look half bad. Thanks to the efforts of a few intrepid individuals who learned about the existence of an old abandoned desert post office by mistake, it has been given a new lease on life, and thanks to the magic of the internet, it has actually become quite a busy operation.

Despite rarely receiving any visitors, over 20,000 letters and postcards were sent from the Desert Post Office in the month of December 2021 alone. And it was all thanks to the efforts of Ms Zhang, one of the people involved in the revitalization of the post office.

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Egg prices a new worry for consumers

SUKANTA HALDER

The prices of eggs, the most affordable source of animal protein, have gone up by 20 percent in a month at the retail markets in the capital, according to the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh.

Retailers were selling brown farm eggs (brown) between Tk 125 and Tk 130 per dozen over the last few days.

Farm owners said rising production and transport costs were behind the price hike.

The prices of soybean meal and maize, the main ingredients for poultry feed, rose by 30 to 40 percent in the last few months, they said.

Also, many poultry farmers have suffered losses and gone out of business during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Nurul Alam Shikdar, a wholesaler in Mirpur's Pallabi Extension area, said many people were buying fewer eggs nowadays.

Contacted, Kayser Ahmed, managing director of Diamond Egg Ltd, one of the largest egg farms in the country, said around 75 percent of the poultry feed was imported.

Feed manufacturers have also reduced their production due to a crisis of raw materials, he added.

The costs of hiring workers and electricity have also gone up, he said.

The overall production of eggs has decreased by 20 percent, Kayser said.

Taher Ahmed Siddique, president of Bangladesh Egg Producers Association, said the current production of eggs was not enough to meet the demand.

As a result, the prices have gone up, he said, adding, "The upward trend of the egg prices may continue until the feed prices come down."

Over 3.5 crore eggs are required to meet the daily demand in the country, he further added.

Prices of local chicken and duck eggs rose to Tk 150 per dozen in Karwan Bazar yesterday.

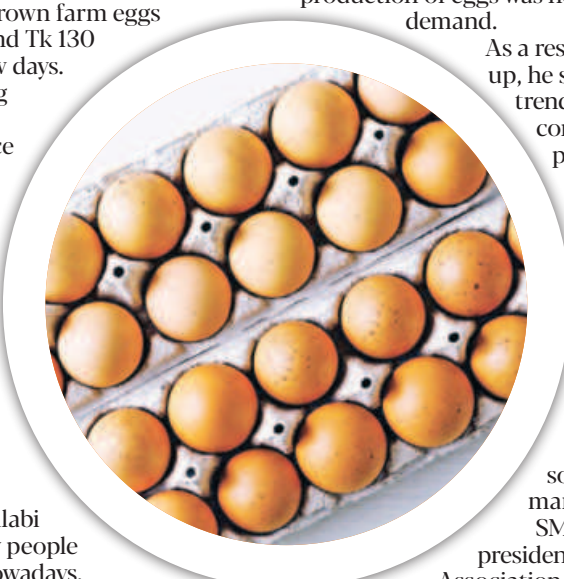
These eggs were being sold at Tk 165 at retail markets.

SM Nazer Hossain, vice-president of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh, said there

was an inflationary pressure in the country now, and it would impact all the sectors.

"The prices of essential commodities have risen and become a major issue for people with limited income."

If this continues, it will not take long for the food security to come under a major threat, he added.



UKRAINIAN GRAINS

Russia 'willing to' allow shipments

Putin tells French, German leaders

AGENCIES

Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday told the leaders of France and Germany in a phone call that Russia was willing to discuss ways to make it possible for Ukraine to resume shipments of grain from Black Sea ports, the Kremlin said.

Russia and Ukraine account for nearly a third of global wheat supplies, while Russia is also a key global fertilizer exporter and Ukraine is a major exporter of corn and sunflower oil.

Russia's offensive in Ukraine and Western sanctions have disrupted



supplies of the key commodities from the two countries, fuelling concerns about the risk of shortages and hunger around the world.

"For its part, Russia is ready to help find options for the unhindered export of grain, including the export of Ukrainian grain from Black Sea ports," the Kremlin said.

It said he also informed French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz that Russia was ready to increase its export of fertilizers and agricultural products if sanctions against it were lifted - a demand

SEE PAGE 6 COL 1



Labourers dump sandbags in the Sugandha to protect the bank from erosion in Jhalakathi's Nalchhiti upazila yesterday. The swelling river is threatening arable land and people's homes and business there.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

Sri Lanka gets Russian oil to ease shortage

AFP, Colombo

Cash-strapped Sri Lanka yesterday took delivery of Russian oil - which could soon be subject to a European embargo - to restart operations at the country's only refinery, the energy minister said.

The island nation is suffering its worst economic meltdown since independence, with shortages of fuel and other vital goods making life miserable for its 22 million people.

The state-run Ceylon Petroleum Corporation (CPC) refinery was shuttered in March in the wake of Sri Lanka's foreign exchange crunch, which left the government unable to finance crude imports.