

## Convicted war criminal held in capital

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Rab arrested a fugitive death-row convict war criminal in the capital yesterday.



Nazrul

Nazrul Islam was arrested in Mohammadpur area, said Khandaker Al Moin, director (legal and media wing) of Rab.

International Crimes Tribunal-1, headed by Justice Md Shahinur Islam, handed down the death sentence to Nazrul on Tuesday in a case over committing crimes against humanity.

He was found guilty of committing crimes in Naogaon during the Liberation War.

Rezaul Karim Montu and Shaheed Mondol were also convicted the same day. They are now behind bars.

Investigators started the war crimes probe against them in October 2016 and indicted them in November 2017.

The tribunal delivered the verdict after both sides concluded their arguments on May 26 this year.

## Israel warns over Iran nuclear programme

AFP, Jerusalem

Prime Minister Naftali Bennett yesterday warned the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency that Israel was prepared to use its "right to self defense" to stop Iran's nuclear programme.

The comments came after IAEA chief Rafael Grossi met Bennett Friday morning during a whirlwind visit.

Bennett's warning is a reiteration of Israeli vows to do whatever it takes to stop Iran from obtaining a nuclear bomb. It comes with tensions rising over stalled efforts to revive a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers.



Ripe litchis and vegetables are on display at the Litchi Fair-2022 at Bangladesh Sugarcrop Research Institute in Pabna's Ishwardi town. Farmers in Ishwardi upazila have achieved highest yield of litchi this year compared to last few years. The photo was taken yesterday, the last day of the two-day fair. Story on page 5.

PHOTO: STAR

# Crisis-hit Sri Lanka seeks UN help on food shortages

AGENCIES

Cash-strapped Sri Lanka is seeking urgent United Nations help to build a stockpile of essential foods, the prime minister's office said yesterday, after authorities warned of looming starvation.

Acute shortages of food, fuel and other essential goods, along with record inflation and rolling blackouts, have inflicted widespread misery in the island nation's unprecedented economic crisis.

Scarce supplies of petrol, diesel and fertiliser have made it difficult for farmers to grow crops, while the agricultural sector is still reeling from a disastrous organic policy that kneecapped yields last year.

The UN Food and Agriculture Organization is now planning a "food crisis response plan" to shore up reserves and will also offer more funds for urban agriculture, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's office said in a statement.

Parliamentary speaker Mahinda Yapa Abeywardana warned in April that Sri Lanka was facing "very acute food shortages and starvation".

Around half of Sri Lanka's rice production was lost last year, and the latest cultivation season which started last month has been disrupted because of fertiliser shortages.

Most of Sri Lanka's fertiliser is

imported, but last year President Gotabaya Rajapaksa announced a ban on foreign agrochemicals as the country's foreign reserves began running out.

The policy was billed as an effort to fashion Sri Lanka into the world's first 100 percent organic farming nation, but was abruptly halted after farmers left their fields fallow.

The head of the agricultural ministry was promptly sacked last December after

**The Colombo Consumer Price Index rose 39.1 pc year-on-year last month, up from 29.8 percent in April, according to the statistics department.**

warning that the scheme could lead to a famine by the end of this year.

Sri Lanka saw its highest inflation on record for the eighth consecutive month in May, official data showed Wednesday.

The Colombo Consumer Price Index (CCPI) rose 39.1 percent year-on-year last month, up from 29.8 percent in April, according to the statistics department.

Food inflation in Colombo came in at 57.4 percent, up from 46.6 percent in April.

Private economists say consumer prices are rising even faster than official records

show, with one John Hopkins University analyst tracking March inflation at 133 percent – more than six times the official figure.

Sri Lanka's import-dependent economy has been hammered by a critical foreign currency shortage, leading to months of acute shortages of food, medicines and other essentials.

Faced with a huge cash crunch, the government on Tuesday raised taxes across the board by rolling back cuts ordered by President Gotabaya Rajapaksa in November 2019.

Weeks of protests outside the president's seaford office have demanded his resignation over government mismanagement of the crisis.

Sri Lanka has defaulted on its \$51 billion foreign debt and is seeking international aid to revive its bankrupt economy, including from the International Monetary Fund.

The country of 22 million people, located off India's southern tip, is struggling to manage its worst economic crisis since independence in 1948.

It has a long history of rising foreign obligations, driven partly by incessant government deficits, and this has been worsened by a loss of tourism revenue in the pandemic and, this year, by surging fuel costs.

## Villagers hand over rape accused to police

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

Villagers in Panchbibi, Joypurhat, yesterday handed over a man to police accusing him of raping a 13-year-old girl after mixing sedatives in her drink.

Haidar Ali, 50, of Binshira area, was caught by villagers and handed over to police following allegations that he offered drug-infused drink to a man and his daughter on a road and then took them to an empty house and raped the girl on Wednesday night.

According to the police, locals found the girl and her father at separate rooms of a house in Satinali area on Thursday.

The villagers then traced Haidar and handed him over to police yesterday.

Polash Chandra Deb, officer in-charge of Panchbibi Police Station, said the father and daughter were hospitalised.

## Man kills wife, surrenders to police

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Dinaipur

A man was accused of stabbing his wife to death in Rangpur's Pirgachha upazila early yesterday.

The dead is Aysha Begum, 38, wife of Moinuddin Mia, of Khamar Noyabari village, said police.

Quoting Moinuddin, Ashrafal Alam, assistant superintendent of police, said he killed her over an alleged affair.

Moinuddin stabbed his wife to death around 2:30am yesterday during an altercation over the issue. Around 7:30am, he surrendered to police, he added.

Police recovered the body and sent it to Rangpur Medical College Hospital morgue for an autopsy.

## 2 boys arrested for attacking cops

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Two teenage boys were arrested for beating up plainclothes policemen in Patuakhali town on Thursday evening.

Masum Matabbar, 25, and Mohammad Juran, 26, took primary treatment, said police.

They were jostled by a group of youths on the stairs of New Market while going to the second floor, said sources.

Following this, they locked in an altercation and the youths started beating them up, they added.

On information, police went to the spot and arrested two 16-year-old boys.

A case was filed against them.

Mohammad Moniruzzaman, OC of Patuakhali Police Station, said they collected the CCTV footage of the incident and would take legal actions against the arrestees.

## Invisible killer in our homes

FROM PAGE 1

Health experts say indoor air quality has a greater health impact as people stay indoors for most of the time a day.

The life expectancy loss due to air pollution is 2.91 years – 1.16 years cut short by outdoor air pollution while 1.53 years by indoor air pollution, says another study.

In Bangladesh, more than 75 percent households still use solid fuels for cooking, and indoor air pollution caused by this resulted in more than 94,800 deaths in 2019 alone, it found.

The study, "State of Global Air 2020: How Does Air Pollution Affect Life Expectancy around the World", was conducted by US-based organisations Health Effects Institute and Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation.

It also said 12 percent of infant deaths in Bangladesh are also linked to exposure to household air pollution.

**'EXTREMELY DANGEROUS'** Abdus Salam, a chemistry professor at Dhaka University, also a co-author of the "In-kitchen aerosol exposure" research team, said the study was aimed at getting a picture of indoor air quality.

"Indoor air pollution is a graver health concern than outdoor. The general perception is that indoor is safe but we found indoor air pollution dangerous for human health as our kitchens in urban settings are very small with a poor ventilation system," he told

The Daily Star.

The team found PM 2.5 level reaching up to 1,500 micrograms per cubic metre during the time of cooking and that is "extremely dangerous", he added.

Published in April, the report attributed small kitchens, extensive frying and long cooking duration as reasons for high PM 2.5 concentrations in Dhaka.

The 12 cities where the study was conducted are Dhaka, Chennai, Nanjing, Medellin, Sao Paulo, Cairo, Sulaymaniyah, Addis Ababa, Akure, Blantyre, Dar-es-Salaam and Nairobi.

In each city, five low-income homes were used for one-week continuous air quality monitoring of their kitchens.

According to the EPA, an independent executive agency of the US federal government, the indoor air pollution sources include fuel-burning combustion appliances, tobacco consumption, products for household cleaning and maintenance and central heating or cooling systems.

Some sources, such as building materials, furnishings and products like air fresheners, can release pollutants more or less continuously.

Other sources, related to activities like smoking, cleaning, redecorating or doing hobbies release pollutants intermittently.

Prof Salam suggested setting up a proper ventilation system in the kitchen. He also said mechanical ventilation like an exhaust fan can help mitigate harmful

cooking emissions that mostly impact women and children.

Pallavi Pant, a senior scientist at Health Effects Institute in the US, told The Daily Star, "Long-term exposure to household air pollution is associated with an increased risk of ischemic heart disease, lung cancer, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, lower respiratory infections [such as pneumonia], stroke, type 2 diabetes, and adverse birth outcomes. Household air pollution is also associated with the development of cataracts."

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Mohammad Abdul Motalib, deputy director of the Department of Environment, said they cannot say exactly what is the status of the country's indoor air quality as they don't monitor it.

"To make a comment, we need specific data which we don't have," Motalib said.

## Ukraine war

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its pro-democracy neighbour.

"Victory will be ours," Zelensky said in the video.

It included Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal and presidential advisor Mykhaylo Podolyak, recalling an impromptu message they posted outside government buildings at the onset of the war, vowing to remain in the country.

## Grand opening on the cards

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set to organise a series of programmes at the Janjira end showcasing one of the country's biggest economic achievements since liberation.

A gargantuan congregation of 10 lakh people has been planned at Kathalbari of Shibchar in Madaripur district on the august occasion, AL sources said.

A stage, shaped like a boat, the AL's electoral symbol, will be built on the bank of the Padma at the Kathalbari ferry terminal, from where the entire

bridge is visible.

Standing atop the boat-shaped stage, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will face the gathering while colourful boats carrying the ruling party supporters ply the river.

The long-cherished bridge from Mawa to Janjira over the mighty river will directly connect the southwestern parts of the country with Dhaka and the northern and eastern regions.

AL decided to gather the participants from nearby districts and 21 southern districts.

## Rackets exploit legal channel

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the officials said.

Besides, the Border Guard Bangladesh seized 50.79kg of gold from smugglers in 2021. But BGB has already seized over 55.49kg of gold this year.

A top official of the Criminal Investigation Department said only about one out of every 10 stashes gets caught.

Interestingly, since the gold policy was enacted in 2018, only 253kg was imported for business purposes through LC (letter of credit) as of February this year, said Abdur Rouf, immediate past director general of Customs Intelligence and Investigation Directorate (CIID), at a briefing on February 27.

Officials said the smugglers buy gold bullions from Dubai, Saudi

Arabia, Singapore and Malaysia.

They then contact Bangladeshi individuals flying back home, giving each the legal amount of gold to carry back home. The smugglers give the travellers tax money, and an additional amount in return for the favour.

After the travellers reach Bangladesh, members of the racket receive the gold from them.

Citing statistics, Sanuarul Kabir, deputy commissioner of Dhaka Customs House, said over four tonnes of gold bullions were brought through Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport under the Baggage Rules in January this year.

A top customs official said the government has earned almost Tk 500 crore in revenues from travellers who brought gold

under the Baggage Rules last year.

Besides, one can bring gold ornaments weighing 100 grams under the rules without paying any duty. Customs officials do not keep records of these ornaments.

Bangladesh Jewellers' Association (Bajus) General Secretary Dilip Kumar Agarwala said importing gold through LC (letter of credit) is much more expensive with a tax of over Tk 7,000 per bhori.

Shamit Ghosh Apu, a member of Bajus, said this is why many jewellers buy the gold bars people bring under the Baggage Rules.

Gold smugglers use Bangladesh as a transit because regulations on gold import is stricter in India than in Bangladesh, said Shamit.

Gold is often used for illegal transactions to

personalities.

Before that, the PM is expected to inaugurate the Padma Bridge at the Mawa end at 9:00am in a programme organised by the government.

She will then attend a civic gathering comprising 2,500-3,000 people from all professional bodies, senior government officials, leaders from different political parties, civil society members and diplomats.

After the meeting, she will cross the bridge in an SUV, becoming the first citizen to use the bridge

officially. On the opposite end of the bridge, at Janjira point, will await a foundation plaque to be inaugurated by the premier.

From there, she will join the mammoth rally.

Two murals of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman and Sheikh Hasina will be unveiled on both sides of the bridge.

The bridge, built at a cost of Tk 30,193 crore, is likely to be decorated with flags of Bangladesh and China because a Chinese contractor built the structure.

## Nadal

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after rolling his right ankle in the final point of the 12th game of the second set.

Nadal, who turned 36 on Friday and is in pursuit of a men's record-extending 22nd Grand Slam crown, will face either Marin Cilic or Casper Ruud on Sunday.

"Tough now. Very sad, he was playing an unbelievable tournament, he's a very good colleague on the tour," Nadal said. "I know how much he's fighting to win a Grand Slam." "It was a super tough match ... of course being in the final of Roland Garros is a dream but at the same time that it finishes that way is tough. Seeing him cry like this is a tough moment."

The 25-year-old Zverev had matched the Spaniard with his power, with both players wasting set points in the first set, and Nadal coming out on top in the tiebreak after 91 minutes.