



A LEAP for Asian connectivity

TUHIN SHUBHRA ADHIKARY

This is a dream bridge which will not only establish the long-awaited direct road and rail communications between the capital and south-western parts of Bangladesh but also contribute to greater connectivity and trade among Asian countries.

The Padma Bridge will have significant economic impacts by cutting the travel time as well as freight costs, and thus bring prosperity for 21 districts in particular and the nation in general.

It will also work as a key component of the Asian Highway-1, boosting economic growth of Asia and improving the country's standing in the continent.

In August 2009, Bangladesh joined the network conceived by the United Nations with a view to setting up regional connectivity among Asian countries via a highway system of over 145,000km roads passing through 32 countries.

Bangladesh is connected with three Asian Highway routes named AH-1, AH-2 and AH-41 with a total length of 1,771km.

The AH-1, connecting Assam with West Bengal of India via Sylhet-Dhaka-Narail-Jashore, had two missing

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NEW ERA IN RAIL, ROAD LINKS

ASIAN HIGHWAY 1 ROUTE
 Guwahati (India)-Tamabil-Sylhet-Shaistaganj-Narsingdi-Kanchpur-Dhaka-Mawa-Charjanajat-Bhanga-Bhatiapara-Kalna Ferry Ghat-Narail-Jashore-Benapole-Petrapole (India)

SIGNIFICANCE

- It will be the shortest route between two parts of India via Bangladesh
- The network comprises over 145,000km of roads passing through 32 countries

TRANS-ASIAN RAILWAY 4 ROUTE
 Petrapole (India)-Benapole-Jashore-Narail-Bhanga-Mawa-Narayanganj-Dhaka-Tongi-Akhaura-Ctg-Dohazari-Gundum-Myanmar

SIGNIFICANCE

- It will reduce the travel distance from Dhaka to Kolkata by 63km
- The network comprises approximately 125,500km of railway lines serving 28 member countries

Padma Bridge handed over to the govt

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The long cherished Padma Bridge is now ready to be inaugurated as the contractor formally handed over the bridge to the project authorities.

China Major Bridge Engineering Co Ltd, the contractor for the main bridge, handed over the bridge to Project Director Shafiqul Islam on Wednesday.

"We formally received the bridge for official or commercial use," Shafiqul Islam told The Daily Star yesterday. "The bridge is now fully ready for opening."

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will inaugurate the country's longest bridge tomorrow morning.

The 6.5-kilometre road and rail bridge, directly connecting the capital with the southwestern districts, will be opened to public at 6:00am the following day.

As per the programme schedule, Hasina will take part in a civil rally at the Mawa end of the bridge at 10:00am tomorrow.

At the programme, Road Transport and

SEE PAGE 6 COL 5

Inaccessible, in distress

Both admin and private efforts far from enough for over a third of Sylhet unions

ZYMA ISLAM, MOUDUD AHMED SUJAN, DWOHA CHOWDHURY and MINTU DESHWARA

Thousands of people in 93 unions – one-third of the total 336 in Sylhet division – suffer immensely as no humanitarian aid could reach them as yet.

People of another 67 unions are struggling for adequate relief. The administrative efforts to distribute relief are falling short everywhere, while individuals and private organisations are also not being able to reach those who need it the most.

The information gathered by The Daily Star from the grassroots shows that adequate relief is not reaching the people in remote areas even days after the flood hit them.

Of the unions still waiting for any kind of humanitarian aid, 36 are in Sylhet district, 38 in Sunamganj, eight in Moulvibazar and 11 in Habiganj.

Meanwhile, NGO aids have reached 57,860 households in 24 upazilas of Sylhet, Sunamganj and Netrakona till yesterday, said a media release.

RELIEF STILL SCARCE

Aytun, a resident of Chatlapur village of Jaintiapur union, where waters went up chest-high about 10 days ago, has spent the last nine days eating dry flattened rice (chira).

Yesterday was a good day for her, and her two children and husband, as they could finally cook some rice. But there was nothing else.

She had fixed bamboo poles horizontally across her hut and built a shelf, where she and her family spent the last week and half, while the flood battered her home.

"We had some food in the beginning ... But the last nine days were

SEE PAGE 2 COL 5

Schools in the north brace for hard times

STAR REPORT

Academic activities in several hundred educational institutions in the country's north have been suspended for about a week as those have been inundated with floodwater.

Many students are worried as their educational materials have been swept away by floodwater.

In Kurigram and Lalmonirhat, teaching in 337 primary and secondary schools and colleges remain stopped for a week.

Education officials said many schools are now being used as flood shelters. They will resume academic activities after the floodwater recedes.

"My school has been shut for the last eight days. People are now

SEE PAGE 2 COL 6

'With no courage to return, how can he lead?'

PM questions Tarique's leadership ability

STAR REPORT

How can BNP leader Tarique Rahman lead the party when he does not even dare to return home, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said.

"If a political leader has no courage to return home, how can he lead?" she said at a discussion yesterday, marking the 73rd founding anniversary of the Awami League, reports UNB.

Hasina, also the AL president,



presided over the programme, held at the party central office on Bangabandhu Avenue. She joined the event via videoconference from the Gono Bhaban.

The PM said it was incorrect to say that Tarique was not allowed to return home. "Nobody ousted him. He willingly went abroad and then didn't return."

Tarique went abroad during the tenure of the then caretaker

PHOTO ON PAGE 3

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Padma Bridge: A display of local industries' prowess

B1

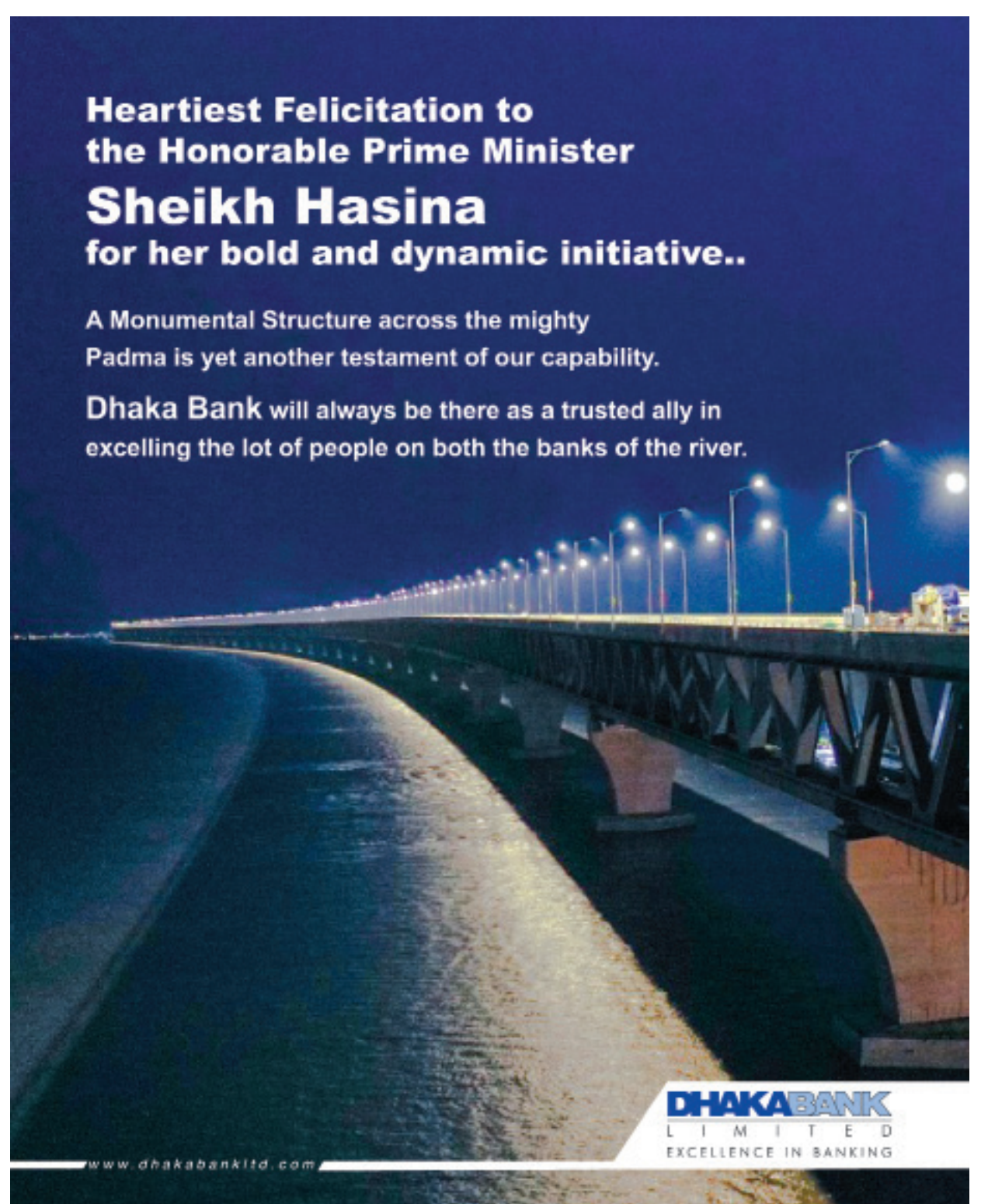
Time for Padma Bridge Plus

B1

Heartiest Felicitation to the Honorable Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina for her bold and dynamic initiative..

A Monumental Structure across the mighty Padma is yet another testament of our capability.

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Jamuna Bank Remembers Its Sponsor Director on his 47th Birthday



Anindya Majumder (Bappu)
 24 June 1975 | 16 January 2007

On his 47th Birth Anniversary, we honour and cherish the memory of **Anindya Majumder (Bappu)**, a loving son, a doting brother, a devoted friend and a dedicated professional.

He had been a founding director of Jamuna Bank Ltd. and a director at New Generation Construction Co. Ltd.

We miss him dearly everyday,
Family, Friends And Colleagues

116 ISLAMIC SPEAKERS ACC to decide on enquiry after review of 'white paper'

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission yesterday said it is reviewing the "white paper" that named 116 religious leaders and Islamic speakers for their "involvement in laundering money, funding militancy and spreading communal hatred".

"After the review, the commission will take measures... no decision has been made for launching an enquiry," said ACC Secretary Mahbub Hossain yesterday at a press briefing at the ACC headquarters, hours after some media outlets reported that the anti-graft body is enquiring into allegations against the 116 religious leaders.

On May 11, the People's Inquiry Commission on Fundamentalist and Communal Violence -- widely known as Gono Commission -- submitted the white paper titled "2,000 days of Fundamentalist and Communal Violence in Bangladesh" to the ACC.

The 30-member commission was formed in February last year comprising members of the Parliamentary Caucus on Indigenous and Minorities and the Ekattorer Ghatok Dalal Nirmul Committee.

The commission on June 21 issued an order, a copy of which The Daily Star obtained.

"Decision has been made to give approval to an enquiry into the allegations through a three-member team of special enquiry and investigation -- Director Sayed Iqbal Hossain, Deputy

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1,319 Covid cases logged in a day

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 1,319 new Covid-19 cases were recorded, against the 9,214 samples tested, in the 24 hours till 8:00am yesterday, while one death was reported during the period.

The positivity rate stood at 14.32 percent, up from yesterday's 13.3.

With the latest, the death toll has risen to 29,135 since the pandemic hit the country, according to the data of the Directorate General of Health Services.

It's the fourth consecutive death in a week. The latest death was of a woman, aged 61-70, from Dhaka division.

Of those who died in the past week, one was vaccinated with a single dose, while three were inoculated with two doses.

The number of daily Covid cases crossed the 1,000-mark after nearly four months on Wednesday.

Earlier on February 25, it recorded 1,409 cases with 11 deaths.

The country's total caseload rose to 1,960,528, according to DGHS data.

At least 127 patients have recovered from Covid-19 in the last 24 hours, with the total number of recoveries now at 19,06,232.

The recovery rate stands at 97.23 percent.



Afghan men look for their belongings amid the ruins of a house damaged by an earthquake in Bernal district, Paktika province, Afghanistan yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

'Nothing is left here'

Thousands left homeless; rescuers struggle to reach remote quake-hit zone in Afghanistan; death toll crosses 1,000

AGENCIES

Organised rescue efforts are struggling to reach the site of an earthquake in Afghanistan that has killed more than 1,000 people, as survivors dig through the rubble by hand to find those still missing.

Wednesday's 5.9-magnitude quake struck hardest in the rugged east, downing mobile phone towers and power lines while triggering rock and mudslides which blocked mountain roads. Heavy rain and poor communication were also preventing rescuers from reaching to the most affected areas.

The quake was Afghanistan's deadliest in two decades and officials said the toll could rise. An estimated 1,500 other people were reported injured, the state-run news agency said.

Entire villages have been levelled in some of the worst affected districts, where survivors said they were struggling to find equipment to bury their dead.

"When I came out of my house it was quiet because all the people were buried under their homes. Nothing is left here," said 21-year-old Zaitullah Ghurziwal.

"There are no blankets, tents, there's no shelter. Our entire water distribution system is destroyed. Everything is devastated, houses are destroyed. There is literally nothing to eat."

The disaster poses a huge logistical challenge for Afghanistan's new Taliban government, which has isolated itself from much of the world by introducing hardline Islamist rule that subjugates women and girls.

"Getting information from the ground is very difficult because of bad networks," Mohammad Amin Huzaila, head of information for badly hit Paktika province, told AFP yesterday.

"The area has been affected by floods because of heavy rains last night... it is also difficult to access the affected sites."

The aid-dependent country saw the bulk of its foreign assistance cut off in the wake of the Taliban takeover last August, and even before the earthquake the United Nations warned of a humanitarian crisis that threatened the entire population.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the global agency has "fully mobilised" to help, deploying health teams and supplies of

medicine, food, trauma kits and emergency shelter to the quake zone.

Afghan government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid yesterday tweeted that aid flights had landed from Qatar and Iran, while Pakistan had sent trucks carrying tents, medical supplies and food across the land border.

The UN said its World Food Programme (WFP) was sending food and logistics equipment to affected areas, with the aim of initially supporting 3,000 households.

The UN humanitarian coordinator for Afghanistan, Ramiz Alakbarov, told reporters nearly 2,000 homes were likely destroyed -- a huge number in an area where the average household size is more than 20 people.

The healthcare system in Afghanistan was already on the verge of collapse. Even before the Taliban takeover, Afghanistan's emergency response teams were stretched to deal with the natural disasters that frequently strike the country.

But with only a handful of airworthy planes and helicopters left since they returned to power, any immediate response to the latest catastrophe is further limited.

Man arrested over rape of co-worker

A CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

Police yesterday arrested a man for his alleged involvement in the rape of his co-worker at a restaurant in Narsingdi.

The arrestee is Asrafur Islam alias Shah Alam, 25, of the district's Sadar upazila, said police.

The teenage victim filed a case with Narsingdi Police Station yesterday morning.

According to her complaint, Asrafur first raped her on June 15 when she was resting at a room adjacent to the restaurant.

On June 18, she was raped again at a hostel at Hazipur union in the district, the complaint added.

The victim was sent to One Stop Crisis Centre of Narsingdi Sadar Hospital for medical tests, said Firoz Talukdar, officer-in-charge of Narsingdi Police Station.

BNP leader hacked to death in Narsingdi

A CORRESPONDENT, Narsingdi

A BNP leader was hacked to death in Narsingdi's Kath Bazar area on Wednesday night.

Sujith Sutradhar, 55, a carpenter by profession, was a former vice president of Hazipur union unit BNP and a former member at ward-2 of the same union.

Two others -- Sujon Sutradhar, 30, the victim's son, and their employee Dina, 55 -- were injured during the attack. They received primary treatment.

According to Sujon, some 10-12 men, led by Hazipur Union Parishad Chairman Yusuf Khan Pinto's brother Monir Hossain, attacked them with sharp weapons over previous enmity.

Kazi Ashrafur Islam Azim, superintendent of Narsingdi police, claimed an ex-employee Masum Mia and his fellow men carried out the attack.

Census deadline extended by 7 days for 4 flood-hit dists

STAR BUSINESS REPORT

The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics has extended the time of the ongoing population and housing census by seven days for four flood-hit districts.

The districts are Sylhet, Sunamganj, Moulvibazar in Sylhet division and Netrokona in Mymensingh division.

Dilder Hossain, project director of the census, told The Daily Star yesterday.

"We completed our countrywide census within the deadline of June 21. But we have extended the time until June 28 to include all the people of the four flood-hit districts," Dilder said.

Asked, he said, "We have circulated several emergency contact numbers in online platforms and through posters, so that they can call us and we can include them."

A leap for Asian connectivity

FROM PAGE 1

links: one is the Padma Bridge and another Kalna Bridge in Narail.

Of the two, the 690m bridge construction in Kalna was comparatively easier, but the 6,150km bridge over the mighty Padma was always a massive task in terms of the magnitude of the work.

With the opening of Padma Bridge tomorrow and Kalna Bridge's expected inauguration by September, those two missing links will disappear.

The Padma Bridge, longest in Bangladesh, will also pave the way for putting in place a new route for the Trans-Asian Railway (TAR) network, another UN initiative aimed at creating an integrated railway network across Asia.

It would be the fourth and the shortest TAR route, which would link India and Myanmar via the country and ultimately become a part of a network comprising 125,500km of railway lines serving 28 countries.

Apart from contributing to poverty reduction for the south-western region, the opening of Padma Bridge will help turn Kuakata into a major tourist destination.

The nation will also be able to make the most of Mongla port and under-construction Payra seaport, taking the burden off the Chattogram port, which often struggles to serve the fast-growing economy owing to inadequate facilities.

AH-1 & PADMA BRIDGE
The UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP) conceived the Asian Highway project and adopted

an Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network in November 2003.

The aim was to establish regional cooperation among the mainland countries of Asia, based on road transport linkages, according to the Road Transport and Highway Division's documents.

A cabinet meeting chaired by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina approved the accession of Bangladesh to the Asian Highway network on June 15, 2009. The government signed the Instrument of Accession on July 5 the same year.

The route of AH-1 is Guwahati in Assam-Tamabil-Sylhet-Shaistaganj-Narsingdi-Kanchpur-Dhaka-Mawa-Charjanaj-Bhanga-Bhatiapara-Kalna Ferry Ghat-Narail-Jashore-Benapole-Petrapole in West Bengal. Its length is 492km.

The route of AH-2 is Guwahati-Tamabil-Sylhet-Narsingdi-Dhaka South (Jatrabari)-Dhaka North (Banani Rail Crossing)-Joydevpur-Elenga-Hatikamrul-Bogra-Rangpur-Panchagarh-Banglabandha Fulbari in West Bengal. Its length is 517km, excluding the 294km common part of AH-1 and AH-2.

The route of AH-41 -- Teknaf Cox's Bazar-Feni-Moinamoti-Dhaka-Joydevpur-Hatikamrul-Banpara-Dasuria-Kushtia-Jhenaidah-Jashore-Khulna-Mongla -- is limited within the country for now. Its length is 762km, excluding the 162km common part of AH2 and AH-41.

"With the opening of Padma Bridge and Kalna

Bridge by September, there would be no missing links and thus an uninterrupted connectivity would be established [on AH-1 route], which is a significant development," Shishir Kanti Routh, an additional chief engineer of Roads and Highways Department (RHD).

The most portion of the AH-1 route is two-lane and also it has four-lane stretches in urban areas and market places.

The RHD is implementing two projects involving Tk 20,500 crore to turn Kanchpur Sylhet and Sylhet-Tamabil portions into four-lane keeping two additional lanes for slow-moving vehicles.

The physical work of the projects is expected to start this year.

Of the route, the portion from Kanchpur to Dhaka is now an eight-lane highway and Dhaka-Mawa-Bhanga a four-lane expressway.

The RHD is going to take up a project to turn the 135km road from Bhanga to Benapole via Kalna, Narail and Jashore into a four-lane highway with Indian lines of credit.

Meanwhile, the department has almost completed construction of the 690m bridge over the Madhumati river at Kalna point with a cost of Tk 959 crore.

"Once all the projects are completed, the entire AH-1 route would be elevated to either primary [access-controlled motorway] or Class-1 (four or more lanes highway)," said Shishir Kanti, also a member of RHD's Thematic Group on Regional Connectivity.

NEW TAR ROUTE
The route would

run through Petrapole-Benapole-Jashore-Narail-Bhanga-Mawa-Narayanganj-Dhaka-Tongi before meeting TAR-1.

Transport expert Prof Haduzzaman said the Padma Bridge has opened a new route for Trans Asian Railway, through which the railway would be connected with a big network.

"This will open a new window for Bangladesh Railway," he told this correspondent recently, adding that the BR has to do a lot of things, including gauge conversions, to establish effective connectivity with TAR.

It has two sub-routes -- Tongi-Dhaka and Akhaura-Kulaura-Shahbazpur-Mahisasan of India.

The route of TAR-2 runs through Singabadi in West Bengal-Rohanpur-Abdulpur-Ishwardi to meet TAR-1.

The route of TAR-3 runs through Radhikapur in West Bengal-Birol-Dinajpur-Parbatipur-Abdulpur to meet TAR-1.

With the building of a double-decker bridge -- roadway on the top and railway on the bottom -- over the Padma river, the country enters a new era of railway connectivity.

Bangladesh Railway has already undertaken a project titled "Padma Bridge Rail Link Project (PBRLP)" to connect the capital and Jashore with a 169km rail line via the Padma Bridge at the cost of Tk 39,246 crore.

And, following BR's request, UNESCAP agreed to incorporate the Dhaka-Bhanga-Jashore track as a fourth route of the TAR network in Bangladesh.

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run through Petrapole-Benapole-Jashore-Narail-Bhanga-Mawa-Narayanganj-Dhaka-Tongi before meeting TAR-1.

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The route would

Schools in the north

FROM PAGE 1

primary schools have been shut for over a week due to flooding, said Thamina Khatun, the district primary education officer (DPEO).

Jahidul Islam, a resident of Khatiamari char in the district's Sariakandi upazila, said his two sons are class 5 and class 2 students in Biramer Pachgachi Primary School.

"Water has entered our house and the school nine days ago. My sons are now stranded at home," he said.

In Gaibandha, flooding has caused the closure of at least 111 primary schools, said the local DPEO officer.

In Sirajganj, water entered

84 primary schools, but the authorities concerned were yet to shut those.

"We are trying to shift academic activities to those school buildings which are not inundated," said Aminul Islam Mandol, DPEO of Sirajganj.

Meanwhile, the Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre yesterday forecasted that the overall flood situation in Kurigram, Gaibandha, Bogura and Sirajganj may improve today.

"Our correspondents in Lalmonirhat, Bogura and Pabna contributed to this report.

Inaccessible, in distress

FROM PAGE 1
incredibly hard. We didn't have a single meal," Aytun said.

The strong flood currents had washed away all her possessions.

"I used to work as a day labourer. Until the waters go down, I will have no income."

A boatful of aid came to the spot and gave her a bag. To her dismay, she found only a litre of bottled mineral water and some more chira.

In Pashchim Gardhana village of Darbast union, people flocked to a relief boat for rice.

They each came in their own dinghy boats, while those without vehicles called the relief boat from afar standing in chest deep water.

This was the first relief boat for them.

"I have two days' worth of rice left, and a six-member family to feed," said Faridun, sitting on a dinghy.

"This was the last of the rice I had bought. We have

set up the stove on the bed and that is why we are being able to cook."

Meanwhile, flood-affected areas in Netrakona are also distressed as relief is still scarce.

Amzad Hossain, a resident of Lengura union in Netrakona, said, "At least 300 houses have been washed away since the flood hit the union last Friday. People here received no food aid till today [yesterday]."

Of all the 10 upazilas there, people in Komlakanda, Durgapur, Barhatta, Mohanganj and Khaliajuri were the worst affected.

In Khaliajuri, army personnel have been coordinating the government and non-government aid activities effectively. Roni, one of the locals, told The Daily Star yesterday.

Razib Sarker, a local journalist who has visited multiple flood-hit areas in the last six days, said, "The majority of the people have

been starving. The local administration could reach only the nearest areas. But the hard-to-reach areas have remained untouched."

ADMIN STRUGGLES
Abdul Latif, member of the union parishad, said they got 24 sacks of rice for 1,100 families -- meaning each family got enough to last a day.

Abul Kalam, a member of Pashchim Jallong area in Sylhet's Gowainghat upazila, said, "We are trying to reach the people who are stranded in the village and in dire need of relief, as the snapped-off communications are being restored."

Several local council representatives and volunteers confirmed they were struggling to reach many flood-affected people due to accessibility issues and the crisis of relief; administrative officials also admitted that the crisis is real.

Rozina Akter, upazila nirbahi officer in Sylhet's Bishwanath upazila, said

"Boats are rare in the upazila while non-flooded roads are blocking the paths. Moreover, not many private efforts are seen in the upazila."

Muntasir Hasan, UNO of Dharmapasha and Madhyanager upazilas in Sunamganj, said, "The villages in deep haars are hard to reach. Due to accessibility issues, not much relief is reaching the flood-hit people in the upazilas."

DEATH TOLL
The fatalities caused by the floods rose to 68 after 24 people died in 24 hours till yesterday morning, UNB reports citing the Directorate General of Health Services.

Of them, 23 are from Sylhet division alone, the report said, adding that 20 people have died by drowning in floodwater, two died in lightning strikes and one from diarrhoea.

The deaths were recorded from May 17 to June 23.

5 lakh expats returned home after losing job

Minister tells JS

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Since the Covid-19 outbreak, more than five lakh Bangladeshi expatriate workers have returned home after losing their jobs, Expatriates' Welfare Minister Imran Ahmad yesterday informed parliament.

The minister said this in reply to a query of Awami League MP Manzur Hossain from Faridpur-1.

Replying to another query, Ahmad told parliament that 5.4 lakh new migrant workers have been employed abroad till May 2022, due to various diplomatic initiatives of the government.

In response to a question of AL MP Didarul Alam from Chattogram-4, the minister said till May 2022, a total of 10.50 lakh female migrant workers have been working in 84 countries of the world.

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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina observes a moment of silence after placing a wreath at the portrait of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman at Dhanmondi-32, on the occasion of Awami League's 73rd founding anniversary yesterday.

PHOTO: PTD

Dhaka air remains 'unhealthy'

UNB, Dhaka

Though Dhaka did not take the spot of the world's most polluted city, its air quality remained "unhealthy" yesterday.

With an air quality index (AQI) score of 112 at 9:01am, the metropolis ranked sixth in the list of cities with the worst air.

Indonesia's Jakarta, Chile's Santiago and Pakistan's Karachi occupied the first three spots, with AQI scores of 171, 154 and 151, respectively.

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

A report by Department of Environment (DoE) and World Bank in March 2019 pointed out that the three main sources of air pollution in Dhaka are "brick kilns, fumes from vehicles and dust from construction sites".

As per the World Health Organization, air pollution kills an estimated seven million people worldwide every year, largely as a result of increased mortality from stroke, heart disease and other conditions.

PRAYER TIMING
JUNE 24

Fajr	Juma	Asr	Maghrib	Esha
AZAN 4-05	12-30	5-00	6-52	8-17
JAMAAT 4-40	1-15	5-15	6-55	8-45

SOURCE: ISLAMIC FOUNDATION

Tortured while on video call with family

Victim shares ordeal of being held captive by trafficking syndicate in Iraq

MOHAMMAD JAMIL KHAN

Find your fellow Bangladeshis. Bond over the sweet homesick feelings. Be friends. Invite them over for a meal.

Once they are in your den, confine them amid their utter surprise.

This is how an Iraq-based transnational human trafficking syndicate members have been trapping Bangladeshi expatriates, along with their Pakistani and Iraqi cohorts.

In the first 24 hours of captivity, syndicate members torture the victims physically and record the whole ordeal. The videos are later sent to the victims' family members to blackmail them for a ransom.

These horrific accounts came to the fore after seven Bangladeshi victims were released from the syndicate's captivity in Iraq in the last 48 hours. Of them, three have managed to establish

communication with the Bangladesh embassy in Iraq and back to their work. Five remain untraced.

Following the arrest of two members of the syndicate — Imran Hossain and Alamgir Hossain — from Narayanganj and Dhaka by the economic and human trafficking team of Counter Terrorism and Transnational Crime (CTTC) unit on Monday, the victims were released.

According to CTTC officials, the released victims have been identified as Apel Ali, Sher Ali, Bablu, Maruf, Zihad, Foyzal and Mazlu Ar Rahman.

Tohidul Islam, CTTC additional deputy commissioner, told this correspondent that victim Apel, Sher Ali and Mazlu went back to work safely.

"We are currently trying to trace the five other victims," he said.

The investigators have managed to get details of five Bangladeshi syndicate

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LIVEABILITY INDEX

Dhaka seventh least liveable city in world

HELEMUL ALAM

Dhaka is the seventh least liveable city in the world, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit's Global Liveability Index for 2022.

The annual global survey was published yesterday.

The Global Liveability Index ranked 173 cities and Bangladesh's capital became 166, with 39.2 points.

The index ranks the cities based on more than 30 qualitative and quantitative factors across five broad categories: stability, healthcare, culture and environment, education, and infrastructure.

In 2021, Dhaka ranked fourth least liveable among 140 cities in the world. It ranked third worst in 2019 and second worst in the 2018 index. No report was published in 2020 due to the pandemic.

Vienna of Austria has been ranked the most liveable city in the world with 99.1 points, while Copenhagen of Denmark and Zurich of Switzerland ranked second and third, respectively, with 98 and 96.3 points.

Damascus, the war-torn capital of Syria, remains the least liveable city with 30.7 points, while Lagos of Nigeria ranked second worst with 32.2 points and Tripoli of Libya ranked third worst with 32.5 points.

Karachi of Pakistan ranked 168th with 37.5 points.

WHAT EXPERTS SAY

Adil Mohammad Khan, former general secretary of Bangladesh Institute of Planners (BIP), said there has been no significant development in the city's quality of life in recent times.

He said the main reason behind Dhaka's present situation is the lack of growth control, which is crucial for advancing in the ranking.

Adil also mentioned failure to protect the environment, lack of proper management, unchecked number of vehicles, especially motorcycles, entering the city, and encroachment of waterbodies as major reasons behind Dhaka's gradual downfall.

TOP 3 LIVEABLE CITIES | TOP 3 LEAST LIVEABLE CITIES

Vienna	Damascus
Copenhagen	Lagos
Zurich	Tripoli

REASONS BEHIND DHAKA'S SITUATION

- No improvement in quality of life
- Lack of growth control, management
- Failure to protect environment
- Unchecked number of vehicles

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Decentralisation
- Shifting industries gradually
- Controlling city's growth rate strictly
- No new industries in city

"If there is no control on growth, it will not work even by increasing roads or recovering canals, as when one side of a canal is being recovered the other side is getting occupied again."

Padma Bridge has already been constructed, and now decentralisation of the city is very important, he said. "If we can reduce Dhaka's density of population through decentralisation, we will be able to proceed in other indicators gradually."

The industries, which are one of the main causes behind the low ranking, will have to be shifted gradually, he said. Then it will be possible to make Dhaka liveable, otherwise the pressure on the capital will continue to increase.

"The government will have to control the city's growth rate strictly. Also, it should not allow any new industrial and commercial facility for its improvement," he added.

Government celebrating, keeping flood victims hungry

Alleges Fakhru

UNB

The government is indulging in Padma Bridge's celebration by keeping lakhs of flood victims hungry, alleged BNP secretary general Mirza Fakhru Islam Alamgir yesterday.

"Our people are starving and not getting treatment in flood affected areas, but they [govt] are occupied with Padma Bridge's inauguration festival," he said.

The BNP leader made the remarks while distributing relief materials among flood-affected people on the premises of Khazar Mokam High School in Sylhet's Jaintiapur upazila.

Fakhru claimed that the government allocated only Tk 60 lakh for 30 lakh flood victims in Sylhet, while hundreds of crores of taka are being spent on the inauguration programme of Padma Bridge.

"People are being washed away by the floods, not getting food and treatment. But the government is paying no attention to it," Fakhru said.

Fakhru along with BNP standing committee member Iqbal Hasan Mahmud Tuku reached Sylhet from Dhaka by road at noon to witness the flood situation and distribute relief materials.

Be organised, do research, hold on to culture

Says Serajul Islam Choudhury at event marking his 87th birthday

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

To bring about a political change in the country, people will need to prepare themselves culturally, Professor Emeritus Serajul Islam Choudhury said yesterday.

While delivering an autobiographical speech marking his 87th birthday at Bangla Academy, the Dhaka University professor also said the country needs a social revolution.

"To bring about that revolution, cultural activists should be organised, do research and continue cultural practices," Serajul said at the event, organised by Natun Diganta, a quarterly magazine edited by him.

Serajul proposed creating a socialist intellectual guild, under which libraries will be built and magazines will be published. It will facilitate games, cultural activities and juvenile movement.

The academic mentioned an article published by Cambridge University Press, which stated that in communism, the bourgeoisie are the villains, the proletariat the victims, and communist parties heroes, but this is all melodrama.

As a result of these thoughts, the leftist world is full of melancholy and frustration, he said.

He said the world has become incapable for humans to thrive. The people are standing at

SEE PAGE 4 COL 3



PHOTO: STAR

LEARNING LOSS IN FLOOD Redress it right away: speakers

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Speakers at a discussion yesterday said the government needs to measure the learning loss of students caused by the recent flood situation across the country and respond with proper mapping and adequate budget allocation for the recovery.

The discussion, titled "Education Budget: Trends and Expectations", was organised by Campaign for Popular Education (Campe) and Education Watch, in cooperation with Unicef and British High Commission in Dhaka at a city hotel.

Pointing to children's learning loss amid the pandemic, Campe Executive Director Rasheda K Chowdhury said the country is facing another disaster in recent floods in terms of learning loss.

She suggested the authorities immediately start mapping and collecting data to measure the loss and allocate the budget accordingly.

Rasheda said the out-of-pocket expenses for education are higher than the budgetary allocation in the sector, and the gap is widening gradually.

She urged for launching a "special stipend" to bring back students, who were dropped out amid the pandemic, to the classroom.

"We could have an alternative fund for students who are facing learning loss," said lawmaker Aroma Dutta.

Campe Programme Manager Mostafizur Rahman, in his presentation, said the proposed budget for education in the 2022-2023 fiscal year

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A large part of the main road at Dhaka Udyan was dug up by authorities over two months ago to install an underground cable line. Makeshift bamboo planks have been set up, using which pedestrians have to cross the area, putting themselves at risk of accidents. This photo was taken from Mohammadpur yesterday.

PHOTO: RASHED SHUMON

29 hospitalised with dengue

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

At least 29 dengue patients have been hospitalised across the country in the last 24 hours, till 8:00am yesterday.

With the new cases, three of them outside Dhaka, the total number of dengue cases has risen to 864, according to Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS).

A total of 109 patients are still undergoing treatment; 754 patients have been released from hospitals, and one has died so far.

Warning city corporations of a major outbreak this year, experts suggested the corporations take extensive measures immediately to control Aedes mosquitoes.

Clear, stagnant water, the breeding ground for Aedes mosquitoes,

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5 lakh expats

FROM PAGE 3 Ahmad highlighted the various steps taken by the Bangladesh missions concerned to ensure safety of female workers abroad. Replying to a question of AL MP Ali Azam, Food Minister Sadhan Chandra Majumder said there is no shortage of food grains in the country, as per the demand. In reply to a question of AL MP Abul Kalam Azad, Commerce Minister Tipu Munshi told the House that the government has identified and taken actions against those who

tried to create a volatile environment in the market by stockpiling soybean oil recently. The minister said the market monitoring team, led by the commerce ministry, and the National Consumer Rights Protection Department has already fined the perpetrators. "Fines have been realised from the persons responsible by operating mobile courts run by the district and upazila administrations. In addition, regular cases are being filed against them," Munshi said.

Unsanctuary

FROM PAGE 5 Ecolish Bangladesh Project 2 officials said in 2020, 6,825 maunds of pangas fry were caught in Patuakhali district and around 9,390 maunds in 2021. In the current season, from December to March, 11,340 maunds of pangas fry have been caught. Sagarika Smriti, an

associate researcher of the project, similar measures like protecting hilsa should be taken to save native species of fish. Contacted, District Fisheries Officer Mollah Emdadullah said they have started a campaign to seize these illegal nets and increase their vigilance to protect the pangas fry.

29 hospitalised

FROM PAGE 3 survey found three Dhaka South City Corporation wards to be at "high risk" and 10 at "medium risk" of an outbreak. Nine wards in Dhaka North City Corporation are at "medium risk".

at under construction buildings is abundant this time around. The scenario came to light after DGHS conducted a pre-monsoon survey between March 23 and April 4. The

Be organised, do research

FROM PAGE 3 the transitional point. "The world will be saved if we have social ownership instead of a personal property system." Serajul said the state is an important factor, and it tries to dominate, but none can leave it behind. A society can not run without a state. "To some extent, we have solved the problem of the nation in 1971, but we still cannot solve the problem of class."

a rights activist. "Why would an auditorium be built in an open place like Osmani Udyan? Why would Lalon Akhra be destroyed? It is irrational and unreasonable to make an airport at Arial Beel," he added. Serajul said he had been nominated for the three-member panel by DU senate three times, but he refused to be included, as he was afraid that he would not be able to meet the undue expectations. He also refused to take responsibility as director general of Bangla Academy and as member of UGC. Serajul mentioned that he escaped death in the Liberation War, as Pakistani forces did not have his proper address. In 1971, Serajul was one of the six DU teachers who were warned by then Pakistani

military rulers for their "anti-state" activities. At the programme, Serajul's student Azfar Hussain, who is currently a summer distinguished professor of English and humanities at University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh, said Serajul led all social, democratic and progressive movements from the frontline. "He is an uncompromising intellectual." An academic, essayist, literary critic, political analyst, activist, historian, translator and columnist, Serajul is known for being vocal against injustice and inspiring people to join the struggle for freedom of speech and against violation of fundamental rights. He is the author of countless articles and more than a hundred books.

Redress it right away: speakers

FROM PAGE 3 is 12.01 percent of the total national budget and only 1.8 percent of the country's GDP. Unicef Bangladesh's Chief of Education Deepa Sankar said Bangladesh has achieved tremendous progress in education despite seeing a relatively low allocation. "If the government invests more in education, the country could become the next "knowledge economy", she added. Addressing the event as chief guest, Deputy Minister for Education Mohibul Hassan Chowdhury said the country's education

budget is sufficient. What needs to be done is spending and implementing the budget effectively, he said. Responding to other discussants, the deputy minister said, "We have already improved our physical infrastructures. What we need is a structural and qualitative change in education. To achieve the best outcome, we should think and discuss more on human capacity building than increasing the budget." For that, he emphasised arranging more training programmes for teachers

and ensuring that they are getting better at their job. Responding to a question, Aminul Islam Khan, senior secretary of Primary and Mass Education Ministry, said at present, they are conducting a feasibility study supported by the World Food Programme to resume mid-day meals at schools. Students, teachers, guardians, journalists, researchers and development activists also spoke at the programme, demanding an increase in the budget allocation for education.

Tortured while on

FROM PAGE 3 members from the released victims. CTTC identified them as Shehab Uddin, the ringleader and accused in at least two other trafficking cases in Bangladesh; Sofiq, in charge of the financial transactions; and Sharif, Jahangir and Nahid. Shehab was in-charge of the communication and illegal trafficking of people to Iran or Europe. ADC Tohidul said these suspects are currently hiding in Iraq. "We would seek Interpol assistance to take action against them," he added. Meanwhile, interrogating the two arrestees - Imran and Alamgir - CTTC officials collected details of some bank accounts in Bangladesh, where ransoms used to be deposited. "We are currently verifying the account holders' connection with the suspects," said ADC Tohidul. "We may be able to get more details following the arrest of Shehab," he added.

with a taxi and brought him to a two-storey building in Baghdad's Hay Jama area. Nahid asked Sher Ali to freshen up and then took him to a room on the building's ground floor. To his utmost surprise, he discovered five people on the floor, with their arms and legs all tied up. He was still dealing with the shock when three people came from behind and tied him up as well. Then the torture began. He was physically tortured the entire day. At one point, they started recording the ordeal. The video was sent to Sher Ali's family and asked for a ransom of Tk 1 lakh to an MFS account in Bangladesh. Once his family deposited the money, the attackers, on the next day, asked for another Tk 2 lakh. "This time, they tortured me while on a video call with my family," he said. Through the process, the attackers collected around Tk 4 lakh from Sher Ali's family, he shared, recalling his terrifying experiences. The two other victims - Apel Ali and Mazlu-ar-Rahman - shared similar stories. "We have information that some of these victims' families have paid up to Tk seven lakh to the syndicate members. We may be able to say clearly after collecting the full details," said ADC Tohidul. Nahid invited him to his place, came to pick him up

No new train

FROM PAGE 5 Dhaka but BR can't be able to add new trains due to engine crisis," said Mohammed Nazmul Islam, chief commercial manager of BR Eastern Region. According to the Chattogram Port Authorities (CPA), container handling is increasing at an average rate of about 12 percent per year. But due to the train crisis, often containers have become entangled in the yard of CPA. Kudrot-E-Khuda, CPA terminal manager, said more trains are needed for transporting containers on this route which would speed up the country's import-export scene, due to its affordability. But BR has not added new container trains in the last three decades. "Transporting goods by road is expensive and unsafe. If the BR increases the number of container trains, businessmen would benefit and the pressure on the highways will decrease," said Md Nurun Newaz Salim, director of Federation of Bangladesh Chambers of Commerce and Industry. Jahangir Hossain, general manager of BR Eastern Region, said they have verbally informed the railway ministry about launching new trains on this route. "However, we think it's not feasible unless and until new coaches are imported from abroad," he said.

Advertisement for 'আধুনিক ভাষা ইনস্টিটিউট' (Modern Language Institute) featuring a table with details about courses, fees, and contact information.

Real estate advertisements including 'Flat for Sale' at Baridhara, 'Office Space for Rent' at Green Grandeur, 'Tuition Wanted' for a Maths teacher, and 'Flat for Rent' at Block G of Bashundhara RA.

My boy

FROM PAGE 5 They alleged that the school authorities tortured Shihab that led to the death. The protesters said legal steps must be taken against the school authorities as well as those responsible for Shihab's death. They warned that tougher movement will be launched if their demands are not met by Sunday. Amid the rally, Shihab's bereaved parents, sister and other relatives from Berbari village in Sakhipur upazila could not bear the pain and started crying. "My boy was killed. I want justice," said Shihab's father. Mir Moshraf Hossain, officer-in-charge of Tangail Sadar Police Station, said an unnatural death case was filed with over Shihab's death. "Further necessary legal measures will be taken after getting the autopsy report." The school authorities were not available for comments. The Daily Star could not verify the incident independently.

Advertisement for 'EUROPEAN COMMISSION Directorate General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO) VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT PROGRAMME ASSISTANT (02 Posts)' with application deadline 08/07/2022.

Advertisement for 'ONE Bank' regarding the publication of an Information Memorandum (IM) on the websites, including details about the bank's corporate HQ and contact information.

Large advertisement for 'টিএমএসএস মেডিকেল কলেজ ডেন্টাল ইউনিট' (TMSMS Medical College Dental Unit) featuring details about a 1-year BDS course, fees, and contact information.

Residents

FROM PAGE 5 Asked why card holders were not notified, he said the district administration has asked all local dealers to inform the matter to card holders. Asked if there is a shortage, Jamal Uddin Ahmed, regional chief of TCB Chattogram, said, "We only supply products as per demand... We have enough products... There is no shortage." Contacted, Khaleed Mahmud, member secretary of TCB's product packaging and distribution monitoring committee and secretary of CCC, said, "We are now packaging products... Sales will start on June 26."

Living amidst

FROM PAGE 5 office (Sylhet division), said at this time of the flood, there would be various diseases due to floating garbage in the water. "At the same time, a lack of pure drinking water causes water-borne diseases including diarrhoea, cholera, and diarrhoea. We have prepared a medical team at the union level to deal with that," he added.

Advertisement for 'ঢাকা কমিউনিটি মেডিকেল কলেজ' (Dhaka Community Medical College) featuring details about BDS courses, fees, and contact information.

Residents suffer as TCB sales postponed

ARUN BIKASH DEY, Ctg

Chattogram residents who buy essentials from Trading Corporation Bangladesh (TCB) had to suffer yesterday, as Chattogram District Administration postponed TCB operations, reportedly without notice.

Sales were scheduled to start in the district on Wednesday.

"We didn't know sales have been postponed, because they [authorities] didn't announce anything," said Abul Kashem, who went to a TCB sale point on Abdus Sabur Road in Patiya upazila. "We were told that sales would start yesterday."

"I'm a day labourer. I couldn't go to work because I came here," he said.

Like Kashem, many people with family cards, which are required to buy goods from TCB, in the city and 15 upazilas had to go through a similar ordeal.

Many card holders gathered in front of ward councillors' offices in the city to protest.

Officials of the district administration said operations will start immediately after two to three days.

"We did not get sufficient goods in time, as the supply chain has been disrupted due to the flood," said Tauhidul Islam, senior assistant commissioner of the district administration. "We have also faced problems in packaging goods, as many of the warehouses in the city were inundated due to waterlogging."

"Staffers of Chattogram City Corporation [CCC] are packaging the products in the city," he said. "Packaging activities are almost finished, and we expect to start sales on June 26 in the city and upazilas."

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5



Protesting the death of Shihab, a fifth-grader of a private school, parents, relatives and students demonstrated in Tangail town yesterday, demanding arrest of those responsible. Shihab, a residential student of Srishti School, was found dead in the dormitory on June 20.

PHOTO: STAR

'My boy was killed'

Says father of fifth grader found dead at school dorm

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Tangail

Parents, relatives and students demonstrated in Tangail town yesterday, demanding arrest of those responsible for the death of a fifth grader of a private school.

Shihab, a residential student of Srishti School, was found dead in the dormitory on June 20. The body bore injury marks on different parts.

The demonstrators brought out a protest procession in the town and later formed a human chain and staged a rally in front of Tangail Press Club.

The students of the school and other educational institutions in Tangail and their guardians also joined the programmes.

Terming the death a murder, speakers demanded exemplary punishment for the killers.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Unsafe in sanctuary

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Patuakhali

Even though seven points in the junction of Tentulia, Agunmukha and Buragauranga estuaries in Patuakhali are considered as breeding grounds of pangas fry, netting of the fish continues unabated.

The points were declared as sanctuaries for breeding and migration of the indigenous species of pangas. However, some unscrupulous fishers are catching the fries, defying restrictions.

If this illegal activity continues, experts fear, the indigenous breed of the fish will soon become extinct.

This newspaper also published a story on the persisting situation in May.

According to the Fisheries Act, fishing under 12 inches of pangas is prohibited but fishermen are not abiding by it.

During a recent visit to the town's Newmarket fish market, it was seen that retailers were selling the pangas fry openly at Tk 230-250 per kilo. When asked, they refused to talk to this correspondent.



Pangas is one of the fastest-growing catfish species. A pangas can weigh up to 60 kg. Catfish is the third-highest producing fish in the country after hilsa. According to the estimates for the fiscal year 2020-21, 11,000 tonnes of pangas came from rivers alone.

Researchers of Ecofish Bangladesh Project-2 of World Fish, funded by USAID, have been working to protect indigenous pangas found in rivers since 2018.

In 2020, the organisation has identified the breeding grounds of pangas and similar fish at seven points in Char Kajal, Char Biswas and Banyatali of Galachipa upazila of Patuakhali region and Chalitabunia, Char Kasem, under Char and Sonar Char areas of Rangabali upazila.

SEE PAGE 4 COL 1

Living amidst polluted waters

Sylhet flood victims contracting various skin diseases



MINTU DESHWARA

Many parts of the municipal area, including Sylhet City Corporation, remain submerged.

There are piles of garbage floating on the road's flood water with their stench in the air – causing new suffering to the flood victims. This is the situation in most places in Sylhet division in the flood-affected areas.

This correspondent visited different areas in Moulvibazar and Habiganj in Sylhet division and found empty bottles, polythene bags, sacks of household waste, toilet waste, and tree branches floating on the side of the road. The water has turned black due to the accumulated garbage, filling the area with a putrid stench.

Dung and excrement from surrounding toilets have mixed into the water. Many people in the area have contracted skin diseases coming in contact with it.

Imon Ahmed, a resident of Kulaura Municipality in Moulvibazar, said, "I woke up from bed and saw garbage drawn into the house with

the flood water. So I set up bamboo in front of the house so that the garbage doesn't get in."

Another resident Bimol Das said the road in front of his house is full of garbage now.

"I can't even remove them until the water recedes. It smells bad all the time. I worry for my children."

Sajjad Hosain, a resident of Habiganj Municipality said, "Whenever I go to and fro from the house, I have to wade through this polluted water. For this, my whole leg is swollen and it itches a lot."

Jahangir Alam, Boropara area resident of Sunamganj Municipality, said, "I'm having to cut this garbage in front of my house into pieces so that it can float away with the currents."

Sunamganj Municipality Mayor Nader Bakht said, "Now there is nothing to do with this. We're on the side of the people with relief now. If the water decreases, the dirt will also go away."

Dr Mohammad Noore Alam Shamim, assistant director (disease control) of Director of Health

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

2006 DOUBLE MURDER SC acquits two death-row convicts

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Appellate Division of the Supreme Court yesterday acquitted two accused, who have been serving in the condemn cell for 14 years after being sentenced to death, in a case filed for killing a mother and her daughter in Godagari upazila of Rajshahi in 2006.

The apex court ordered the jail authorities to release Sonardi and Ismail Hossain Babu.

It also commuted death sentence of another, Tarikul Islam Vuta, to life imprisonment.

A three-member bench of the Appellate Division headed by Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique delivered the verdict after hearing on three appeals.

Minara Khatun (30) and her nine-year-old daughter Saria Parvin were killed at Dhoo Joubanpara in Godagari on October 20, 2006.

'Invest more in research'

Experts tell RU workshop

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Rajshahi

Scholars from different universities have stressed the need for increasing funds and research activities on digital technologies for preparing for the fourth industrial revolution.

They were speaking at a daylong workshop on "Fourth Industrial Revolution, Challenges and the Way Forward: Bangladesh Perspective".

Rajshahi University and University Grants Commission organised the event at RU on Wednesday.

RU VC Prof Golam Sabbir Sattar chaired the workshop. UGC member Prof Muhammad Alamgir attended as chief guest.

Digital technology experts Prof Kazi Mohaimen-us-Shakib of Dhaka University and Prof Afroza Parveen of Khulna University presented keynote papers respectively on "Knowledge Dominates the Period of 4IR" and "Challenges of 4IR & the Way Forward".

GRAFT CASE Hall-Mark GM denied bail

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday refused to grant bail to Hall-Mark Group's General Manager Tushar Ahmed in a Tk 135 crore money laundering case.

The HC, however, ordered the lower court concerned to finish trial proceedings in six months.

If the trial court cannot dispose of the case in six months it will consider Tushar's bail, the bench of Justice ASM Abdul Mobin and Justice Md Atoar Rahman said in the order.

Deputy Attorney General Sujit Chatterjee Bappi told The Daily Star Tushar has been in the custody for 10 years.

Maximum punishment for money laundering is 12 years under the Money Laundering Prevention Act, 2006, he added.



A Barishal resident purchases freshly produced mustard oil from a travelling van carrying an extraction machine. These traders make the oil daily out of 4-5 maund of seed and sell each litre of oil for Tk 260. This photo was taken yesterday from the city's Fazlul Haque Avenue.

PHOTO: TITU DAS

No new train on Dhaka-Ctg route in 7 years

SIFAYET ULLAH, Ctg

Although the demand for railway tickets on the Dhaka-Chattogram route has been increasing every year, the Bangladesh Railway (BR) authorities could not add a single passenger train to the country's most important route in the last seven years.

The BR authorities said they attempted to increase the number of trains on the route multiple times earlier but failed due to the crisis of coaches and engines.

According to BR officials, the last intercity train on this route – Sonar Bangla Express – was added in 2016. Five container trains were also added for transporting goods from the port to Dhaka Inland Container Depot (ICD) in 1988.

Currently, there are eight passenger trains running daily on the route. Of these, six intercity trains are Subarna Express, Mahanagar Express, Mahanagar Godhuli, Sonar Bangla Express, Chattala Express and Turna Express. The total number of seats is 5,235.

Besides, two mail trains – named

Dhaka Mail and Karnaphuli Express – are running every day on this route.

According to the Chattogram Railway Station, 11,000-12,000 passengers travel on the route every day.

"A good number of people come to the counter for tickets on the route. However, due to the crisis of trains, we cannot meet this huge demand," said Ratan Kumar Chowdhury, manager of Chattogram railway station. "The cost of travelling by train is less than travelling by bus, so I came to buy a train ticket. But I didn't get any because all were sold out," said Arafat Sajib, who wanted to travel to Dhaka for business purposes.

According to BR's commercial department, the railway earned Tk 145.54 crore from freight transport in 2020-21 fiscal.

BR Commerce Department officials said the number of container trains on this route is increased, it is possible to boost revenue from the freight transport sector.

"We need more trains for transporting containers from Chattogram port to

SEE PAGE 4 COL 8

Elina Shammi

from schoolteacher to silver-screen darling

SHARMIN JOYA

Elina Shammi used to be a schoolteacher, until she was inspired by one of her colleagues, Timir Nandi, to begin her journey as an anchor. In 2011, she hosted "Durpath", a programme on Desh TV.

"There was no looking back after that, I continued as an anchor, interviewing over six thousand artistes, and later on began my journey as an actress," said the actress who made her first appearance on the silver screen in 2014, in Shah Alam Kiron's "71er Maa Jononi".

Elina went on to impress the audience not only through her projects on the big screen, but with her presence on television. Recently, she has been busy working on projects for streaming platforms as well. Her performance in the Raihan Rafi directorial web film "Janowar" was a turning point in her career.

"I always look for story-based projects. From that point of view, I rarely discriminate between the variety of mediums as long as the story is good," said the artiste who has also been a screenplay writer since her college days, writing around 20 fiction projects that were aired.

"The first tele-fiction that I wrote was 'Aw Er Golpo'. Since I am currently occupied with projects for the big screen, I am trying to be a bit more selective when taking on television projects."

The multi-talented artiste has portrayed the role of Begum Khaleda Zia, in the much-anticipated biopic on the Father of the Nation, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. "Mujib: Making of a Nation" is directed by Shyam Benegal.

She shared that she is proud to be part of a project, which will have a place in history. "I was blown away upon seeing the transformation that the team put me

through, to make me resemble Begum Khaleda Zia. All of the actors on set also resembled the real-life persons they are portraying".

Elina also talked about the controversy surrounding the release of the film's trailer. "Although people are talking a lot about this, especially since the film has a budget of 100 crores, I would say that presenting Bangabandhu on screen is not easy. The budget was not enough to execute such a project, but the director put in his best efforts to ensure the film would do justice," said the actress. "We should not jump to conclusions without first watching the entire film."

At present, the actress has around

"The first tele-fiction that I wrote was 'Aw Er Golpo'. Since I am currently occupied with projects for the big screen, I am trying to be a bit more selective when taking on television projects."

seven projects in the pipeline, all of which will be released soon. She stated that she has finished working on most of these projects, including: Mushfiqur Rahman Gulzar's "Tungi Parar Dushshahoshi Khoka"; Shyam Benegal's "Mujib: Making of a Nation"; Anonno Mamun's "Radio"; Tanvir Hassan's "Modhobito", and Shihab Shaheen directorial web film "Syndicate" among others.

Elina is quite busy with upcoming Eid projects as well. "I have recently worked on 'Shahshika 2', which will be released during Eid, also I am working on a television serial 'Jhorer Pakhi' telecasted on Rtv," added the actress.



PHOTO: COURTESY

'Bhager Manush' at Shilpakala today

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

The critically-acclaimed theatre play, "Bhager Manush" produced by Somoy Theatre Troupe will be staged today at the Experimental Theatre Hall of Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy.

The play has been scripted by Mannan Heera, based on the short story "Toba Tek Singh", which was written by Urdu writer Saadat Hasan Manto. The story is set during the time of the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, and focuses on the sufferings of the people who live near the border.

The play follows the tale of Tek Singh, a mental patient who is strongly opposed to the partition. Through the use of satire, the play also showcases that a partition doesn't only change a country's geographical borders, but that it also divides a country's customs, culture, and heritage.



Sabila Nur to star in 'Rangila Fanush 2'

ARTS & ENTERTAINMENT DESK

Shihab Shaheen is all set to bring "Rangila Fanush 2" this Eid-ul-Azha, starring Sabila Nur and Tawfiq Mahub. The original "Rangila Fanush" starred Sabila and Apurba and received more than 10 million views on YouTube.

"Rangila Fanush 2" will be a women-centric Eid drama just like the original. It has elements of comedy with a touch of uniqueness within it. Audiences will surely love it," said Sabila Nur. Shihab Shaheen is also super excited about his latest drama.

"This will be a comedy drama similar to the original. I made this drama to entertain audiences during Eid. The drama incorporates the dreams of the marginalised people in society and their efforts to fulfil these dreams," said the director.

"Rangila Fanush 2" will air on the CMV YouTube Channel on Eid.



PHOTO: SHAHREAR KABIR HEHELE

NEWS

With no courage to return

FROM PAGE 1

government (in September 2008) promising that he won't be involved in politics anymore, she said.

In this context, Hasina said she was prevented from returning home during the then caretaker government, but she came back (on May 7, 2007) defying obstructions and took her return as a challenge.

Noting that she had been sued in a murder case and an arrest warrant had been issued against her, the premier said she announced that she would return home, appear before the court and face the case.

How can an election be participatory when AL's rival the BNP is facing a crisis of proper leadership, she said.

Referring to the 2018 national election, Hasina said BNP leaders changed their candidate in a constituency several times due to nomination trade.

She said Enam Ahmed Chowdhury and Morshed Khan told her that Tarique sought money for party tickets, but they refused.

The PM questioned how the BNP could attract voters and how the people could vote for the party when it was "leaderless".

Criticising BNP acting chairman Tarique, the premier said he has proved that his parents Ziaur Rahman and Khaleda Zia were involved in the August 1975 carnage conspiracy by supporting the slogan "pachattorer hatiar" (arms of 75).

Lambasting BNP founder Zia for rewarding the killers of August 15 carnage with lucrative jobs in Bangladesh missions abroad, Hasina said he got killed and no one even found his body.

"Yes, Ershad had brought a box [to Dhaka]. But what was in that box? Later, Ershad himself

said Zia's body was not in that box. But the box was buried in Sangsad Bhaban area [Chandrima Udyan]," she said, adding that even Khaleda and her son can't say that they had seen Zia's body.

She said BNP leaders now place floral wreaths there, but Khaleda's spouse is not there. "The truth will be revealed one day."

Taking a swipe at the BNP leaders for criticising the government over the Padma Bridge issue, the PM said the World Bank stopped its funding for Siddiganj power plant and Dhaka-Mymensingh road during the tenure of Khaleda's government on corruption allegations.

She expressed wonder how BNP could raise questions about the Padma Bridge issue when its leaders are corrupt from top to bottom. "BNP in fact is a factory of lies," the PM alleged.

About the criticism of BNP leaders over the flood issue, Hasina said they failed to stand by the flood victims and could not provide even a fistful of food, but they are shedding crocodile tears staying in Dhaka.

The AL chief said her party leaders have been working hard to extend support to the flood victims even in very risky places.

The premier blasted the BNP leaders for demanding cancellation of the grand opening of the Padma Bridge citing floods.

Hasina said the AL has been working to change the fate of the people since its founding in 1949.

"Whatever the people of this country attained, all these came through the Awami League. Whenever the Awami League came to power, the fate of the people changed."

AL presidium members Matia Chowdhury, Jahangir Kabir Nanak,

Abdur Rahman, AHM Khairuzzaman Liton, and Mofazzal Hossain and Chowdhury Maya, among others, spoke on the occasion.

Earlier in the day, the PM paid homage to Bangabandhu on the occasion of the party's founding anniversary, reports BSS.

She placed a wreath at the portrait of the Father of the Nation at Bangabandhu Memorial Museum on the capital's Dhanmondi-32.

PM ADDRESSES JS
Speaking at the Jatiya Sangsad yesterday, the PM said no one would be able to restrict Bangladesh's advancement if it was run as per the plans drawn up by the AL.

Hasina was addressing the House during an unscheduled discussion on the ruling party's founding anniversary, reports our staff correspondent.

The leader of the House said the AL government has formulated the plans to turn Bangladesh into a developed country in future.

"The Awami League was born for a special reason," she said.

The AL president said the then Pakistani rulers put restrictions on language and oppressed Bangladeshis socioeconomically.

"Protesting this, Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman organised the Language Movement, and founded Chhatra League. He had been with the Awami League from the very beginning."

She said the AL is the people's organisation and it always waged struggles for the country's oppressed and neglected people. "Many Awami League leaders and activists laid down their lives for this cause."

The premier said Padma Bridge has been built

with the country's own resources.

"Like this, Bangladesh will be moving forward. It will never be dependent on others and never beg. With its own dignity, Bangladesh will hold its head high in the world arena," she said.

AL MPs Amir Hossain Amu and Tofail Ahmed also spoke on the same issue.

Court returns

FROM PAGE 12

investigate the offences under sections 420, 467, 468, 471 and 477A of the Penal Code referred to in 'Kha' (a) of the Schedule of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 2004, if they relate to public assets or if they are committed during the discharge of official duties by government employees or bank employees or officials of financial institutions, the magistrate said in the order.

Shahab also brought allegations against Wasa Secretary Sharmin Haque Amir, former revenue inspector Mia Md Mizanur Rahman, Additional Chief Engineer Mohd Akhtaruzzaman, Revenue Inspector Zakir Hossain, DWSNTP Executive Engineer Badrul Alam, former deputy manager and branch manager of Janata Bank's Karwan Bazar Corporate Branch Shyamal Biswas, Deputy Secretary Sheikh Enayet Abdullah and Deputy Chief Accounts Officer Salekur Rahman.

Sahab, in the complaint, alleged that Taqsem and the eight withdrew Tk 132,04,17,460 from the cooperative's account with Janata Bank without any approval of the committee concerned.

The matter came to light following an audit in 2018-2020, he added.

ACC to decide on enquiry

FROM PAGE 2

Director Mohammad Ibrahim and Deputy Director Ahsanul Kabir Palash and send it to the director general (special investigation) to take necessary measures for enquiry," read the order.

Following the decision, therefore, the attached files are sent for taking measures after the enquiry of the allegation," it added.

However, ACC Secretary Mahub Hossain denied it

at yesterday's briefing.

"The Ekattorer Ghatk Dalal Nirmul Committee has recently submitted a 2,215-page white paper to the ACC. An internal committee was formed by the ACC to prepare a summary of the white paper ... the committee is not given any responsibility to enquire into the financial transaction of religious leaders," said an ACC press release issued after the briefing.

"Moreover, no decision was made for carrying out enquiry," it said, adding that the statement would put an end to confusion in this regard.

Although Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan at the launching of the "white paper" termed it eye-opening, he later changed his stance.

On May 20, he said there was no legal basis for the commission and its report. "I don't know what

the Gono Commission has written in its report. Therefore, we cannot say anything about it," Asaduzzaman said.

Three days after his statement, religious leaders under the banner of Islamic Cultural Forum Bangladesh submitted a memorandum requesting the ACC to enquire into the wealth of the Ekattorer Ghatk Dalal Nirmul Committee and its members.

Padma Bridge handed over

FROM PAGE 1

Bridges Minister Obaidul Quader will deliver a speech. This will be followed by the screening of a documentary on the bridge and the singing of the theme song, before Hasina delivers her speech.

The PM will then inaugurate the bridge by unveiling the plaque and will offer prayers. She will then travel across the bridge to the Zanjira end and unveil another plaque, before offering prayers.

The bridges division of the road transport and bridges ministry has taken all-out preparations to make the inauguration ceremony a success, while the ruling Awami League is organising the massive rally at the Zanjira end.

The Road Transport and Highways Division has decided not to collect tolls for 17 bridges and one ferry on the Dhaka-Mawa-Bhanga Expressway and the country's southwestern region on June 25.

The division yesterday issued a circular saying tolls would not be collected from 14 major bridges and one ferry in the country's

southwestern region on June 25.

The 14 bridges are: Khan Jahan Ali (Rupsha) Bridge, Daratana Bridge, Doarika-Shikarpur Bridge, Dapadapia Bridge, Gabkhan Bridge, Baleshwar Bridge, Patuakhali Bridge, Sheikh Russel Bridge, Sheikh Kamal Bridge, Sheikh Jamal Bridge, Payra (Lebukhali) Bridge, Mullahat Bridge, Ashmat Ali Khan Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge and Sheikh Lutfar Rahman Bridge.

The ferry to be free of toll is the Kalna Ferry.

On June 20, authorities announced that no toll would be collected from vehicles on three bridges on the Dhaka-Mawa-Bhanga Expressway on June 25 to avoid traffic congestion at these points.

The three bridges are: Bangladesh-China Friendship Bridge (Buriganga Bridge-I) at Postagola, Dhaleshwari Bridge, and Haji Shariatullah Bridge (Ariakha Bridge) in Madaripur.

Meanwhile, Dhaka Metropolitan Police has issued directives centring the inauguration of the Padma Bridge for exit and

entrance routes towards Dhaka-Mawa-Bhanga Expressway.

Once in service, Padma Bridge will connect the capital with 21 southwestern districts by road and railway, providing relief to tens of thousands who often face hardships while travelling across the river, especially around major festivals.

The double-decker bridge -- a four-lane road on top and broad-gauge single rail track on the bottom -- is expected to boost the country's gross domestic product by 1.2 percent.

Although the project was approved in 2007, the physical work started only in November 2014. Project authorities were supposed to complete the work within four years but it was delayed due to complexities over design, the Covid-19 pandemic and some other reasons.

Dewan Mohammad Abdul Kader, executive engineer (main bridge) of the Padma Multipurpose Bridge Project, said, "I am very happy to be part of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's dream project."

Ukraine gets

FROM PAGE 12

The EU's green light "is a signal to Moscow that Ukraine, and also other countries from the former Soviet Union, cannot belong to the Russian spheres of influence," Ukraine's EU ambassador Chentsov Vsevolod told Reuters earlier yesterday.

"There are Ukrainian soldiers calling home from the front line and asking: what is happening with our candidate status? It's amazing how important it is for Ukrainian people."

BALKAN FRUSTRATION
While Ukraine and Moldova were expected to be welcomed into the EU's waiting room, Georgia was given "a European perspective" but told it must fulfil conditions before winning candidate status.

Reticence over EU enlargement has slowed progress towards membership for a group of Balkan countries -- Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo, Montenegro, North Macedonia and Serbia -- whose leaders met their EU counterparts in Brussels in the morning.



A Taliban helicopter takes off after bringing aid to the site of an earthquake in Gayan, Afghanistan yesterday. Inset, an Afghan woman is helped to reach another evacuation helicopter after she lost some of her relatives in the earthquake in Gayan. Desperate rescuers battled against the clock and heavy rain yesterday to reach cut-off areas in eastern Afghanistan after the earthquake killed at least 1,000 people and left thousands more homeless.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Suu Kyi sent to solitary confinement

UN expert says Asean should rethink its approach on Myanmar

AGENCIES

Ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi remained in strong spirits after being transferred from house arrest to prison, a source with knowledge of the case said yesterday, and would "calmly" face her new solitary confinement.

Since being deposed in a coup last year, Suu Kyi had been under house arrest at an undisclosed location in Naypyidaw, accompanied by several domestic staff and her dog, according to sources with knowledge of the matter.

The Nobel laureate, 77, left those premises only to attend hearings for her numerous trials in a junta court that could see her handed a prison sentence of more than 150 years.

On Wednesday, she was transferred from house arrest to "solitary confinement in prison", junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun said in a statement.

Her future trial hearings would take place inside a courtroom within the prison compound, he added.

Suu Kyi was in "strong spirits" after the transfer, a source with knowledge of the case told AFP yesterday.

Suu Kyi will be provided with three female staff from inside the prison to look after her, said another source.

Meanwhile, a United Nations expert said yesterday the Southeast Asian bloc Asean should rethink its approach to engaging with Myanmar and demand specific actions and timetables to end hostilities in the military-ruled country.

Special Rapporteur on Human Rights, Tom Andrews, also called on UN member states to engage formally or informally with Myanmar's shadow National Unity Government (NUG) to help the humanitarian situation, reports Reuters.

China's Xi criticises sanctions 'abuse'

Putin scolds the West at BRICS virtual summit

REUTERS, London

Chinese President Xi Jinping yesterday criticised "the abuse" of international sanctions, while Russian President Vladimir Putin scolded the West for fomenting global crisis, with both leaders calling for greater BRICS cooperation.

Xi called on Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa (BRICS) to take up the responsibility conferred by their economic clout, and said they should stand up for a truly multinational international system based on the United Nations.

"We must abandon Cold War mentality and block confrontation and oppose unilateral sanctions - and the abuse of sanctions," Xi told the BRICS summit through a translator.

"Our meeting today comes at a crucial moment of choice for the future of humanity: as key emerging markets and developing countries, BRICS countries must rise to our responsibility," Xi said.

China has by far the largest economy in the BRICS grouping, accounting for more than 70% of the group's collective \$27.5 trillion economic might.

Putin called for stronger BRICS cooperation and took a swipe at the West which he accused of fomenting a crisis.

"Only on the basis of honest and mutually beneficial cooperation can we look for ways out of the crisis situation that has developed in the global economy due to the ill-considered and selfish actions of individual states," Putin said.

He accused the West of "using financial mechanisms" to "shunt their own mistakes in macroeconomic policy on to the whole world."

Putin has said relations with China are the best they have ever been and touts a strategic partnership with China aimed at countering US influence.



US President Joe Biden has said the West is locked in a battle with autocratic governments such as China and Russia.

The United States and European powers blame Putin's decision to invade Ukraine as the reason relations with the West have sunk to the lowest level since the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis - including the severest sanctions in modern history.

But Putin says the West wants to destroy Russia, that the economic sanctions are akin to a declaration of economic war and that Russia will build ties with other powers such as China and India.

Putin, who casts the Ukraine war as a "special military operation", blames the United States for humiliating Russia in the aftermath of the 1991 fall of the Soviet Union and threatening Moscow by enlarging the Nato military alliance.

Russia sent troops into Ukraine on February 24 to degrade its southern neighbour's military capabilities, root out people it called dangerous nationalists and defend the Russian speakers of two eastern Ukrainian regions.

Johnson resolute as UK by-election losses loom

AFP, Wakefield

Britain's beleaguered Prime Minister Boris Johnson said yesterday he will not resign even if his ruling Conservatives lose two closely watched by-elections, including in a once-safe seat held by the party for more than a century. The Tories are tipped to lose the contests for the Westminster seats of Tiverton and Honiton in southwest England - a true blue heartland which has voted Conservative in every general election since the 1880s - and Wakefield in the north. The votes are being held after the constituencies' former Tory MPs both resigned in disgrace. Tiverton and Honiton's ex-lawmaker Neil Parish quit after admitting watching pornography on his phone in the House of Commons, while Wakefield's Imran Ahmad Khan was jailed for sexually assaulting a teenage boy. The by-elections also follow months of scandals and setbacks that have severely dented the popularity of Johnson and his party, and come just weeks after he narrowly survived an attempt by his own lawmakers to oust him as Tory leader and prime minister. The June 6 vote among Conservative MPs saw more than 40 percent of the parliamentary party desert Johnson, leaving him severely weakened and struggling to

reset his turbulent tenure. As voters head to the polls the embattled UK leader is thousands of miles away attending a Commonwealth summit, from where he again insisted quitting was not on his mind.



France enters a political deadlock

Macron 'compromise' call meets opposition resistance

AFP, Paris

France risked prolonged political deadlock yesterday after opposition parties gave a frosty reception to President Emmanuel Macron's call for "compromises" to keep France governable after an indecisive parliamentary election.

Macron made his plea in an address to the nation late Wednesday days after failing to retain a majority in parliament, a setback that threatens to cripple his ability to carry out his planned reforms. His centrist alliance finished Sunday's parliamentary elections 44 seats short of a majority in the National Assembly, as a new left-wing coalition and the far right made major gains. The main opposition parliamentary groups, feeling triumphant after upsetting the president's party, seemed in no mood, however, to help out Macron whom they accused of putting them on the spot. "He's the one with his back to the wall, not us," said Socialist deputy Valerie Rabault, whose party is part of the new leftist NUPES alliance that enjoyed a surprise surge in the vote. "If he tries to push through his programme without an absolute majority he will be stuck," she said. "He will be responsible for paralysing France."

India will support Lanka's recovery

Says top diplomat

REUTERS, Colombo

India's top diplomat yesterday held talks with Sri Lanka's president and prime minister as India signalled its willingness to go beyond the \$4 billion in loans, swaps and aid that it has already provided its cash-strapped neighbour. "Indian Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra has said that the Government of India will extend its fullest support to Sri Lanka in overcoming the current difficult situation as a close friend," the president's office said in a statement. "The Indian delegation stated that the Government of India and the political authorities are committed to provide continued support to Sri Lanka," it added.

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Local Government Engineering Department
Office of the Executive Engineer
Barishal

Memo No. 46.02.0600.000.07.068.17.2660
Dated: 22/06/2022

e-Tender Notice-396-397/2021-2022

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the Procurement of

e-Tender No.	Package No.	Name of work	Last receiving date & time
396/2021-22	IRIDP-3BRS/DW-44	(a) Improvement of Faimshiddi Bazar - Somaddar Par GPS Road from Ch. 720m-3020m under Gourmadi Upazila, District: Barishal, [Road ID 5063250151], (b) Construction of 01 No. 3.60m x 3.60m Culvert at Ch. 1060m on the same Road, (c) Construction of 02 Nos. 4.30m x 4.30m Culvert at Ch. 1715m & 2678m on the same Road. [Salvage Cost Tk. 58,137.00], e-ID No. 702976	21-07-2022 Time: 12:00pm
397/2021-22	IRIDP-3BRS/DW-45	(a) Improvement of Barhi Bazar (NH)-Tutalata Bazar via Bagh Mana Road from Ch. 00m-744m & 1200m-1920m under Gourmadi Upazila, District: Barishal, [Road ID-506324045], (b) Construction of 03 Nos. 0.625m x 0.60m Culvert at Ch. 311m, 565m & 1355m on the same Road. [Salvage Cost Tk. 5,96,775.00], e-ID No. 702977	14-07-2022 Time: 12:00pm

National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches up to 17.00 on previous day of receiving tender. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

Executive Engineer
LGED, Barishal

GD-1292

Rice import duty slashed

FROM PAGE 1
inclement weather. Illegal hoarding has also been blamed for high prices.

Prices of all sorts of rice shot up over one month.

Retailers sold fine rice for Tk 64-80 a kg yesterday, up 14 percent from a month ago. Prices of coarse rice edged up 8.6 percent to Tk 48-53 a kg during the same period, according to Trading Corporation of Bangladesh.

Until June 22 of the current fiscal year, Bangladesh imported 9.89 lakh tonnes of rice, including the 6.83 lakh tonnes the government imported itself, says food ministry data.

In the first two crop seasons - Aush and Aman - of this fiscal year, rice production grew one percent year-on-year to 1.79 crore tonnes, according to Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics.

Agricultural officials earlier said Boro production would be over 2 crore tonnes this year

and the total production of the grain was expected to be around 3.8 crore tonnes.

Bangladesh had allowed rice import at reduced

customs duty and taxes between August 12 and October 30 last year.

Rice import was 13.59 lakh tonnes in fiscal 2020-21.

টেকসই ও নবায়নযোগ্য জ্বালানি উন্নয়ন কর্তৃপক্ষ (স্রেডা) SREDA
বিন্যাস বিভাগ

জ্বালানি দক্ষ যন্ত্রপাতি স্থাপনে সহজ শর্তে ঋণ গ্রহণ করুন

জ্বালানি শাসকের মাধ্যমে নিজে লাভবান হোন এবং সমৃদ্ধ দেশ গঠনে গর্বিত অংশীদার হোন

সাশ্রয়ে জ্বালানি, সমৃদ্ধ আগামী

"জ্বালানি দক্ষতা ও সংরক্ষণ বৃদ্ধি কার্যক্রমে অর্থায়ন প্রকল্প"

www.sreda.gov.bd

The Daily Star

FOUNDER EDITOR: LATE S. M. ALI

Ban on notebooks must not be a paper promise

Govt must take new act as a stepping stone to wider reforms

WE'RE glad to know that the country's first education act is no longer a distant reality as a draft, based on inputs from the Cabinet Division, has been finalised by the education ministry. It will be sent to the division next week and hopefully approved sooner than later. The draft law, notably, issues a ban on printing, publishing and marketing notebooks and guidebooks, but allows publishing "supplementary books and education aid books" upon securing permission. It also forbids teachers from giving private tuition to students of their own institution. Schools, however, can arrange additional classes for weaker students subject to the written consent of parents.

Experts have, justifiably, lauded the new direction of the law – moving away from legitimising the culture of "coaching" and private tuition. If properly implemented, it will improve the quality of classroom education and drastically reduce out-of-pocket expenditure on education. But a few potential issues remain, not so much in the letter of the law as in the spirit in which it may be taken. For example, the approval of additional classes for weaker students opens up a quagmire: Will students be forced to attend them? Will this be a new model of business replacing the coaching culture? While students do need additional help recovering from the learning loss suffered during school closures, this should be done in a way that doesn't nullify the objective of the act, and the government must financially help schools, especially non-MPO schools, incur extra costs.

Also, care should be taken so that no one takes advantage of the often thin line between guidebooks and supplementary reading materials. But perhaps the biggest concern about the act, like any other act in Bangladesh, to be frank, is its implementation once passed into law. The fact that the draft has been on the drawing board for over 11 years paints a disturbing picture of our priorities as a nation. It would be a travesty if we fail to properly implement it after going through all that trouble and the excruciatingly long wait.

That said, the act is just one of the many changes we need after two years of the pandemic during which many students dropped out of school, many turned child brides or child labourers, and many fell behind in terms of basic literary and numeracy. We drastically need a recovery and remedial plan for the education sector. We also need the proposed budget to reflect the need for recovery through improved allocations. Therefore, the authorities – including the two ministries and three divisions in the sector – must take the new act as a stepping stone to the wider reforms needed for education to get back on its track.

Bangladesh railway needs serious fixing

Chronic problems stopping it from getting expected results

IT is generally believed that the potential of Bangladesh Railway to become a major revenue earner for the country has never been properly exploited by those who run this important service sector. Some decades-old problems continue to plague it at a time when railways in developed countries have become synonymous with superior customer service and punctuality. The sector needs dedicated planners and operators with a modern vision to improve the quality of service and to make it profitable.

According to a report by this daily, railway officials have identified a number of chronic problems bedevilling the sector. To begin with, the current 3,093-kilometre rail track being mostly single line, the authorities cannot increase the number of locomotives and compartments. They need double lines to reduce travel time. Furthermore, with most bridges under the rail network having outlived their natural life span, trains cannot pick up speed there nor carry extra load for fear of accidents. Therefore, new bridges should be built replacing the old ones. Also, only 124 stations under the BR, out of the total 359, operate with a modern signalling system, while the rest depend on the old system. A modern signalling system is vital to ensure safety and punctuality.

There is no denying that a modern railway system must have, under its wings, a number of workshops with state-of-the-art equipment to undertake repair works on a regular basis, especially after an accident to put the engines in operation without losing time. But the railway lacks such workshops.

The BR is also in need of major renovation and modernisation to stay in the race. Projects taken up by the BR in this connection must be given the highest priority by relevant officials. In reality, however, projects often get delayed for no plausible reasons. We are told that most projects aimed at improving its infrastructure and rolling stocks get delayed for several reasons, such as delays in getting project approval, land acquisition, appointment of consultants, lack of coordination among relevant agencies, and delay in accessing funds from foreign lenders. A sliver of hope, experts say, is that Padma Bridge will open up opportunities for the BR to earn revenue in the coming days.

But all those problems that persist today threaten to nullify any progress achieved. The relevant authorities, therefore, should urgently undertake the measures and reforms needed for the unimpeded operation and modernisation of Bangladesh Railway, so that it can turn into a profit-making and passenger-friendly service sector.

Why I'm a fan of Ananta Jalil



Aasha Mehreen Amin is joint editor at The Daily Star.

AASHA MEHREEN AMIN

NO STRINGS ATTACHED

Sayedul Haque Suman, announced on his Facebook page that he has raised Tk 98 crore in just two days. Bangladeshi expatriates in the US are raising funds to arrange relief to be reached to the stranded.

These are heartwarming examples of spontaneous empathy and quick action. But they are still far from being

alive. What kind of Eid these people can expect to have is not something the majority of the rich have time to think about.

There is a disturbing obtuseness among the wealthy that makes them unmoved by the acute suffering of their compatriots who are lower down the social ladder. Perhaps the floods in

I have to admit it, I am becoming a fan of Ananta Jalil. Not because of the explosive, dealening trailer of his latest movie, *Din: The Day* – a Bangladeshi-Iranian joint venture shot in Iran where AJ ("A Zay") the superhero is performing logic-defying stunts, shooting a hundred bad guys while keeping his makeup intact and sporadically sporting his long auburnish w-i-g – ahem, mane. Neither is it because of that distinctive diction we so love as he makes speeches, listing the accomplishments of Bangladesh including how it has hosted the Rohingya refugees (which, I am sure, is somehow relevant to the intricate plot involving Afghani terrorists, drug cartels and an extravaganza of guns that would put the staunchest supporter of the National Rifle Association of America to shame).

No, this time it's because of Ananta Jalil the human being.

When news of the devastating floods and human suffering started coming in, we were pleasantly surprised by a Facebook post from the much reviled and revered star. Ananta Jalil, of "Mansester" and "orenz zues" fame, without any cringe-worthy utterings, announced he would stand by the flood victims and help them as much as he could. He would donate money for relief from profits earned from his business and movies. Admittedly, one would have wished he hadn't mentioned that he would sacrifice one or two cows instead of the usual 12 and donate the money instead, but at least we know his heart is in the right place. According to news reports, he will be donating Tk 30 lakh for flood victims. What's more, he has urged the well-off to do the same.

In fact there are individuals, NGOs and private organisations (like Bidyanoondo Foundation) taking the initiative to help. The biggest challenge is to actually reach the relief to the people in remote areas where the water is so choppy and the weather so volatile, even the armed forces are finding it difficult to navigate. Tour operators like Onirban Boat have turned their holiday cruise boats into rescue boats, picking up stranded people from the remote areas, taking them to shelters. A number of tourism agencies part of the e-Tourism Association of Bangladesh used their boats stationed in remote areas to rush to the stranded people, housing them, providing food and carrying relief items. They are trying to raise funds from members and other sources to continue their relief operations. A barrister, Syed



▲ VISUAL: STAR

adequate considering the widespread, prolonged nature of this catastrophe. An estimated 7,334,000 people have already been affected in Sunamganj, Sylhet, Moulvibazar, Netrokona, Kishoreganj, Habiganj, Brahmanbaria, and Mymensingh. This is an ongoing humanitarian disaster, the financial, social and health effects of which will continue for months on end. In the meantime, every second counts and people's lives are on the line. So, why isn't there a more enthusiastic response from the wealthier sections of society?

It brings us to the issue of a bubble culture – people inside the bubble are impervious to the suffering of others as long as they do not know them and definitely if those suffering are part of the "invisible masses." They will cry oceans with the tortured heroine and battered hero in their favourite drama serial but will feel nothing for the real life heroes and heroines battling for their very lives as the waters swallow up all their belongings, their homes, their crops, food, possessions, their cattle and, terrifyingly, sometimes even their loved ones. They will not know about the mother and her five children who have not eaten for two days, the farmer who has lost all the paddy he had kept to sell and feed his family in the coming months or the thousands of families who await a bleak future of destitution and endless borrowing from loan sharks just to stay

Sunamganj or Sylhet are not part of their newsfeed as much as the latest update on Amber Heard and Johnny Depp. Perhaps we need to revive the photo opportunities of the old days when anyone could get their few seconds of fame by handing a check to the PM's relief fund and be seen on BTB news while doing so. It is strange that people will spend huge amounts of money for the salvation of their soul or a confirmed seat in paradise but not for helping someone just for the sake of helping. Why is philanthropy so rare in Bangladesh, despite the rising number of millionaires?

There is something ignoble about a class of people which spends obscene amounts of money on jewellery, watches, cars, and expensive holidays in Europe but have hardly any money to spare for charity just to be good human beings. Ananta Jalil has stated what rich people are supposed to do with their money – share it with the needy, helpless, and distressed. The privileged in society should listen to his appeal and stand by their brothers and sisters whose lives have been turned upside down by this disaster. If we can't help them directly, we can always give our money to groups and organisations involved in rescue and relief. Sometimes we just need to be reminded of the obvious, as Ananta Jalil philosophically stated in his Facebook video: You can't take your wealth to the grave.

There is a disturbing obtuseness among the wealthy that makes them unmoved by the acute suffering of their compatriots who are lower down the social ladder.

Our education system needs to change

Abu Afsarul Haider is an entrepreneur.

ABU AFSARUL HAIDER

IN Bangladesh, although primary education is free and the government provides the textbooks, more than 4.3 million children aged 6-15 years are not in school and around 42 million people – about 26 percent of the population – are still illiterate. Moreover, while our school enrolment rate is still high, the dropout rate is even higher. Data from the Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics show that, in 2020, the dropout rate was 17.2 percent at the primary level, 35.76 percent at the secondary level, and 21.16 percent at the higher secondary level. Most of these dropouts happen in rural areas. Because the quality of schools and standard of teaching there are poor, many parents feel reluctant to send their children to schools. They find the current education system to be of little use in practical life as neither textbooks nor the curriculum is relevant to their situation or match the requirements of the present job market.

In the past few years, numerous experiments have been carried out in the name of modernising and updating our primary, secondary, and higher secondary education. Yet, the existing education curriculum is not aligned with industry needs. While schools/colleges across the globe are focusing more on soft skills such as team-building, problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, negotiation, decision-making, etc., our education system is still stuck in the past.

Research suggests that our garments, real estate, telecommunication, information and technology sectors are facing severe shortage of skilled manpower. As a result, foreign workers are being hired. There is no specific data on outbound remittances, but industry insiders say that foreign nationals working in Bangladesh remit about USD 6 billion altogether every year to their countries.

Bangladesh has a vision to become a developed nation by 2041 and to achieve that, we need skilled workers. But our education budget doesn't reflect the urgency of developing human resources. Our current expenditure on education is the lowest among South Asian countries. The country spends around 2 percent of its GDP on education, whereas India spends 4.6 percent, Afghanistan and Maldives 4.1 percent, Nepal 5.2 percent, and Bhutan spends 6.6 percent of their respective GDPs on education. Despite demands from experts to increase the allocation to between four to six percent of GDP, again we saw poor allocation for education in the national budget for

today and tomorrow.

The government has recently been putting more emphasis on setting up technical schools and colleges in different upazilas. Undoubtedly, vocational training could be an important element for future development, and in reducing unemployment, inequality, and poverty. But our policymakers need to realise that if someone's basic education is weak, vocational training will hardly be of use to them. It is therefore necessary to redesign our primary, secondary, and higher secondary education. Pre-vocational education, information and communication technology (ICT) based education must be considered a priority area for inclusion and development from the secondary level (Class 9) to the higher secondary level (Class 12), to provide a foundation of basic skills and knowledge that will help students acquire technical skills, learn how to apply their knowledge, and use creativity in their work. Also, we should keep in mind that merely setting up technical schools and colleges is not enough. We need to ensure they have skilled teachers, lab facilities, safe and supportive learning environments and, more importantly, offer the most up-to-date technical, professional, and job-oriented courses for young graduates.

Some people in our country tend to see our large population as an asset. There is no denying the fact that the population of a country is the greatest social capital it can have. But as the saying goes, "People without education are like weapons without bullets." Research shows that, at present, about two-thirds of our total population is of working age, which means the country is going through a "demographic window of opportunity." To reap the benefits of this opportunity, our young people need to be trained properly so they can contribute to the development of the nation. Otherwise, Bangladesh may find it very difficult to achieve higher economic growth.



▲ **It is important for Bangladesh to focus on improving the quality of its education – the kind of education that will help individuals acquire the knowledge and skills to meet all the needs of the jobs of today and tomorrow.**

FILE PHOTO: STAR

FY2022-23. The Unesco recommends spending six percent of GDP on the education sector. Bangladesh ranked 112th out of 138 countries in the Global Knowledge Index 2020. It has scored 35.9 – again the lowest among South Asian countries.

We all know that education is a major driving force of development in any modern society, and that the quality of workers is the central determining factor of economic progress. Therefore, it is important for Bangladesh to focus on improving the quality of its education – the kind of education that will help individuals acquire the knowledge and skills to meet all the needs of the jobs of

India should think beyond the Hindutva agenda



A CLOSER LOOK

TASNEEM TAYEB

Tasneem Tayeb is a columnist for The Daily Star. Her Twitter handle is @tasneem_tayeb

OVER the last few years – under the BJP government – India's religious polarisation has increased in degree and intensity. Multiple factors have contributed to the ever-expanding divide among religious communities in India, from policy-related institutionalised approaches which are divisive in nature, to the enactment of the Citizenship Amendment Act, and the implementation of the National Register of Citizens in Assam, to the more administration-related decision – that is, new rules being imposed in various states that are biased against minority communities, and petty actions such as hijab bans in educational institutions, the right-wing rhetoric of majority of BJP leaders, and the attacks on Muslim and Christian places of worship. This polarisation has resulted in the sidelining of some of India's core precepts of pluralism, polyphony, heterodoxy, and communal harmony – ethos the nation has built upon since its independence in 1947.

The recent protests, although sparked by irresponsible, derogatory, and provocative comments by BJP spokesperson Nupur Sharma about Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), is the outcome of built-up sentiments among Muslims as a result of recent years of religious discrimination and "hate" messages they have had to endure in their own motherland.

This latest incident has not only disrupted India's internal stability, with communal unrest spreading in multiple states, but the nation has also had to face backlash from various countries, including its key trading partners in the Middle East. According to Al Jazeera, India's financial trading with the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries exceeded USD 150 billion in the fiscal year ending in March 2022. Its exports to the Gulf countries had been of around USD 44 billion, a 58 percent increase from the previous year. Indian imports

from the Gulf countries stood at around USD 111 billion, an increase of about 85 percent. And these strong trade ties have now been put at risk by the provocative comments of the BJP spokesperson.

What is worrying is that using this incident as a tool, vested quarters in both the Gulf countries and in India are propagating the boycotting of trade



relations. Social media is abuzz with hashtags such as #BoycottIndiaProducts and #BoycottQatarAirway. This is an alarming development, not just for India but for the overall state of global trade, as trade disruptions between India and its key trading partners in the Middle East would have a ripple effect on global trade.

These incidents should be an eye-opener for India, leading to a moment of realisation for the government that the majoritarian, right-wing policy that it is currently pursuing is highly destructive for the nation and its people.

India – the world's largest democracy, home to more than 200 million Muslims, a melting pot of diverse faiths and cultures – is also one of the fastest growing economies in the world. According to the IMF, India is projected to grow by 8.2 percent in 2022-23, compared to the 4.4 percent estimated growth for China. At this point, India cannot afford internal unrest that may

hamper its economic growth.

To realise its full economic potential, India must change its current course of action with regard to its treatment of minority religious communities. Suppression of minority communities, disrespecting their basic human rights, and their rights enshrined in the Indian constitution, discriminating against

hate-mongering elements, further such measures are immediately called for. Those who wish India well hope that it will understand that the only way forward for the nation is religious inclusion and communal harmony. According to Mahatma Gandhi, "True religion is not a narrow dogma. It is not external observance. It is faith in God and living in the presence of God. It means faith in a future life, in truth and Ahimsa." It is this same philosophy that the current Modi government needs to revisit and internalise, principles the nation's foundation is based on.

From Ashoka to Akbar to Gandhi, everyone advocated for a healthy practice of heterodoxy and dialogues, which has sustained India's vibrant secular character. And these are deeply rooted in how Indian thoughts have been shaped over centuries; one needs only to revisit the Vedas and the two great Indian epics, The Ramayana and the Mahabharata, that are so rich in discussions and deliberations encompassing a wide array of topics, including theology, philosophy, and politics. These values and characteristics have helped the Indian democracy thrive, enabled communities to live together in harmony, and it is these same attributes that need to be reintegrated into the nation's perception of its identity for it to overcome the challenges it is facing.

The present government needs to rebuild the burnt bridges by engaging in dialogue with the aggrieved communities and assuring them of their rights and security, which should be backed up by appropriate actions, including policy interventions, in order to demonstrate the commitment of the government towards religious inclusion.

Moreover, everyone should be aligned towards common national objectives of shared prosperity and economic growth.

The government, as distinct from the BJP, needs to think beyond the Hindutva agenda, and consider the bigger landscape of Indian historic legacy and global standing. It is the core values of the nation that need to be prioritised over the agenda of a particular section, regardless of it being the majority in terms of numbers. Nothing less is expected from the world's largest democracy, with such a rich history of religious co-existence and communal harmony.

▲ **The government, as distinct from the BJP, needs to think beyond the Hindutva agenda, and consider the bigger landscape of Indian historic legacy and global standing.**

PHOTO: REUTERS

them, and cornering them in their own country will only aggravate the current internal tensions which may spiral out of control in the short- to mid-term. This would be a highly undesirable development, not only for India, but also its neighbours, including Bangladesh.

The way India has so far handled the current protests through coercive actions – state government in UP bulldozing Muslim homes; law enforcement agencies unleashing force to suppress the protests, leading to two deaths – shows that the government is still perhaps under the impression that its hardline policy against minorities is the right track to be on. But this only shows that minority sentiments are at a boiling point, which need to be cooled down at the earliest, for the greater interest of the nation and of the South Asian region.

Though we appreciate the few stern, albeit belated, measures the Indian government has taken against these

“Israel’s actions are that of an apartheid regime. The only difference is that we are all brown.”

Dr Amal Jadou, Palestine's Deputy Foreign Minister, talks to Porimol Palma of The Daily Star about the decades long Palestine-Israel conflict, and the recent escalation of violence against the Palestinians.

What is the situation now on the ground?

The situation has been very difficult for a very long time. It is getting more and more difficult now. The globally-accepted two-states solution to the conflict is escaping us mainly because of the Israeli policies of colonisation and settlement. It is a policy of displacing the Palestinians with Israeli settlers by moving Israeli civilians from Israel to the occupied territories in violation of the Geneva Convention. Today, we have more than 700,000 Israelis living in the occupied territories in the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem. When the Oslo agreement was signed in 1993, we had 100,000 Israeli settlers. But today, we have 700,000 settlers. Israel wants to increase it to one million by 2025.

The problem is the Israeli claim that this is a God-given land to them. We all believe that we are created by God, but God does not discriminate based on gender, race, colour or ethnicity, rather He accepts us all. It is very important that we don't mix religion with politics. This is a political conflict that requires political solutions.

Palestinian territory is dispersed – there is no continuity between them, they have become like dots on the map, like separated islands. Their ability to establish a contiguous Palestinian state based on the 1967 border with East Jerusalem as the capital is becoming more and more implausible. We have a minority of 700,000 Israeli settlers controlling the lives of 3.5 million Palestinians. There are two sets of laws that apply to the two territories – one in the occupied territory, and the other, for Israeli settlers. A different law applies for the Palestinian citizens. We have extrajudicial killings. We have roads for the settlers only and roads for Palestinians only. There is a bus system for the Palestinians and another for the Israelis. All of these are actions of an apartheid regime. The only difference is that we are not black and the Israelis are not white. We are all brown. If we were black and they were white, it would have been an explicit apartheid regime.

Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Aqleh was recently killed by the Israeli security forces. Are the Israeli authorities trying to send the message that they won't allow any fair media coverage?

She is not the first one. Of course, she is an icon of Palestine. We all love her and respect her. She was telling the truth about Palestine and the region. But there are killings of Palestinians on a daily basis. The coverage of those killings is not as prominent as that of Akleh. It is the immediate outcome of the policy that was adopted by Prime Minister Bennet of Israel, who basically ordered his soldiers to shoot to kill Akleh without any kind of restraint. This is really a very dangerous policy, and while moving from one city to another, I see the soldiers at the checkpoints with their hands on the trigger. They are ready to shoot and can shoot anyone. Basically, there is no sense of safety or security. Her murder is in line with the policy that they don't want the media to cover what really happens.

The Arab states – UAE and Bahrain, Sudan and Morocco – established their diplomatic relationship with Israel in 2020. Earlier, it was Egypt and Jordan. What does this imply?

It means they have given up on their commitment to the Arab Peace Initiative, which clearly calls for ending the Israeli occupation of the Arab occupied territories in return for normalising relationship with the Arab and Muslim world. Unfortunately, they have done this based on self-interest. Despite this, the dialogue with these countries could continue within the Arab League. We know that the populations of these countries still believe in the just cause of Palestine. I hope that they also will abide by international law and respect the border resolution of 1967.

When all Palestinians need to unite, we see a division between Hamas and Fatah. Is it a roadblock to solving the crisis?

No, I don't think that it contributes to the lack of progress in the peace process. Currently, there is no peace, no process.



▲ **Dr Amal Jadou**

But I can tell you that long before there was a division, the peace process was not moving anywhere. In fact, the party that negotiates for the Palestinians is the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) – all political parties agree to this. Today, it is the Israeli government headed by PM Bennet says no to negotiations, no to the two-states solution, no to meeting with Palestinians, and yes to the expansion of settlements.

But yes, our unity is very important. I hope we can move in the direction of election as an exit-way for the Palestinians to choose their representatives, and we will respect the outcomes of the elections. I think every Palestinian is working towards an independent Palestinian state. I believe that Hamas is a political movement, a party that participated in

the participatory elections in 2006 and won, and then was given the chance to govern but the world boycotted it, and that basically is one of the reasons that we have division. I believe that there are dialogues that are taking place in different countries under the leadership of the Egyptians, Algerians and others who help the process of unity among the Palestinians. In fact, during the last year's aggression, we saw how Palestinians all over the world, in West Bank, Gaza Strip, Jerusalem, and in Israel stood together and presented a unified position of support to an independent Palestine.

Militarily, Israel is far more powerful than Palestine. The US is also Israel's very close ally. Do you think there is real willingness in the international community to solve this crisis?

Here comes the issue of the universality of international law. When there are other conflicts in this region, the world comes together in order to find solutions and we have seen this in Europe just recently. So, international law needs to be applied universally. After all, international law is the culmination of many wars from the past. So far, the international preventive diplomacy has failed. We may have a chance to succeed by providing an opportunity for the international community to take a stand against the violation of international law and the regime of occupation and apartheid.

Do you have any new idea in mind that could be effective in realising your demand for an independent Palestinian state?

We are talking to everyone, engaging with everyone. It is important for us to explain the situation all over the world. We have friends all over the world. There are many countries that are trying to play a role. Our hope is that the UN will step up its efforts. A US delegation visited Palestine and Israel in order to push for a revival of the political process. We hope that their efforts are successful. I feel that the international community will play its role to find a just solution to this conflict.

RIGHTS WATCH

Farmers' rights under the Plant Varieties Protection Act 2019



TAHSEEN LUBABA

Extending Intellectual Property (IP) protection to plant varieties – especially in the context of developing and agriculture-based economy like Bangladesh – is fraught with debates. The matter attracts various concerns that are seemingly contradictory – firstly, there is a need to ensure a proper balance between the proprietary rights of breeders and the rights of farmers who make their livelihood from agricultural productions; secondly, there are growing concerns about the sustainability of commercially produced varieties of plants – many researchers have argued that resorting to genetically modified organisms instead of relying on the traditional farming practices result in a number of adverse effects. For example, researchers have claimed that commercially produced varieties do not possess the natural resilience that was a significant feature in varieties which were produced through traditional practices such as cross-pollination etc. On the other end of the debate, some argue that commercially produced varieties are necessary to ensure sufficient yield to meet the growing need of food security. Moreover, there are also scholarships that discuss the impact some Genetically Modified (GM) crops have on the soil quality and resultantly, on the long-term future of agricultural production.

Due to the nature of the complexities surrounding the debates on IP protection of plant varieties, the topic is significant for Bangladesh. Although the economy is gradually moving towards industrialisation, there is still a significant portion of the population that relies on agriculture. As of 2019, the agricultural

workers make up about 38% of the country's labour force. Needless to say, food security is also a significant concern for the country's population. Recent reports show that Bangladesh ranks 84th among 113 countries worldwide in the 9th Annual Global Food Security Index (GFSI), making it the last among South Asian nations. Furthermore, Bangladesh is also one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change, ranking 7th in the Global Climate Risk Index 2021, which makes sustainability a major concern for its law and policymaking.

Bangladesh is a state party to multiple treaties and conventions that require compliance with cross-cutting issues when it comes to extending IP protection to plant varieties. Being a dualist state, international treaties are not automatically incorporated into its legal system but are required to be incorporated within the domestic legal framework in order for them to be enforceable. However, progressive interpretations by the apex court have paved the way for reliance on international instruments when there is a vacuum in the law and for interpretive guidance. In Bangladesh, IP rights are protected under several laws. Of these, the ones relevant to the present discussion are the newly enacted Patent Act (which replaces the 1911 law), the Geographical Indications Act 2013, the Biodiversity Act 2017 (the Act does not explicitly deal with IP rights but contains provisions on regulation of IP rights relating to biological resources), the Trademark Act 2009 etc.

After over two decades of drafting, the Plant Varieties Protection Act 2019 was finally enacted in 2019. The Act relies largely on the model provided under the International Convention on the

Protection of New Varieties of Plants 1961 (popularly referred to as the UPOV) and also the Indian Plant Varieties Protection and Farmers' Rights Act (PVP&FR Act).

The 2019 Act provides protection to three classes of plant varieties. Section 15 of the Act states that the variety invented by a breeder must be registered as essentially derived variety or farmer's variety and GMO protected breed.

Although the Act borrows from the UPOV the criteria of determining a plant variety – novelty, distinctiveness, uniformity, and stability (NDUS) – it also provides protection to farmers' varieties which, by definition, do not meet the four criteria. Farmers' variety or landrace under the Act is –

(a) the variety invented by the farmer and which the farmer has been cultivating on his land, and

(b) a species which is related to a wild variety or whose origin is unknown, but the farmer has knowledge of that species.

Needless to say, food security is also a significant concern for the country's population. Recent reports show that Bangladesh ranks 84th among 113 countries worldwide in the 9th Annual Global Food Security Index (GFSI), making it the last among South Asian nations.

This provision is not borrowed from the UPOV but from the Indian PVP&FR Act which provides protection to extant variety. Extant variety includes farmers' variety which is defined in more or less identical terms as the aforementioned definition under the 2019 Act. While new varieties are required to fulfill all four criteria of the NDUS test, landraces are not meant to fulfill the novelty requirement. This provision is potentially problematic for several reasons. Considering the socioeconomic conditions of farmers' as well as the general lack of understanding for the need of registration, it is unlikely that farmers will avail the protection they are entitled to. As such, putting farmers and commercial breeders on an equal

footing by requiring both to apply for registration is likely to do more harm than good to farmers. A wider scope of oversight with regard to landraces or farmers' varieties by the authority would perhaps been more prudent in order to bridge the inherent gap between farmers and breeders. Under section 23(2), farmers are allowed to reproduce and sell seeds except for commercial purposes. This is in line with the broader understanding of IP rights and the plant varieties protection regime, as well as the breeders' right exception under article 15 of the UPOV 1991. However, as the international corporations opt to expand their IP rights regime through a wider definition of "commercial marketing", this also leaves scope for potential restriction on traditional and informal exchange of seeds among farming communities.

As it now stands, the implications of the 2019 Act for farmers' rights is far from clear. This may largely be due to the fact that there is little guidance on what a *sui generis* protection system would entail in terms of plant varieties protection. Until the existing tension with regard to the interpretation of the TRIPS provisions on patentability of plant varieties under article 27(3)(b) result in some definitive requirement for plant varieties protection, the area will remain indeterminate, and any evaluation will be limited by such confusion. At present, the creation of a well-equipped plant varieties protection authority, conducting requisite research to discover the specific requirements for the national geography and implementing the law accordingly are necessary.

The writer works with Law Desk, The Daily Star.

LAW LETTER

Legal complications in controlling smoking in public place and transport



SOEB AKTAR

Effortless smoking in public places or public transport is nothing new. To control smoking in these public places/transport, we have a special law called the Smoking and Tobacco Products Usage (Control) Act 2005.

According to the preamble of the Act, it is designed to regulate the production, use, sale and advertising of smoking and tobacco products. This law includes some provisions on smoking in public places and public transports where smoking in public places and public transport has been made a punishable offence. Now the question arises, which are the public places or public transports?

This is explained in section 2 of the

Act, which states that 'public place' means educational institutions, government offices, semi-government offices, autonomous offices and private offices, libraries, elevators, indoor workplaces, hospitals and clinic buildings, court buildings, airport buildings, seaport buildings, naval port buildings, railway station buildings, bus terminal buildings, auditoriums, exhibition centres, theatre halls, marketing buildings, theatre halls, marketing buildings, restaurants, public toilets, children's parks, fairs, or specific queues for passengers to wait to board public transport, any other place used collectively by the public or any or all other places declared from time to time by government or local government institution, by general or special order.

In the same section, public transport is referred to as motor cars, buses, rail carriages, trams, ships, launches, all types of public vehicles, aircraft and any other vehicle specified or declared by the government, by notification in the Official Gazette.

One cannot smoke in these places. If one does so, it will be an offence punishable under section 4 for which punishment is not more than BDT 300/-. A concerning issue is that there are also some exceptions to this, when smoking in public transports will not be considered an offence.

According to section 7 of the Act, the owner, caretaker or controlling person or manager of a public place and the owner, caretaker, controlling person or manager of a public transport may identify or specify a place for smoking therein. Smoking in these identified places of public transport and public places shall not be an offence under section 4.

In order to effectively implement this law, the Smoking and Tobacco Products Control Rules were promulgated in 2015. In the Rules, the particulars for establishing specific places for smoking in public places and public transport are provided. If we look at the method of applying this law, it is seen that some officers have been given the power to implement it. According to section 2, authorised officer means Upazila Nirbahi Officer or Upazila Health Officer or any equivalent or superior officer of Directorate of Health and shall include any or all officers empowered by different laws to carry out the concerned duties. The 2015 Rules also include the names of some other officers – police officers not below the ranks of Sub-inspector, officers not below the rank of Assistant Director

According to section 7 of the Act, the owner, caretaker or controlling person or manager of a public place and the owner, caretaker, controlling person or manager of a public transport may identify or specify a place for smoking therein.

of the Directorate of Narcotics Control, and a number of officers who may enter and inspect a public place or public transport in their respective jurisdictions, and any person who has violated the provisions of this Act may be expelled from a public place or public transport by an authorised official. They can make a written complaint in the prescribed manner to the court for trial.

This law, with some others, has two issues to generate concerns. The first is that some certain places are defined as public places and the second is that no court shall take cognizance of any offence under this Act for trial except with the written complaint of an authorised officer. That is, if a person is to be punished for smoking in a public place or in public transport, he will have to smoke in the place mentioned in this Act and a written complaint of the authorised official will be required in this regard. Therefore, a person who is smoking in public places/transport cannot be easily held responsible under this Act for smoking due to some legal and practical complications.

To eliminate these complications, especially without limiting the definition of a public place to a specific place, it can be interpreted in such a way that a public place would mean a place to which the public has access. It is also necessary to exclude the provision in the Act which is called 'Designated place for smoking' in public places/transport. Further, it is important to reconsider the amount of the penalty (fine) for the offence. Considering these factors, if the law is amended, it will play an important role in controlling smoking in public places/transport.

The writer is a law student, University of Dhaka.

Star

DHAKA FRIDAY JUNE 24, 2022, ASHAR 10, 1429 BS

SPORT

What to WATCH

T SPORTS
West Indies vs Bangladesh
2nd Test, Day 1
Live from 08:00 pm

TEN 2
England vs New Zealand

3rd Test, Day 2
Live from 04:00 pm
SONY SIX
Sri Lanka vs Australia
5th ODI
Live from 03:00 pm

Shakib wants a good start

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh Test skipper Shakib Al Hasan reminded that it was neither pace nor spin which held particular sway on the Tigers' batters; rather it was difficult conditions which usually led to batting disasters.

Asked whether there was a defined weakness towards facing pace, Shakib said that any difficult conditions usually see Bangladesh falter.

"If you look at the last three Tests, then you can say that (there is weakness against pace). If you see the two Tests before that, you will say its spin. So we always fail to stay in the wicket in difficult conditions," Shakib told reporters in the pre-match press conference yesterday ahead of the second Test against the West Indies.

Bangladesh were troubled by South Africa's spin attack in the recent two Tests there before



Tamim Iqbal and Shakib Al Hasan (R), batting at the nets in St. Lucia, will have to take the bulk of responsibility in the second Test, which starts today, if Bangladesh are to take a share of the two-match Test series against Kraigg Brathwaite's West Indies.

PHOTO: TWITTER



succumbing to Sri Lanka's spin. For Shakib, it was an opportunity to overcome their batting troubles. "This is an opportunity and a challenge; let's see how we can overcome it."

Batsman Anamul Haque Bijoy and pacer Shoriful Islam were included in the squad for the second Tests with batting being major issue ahead of the St. Lucia Test. Asked on changes, Shakib said: "We have a few thoughts and we will sit down after the training session today. After this we will hold a meeting to let everyone know who is playing and who is not. This will remain within the team."

Although Kumar Roach had earlier said that the conditions at St. Lucia are good for fast bowlers, Shakib said his side will have to start well.

"We can focus on the first two hours and then go about our tasks according to match situation but the idea is to start well in the first two hours. The first day, it will be better for batting than at Antigua."

Tigers wary of batting debacle ahead of St. Lucia Test

SPORTS REPORTER

Bangladesh head into the second Test in Saint Lucia 1-0 down in the two-Test series after losing the first Test at Antigua by seven wickets. The Tigers will be hoping to avoid their 100th defeat in the Test format at the Darren Sammy National Cricket Stadium, having lost 99 of the 133 Tests they have played so far. The match will get underway from 8:00PM BST and will be broadcast by T Sports.

The second Test will ask tough questions of Bangladesh's batting department, which has collapsed regularly this year. Recurring top-order failures have seen the Tigers lose in South Africa and then at home to Sri Lanka.

The batters also suffered greatly on the first day of the Antigua Test against the likes of Kumar Roach, Alzarri Joseph and Kyle Mayers as they were bundled out for just 103. Another top-order collapse in the second innings then saw them take just an 84-run lead. Despite the bowlers doing well, the Tigers' batters will have to find the right answers to avoid another embarrassment in the second Test.

The Tigers' team management opted to include in-form batter Anamul Haque in the squad for the second Test, with Mominul Haque and Najmul Hossain Shanto both out of form. Either may give way to Anamul in the playing eleven.

Anamul, who had initially made it into the white-ball squads following his

impressive run-scoring in the Dhaka Premier League, was aware of the trend of batting collapses in red-ball cricket.

"I am thinking that if I get a chance, I will try to give my best. I want to help by putting up a good score. It is very important that we prevent the fall of early wickets while keeping the score board ticking. That is very important for me," he remarked to reporters ahead of the first Test.



Anamul's DPL form was astonishing, but in the longer-version surroundings of the National Cricket League, he managed just one big score of 84, averaging 23.25 over six matches. The challenge of adaptability will be significant, but Anamul believes that it is time to show his commitment to Test cricket.

"It's true that I was called up for white-ball formats and was practicing with the white ball. But to be honest, I have said this before, I love Test cricket a lot and

I am very passionate about it. If I get an opportunity, I will certainly try to grab it," Anamul said.

"I am very happy that all the senior and junior players welcomed me. Although results are not going our way, I feel we can go a long way and do good things," he added.

Meanwhile, the hosts named an unchanged squad for the second Test with West Indies lead selector Desmond Haynes saying they were aware of the challenge posed by Bangladesh's bowlers.

"Great credit to our bowlers who worked really hard in the first Test match," he said. "We can't take Bangladesh lightly, they also bowled really well and were quite disciplined. I know we will try our utmost to win the second match."

Roach also spoke to local media and said his recovery was going well while also giving the Tigers a heads up on what awaits them in Saint Lucia.

"It's one of the best wickets in the Caribbean. It offers a lot for fast bowlers. I didn't have a look at the wicket yet so I don't know what to expect. Hopefully today at practice we get a look at the wicket and we plan going forward. Usually it's one of the better wickets for fast bowlers in the Caribbean," he said.

Another pace-friendly wicket would mean that Bangladesh will be desperate from someone in the top-order to score the big runs.

Saif SC edge 7-goal thriller

SPORTS REPORTER

Saif Sporting Club climbed up the ladder in the points table after beating Chittagong Abahani 4-3 in an enthralling Bangladesh Premier League encounter at the Shaheed Dhirendranath Datta Stadium in Cumilla yesterday.

Saif SC toppled Sheikh Jamal DC to move to the third position by virtue of better goal difference despite having an equal 30 points from 16 matches. Chittagong Abahani, on the other hand, remained fifth on the table with 26 points from 16 games.

Saif SC broke the deadlock in the 43rd minute through an Emeka Ogbugh strike.

The second half saw more goalmouth action as six more goals were scored with Saif SC having the last laugh.

Omid Popalzay and Candy Augustine struck two goals in space of eight minutes to give Abahani a 2-1 lead before Faisal Ahmed Fahim scored a brace in the 72nd and 74th minutes respectively to give Saif SC a 3-2 lead.

The port city outfit once again bounced back to level the margin with a penalty from Peter Thankgod in the 86th minute but Emery Bayisenge converted from the spot in stoppage time to give Saif SC their fifth consecutive win.

In the day's other match, Muktijoddha Sangsad secured valuable points after beating Swadhinata KS 1-0 in Rajshahi.



Mitchell, Blundell revive NZ

AFP, Leeds

Daryl Mitchell and Tom Blundell revived New Zealand with a 102-run unbroken partnership to take the tourists to 225 for five on the opening day of the three-match Test series finale at Headingley on Thursday.

Mitchell was batting on 78 with Blundell on 45 as New Zealand recovered from 123 for five after winning the toss under blue skies and on a seemingly good pitch for batting in Leeds.

England were without James Anderson, but Stuart Broad removed Tom Latham for a sixth-ball duck after he edged a delivery straight to Joe Root at first slip.

New Zealand were none for one at that stage, but Will Young and Williamson, back in action after missing the second Test in Nottingham with a bout of coronavirus, repaired some of the early damage.

Jack Leach struck with his first ball to dismiss Young before Broad got rid of Williamson.



Bangladesh women hit Malaysia for six

SPORTS REPORTER

The Bangladesh women's football team delivered the biggest surprise in its history as they handed a massive 6-0 defeat to Malaysia in the first of two FIFA-sanctioned international friendlies at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium yesterday.

Defender Akhi Khatun struck a brace while Sabina Khatun, Sirat Jahan Swapna, Monica Chakma and Krishna Rani netted one goal apiece as the women took part in their first international match in nine months.

Bangladesh are far behind Malaysia in the FIFA Rankings, where the former are 145th and the latter 85th, but on the field, it appeared completely the opposite.

The manner of Bangladesh's domination saw some questioned whether Malaysia had sent their first team for the match, with the visitors mustering only two shot on target. Golam Rabbani Choton's charges were irresistible throughout the 90 minutes and, on another day, may have even ended the game 10-0.

Bangladesh got off to a sparkling start as Swapna raced into the box from the right in the first minute before squaring the ball to Sanjida

Akhtar, who squandered the opportunity with a feeble shot.

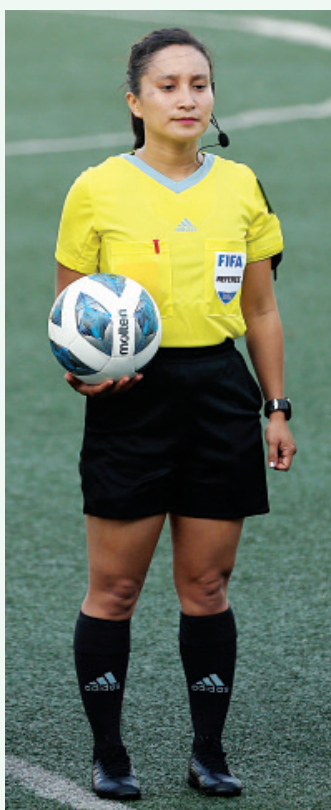
Swapna would time and again expose the defence with darting runs and Bangladesh got their breakthrough in the ninth minute as a corner from Maria Manda floated over the Malaysian goalkeeper and fell to Akhi on the goalline, who simply had to get any kind of touch.

Sanjida wasted two more opportunities afterwards before she and Swapna switched flanks and, from the right, Sanjida fed Sabina for the second goal in the 26th minute.

With Malaysia appearing helpless, Bangladesh continued to create a plethora of chances before widening the margin on the half-hour mark as Akhi tapped in a cross from Sabina after a short-corner routine.

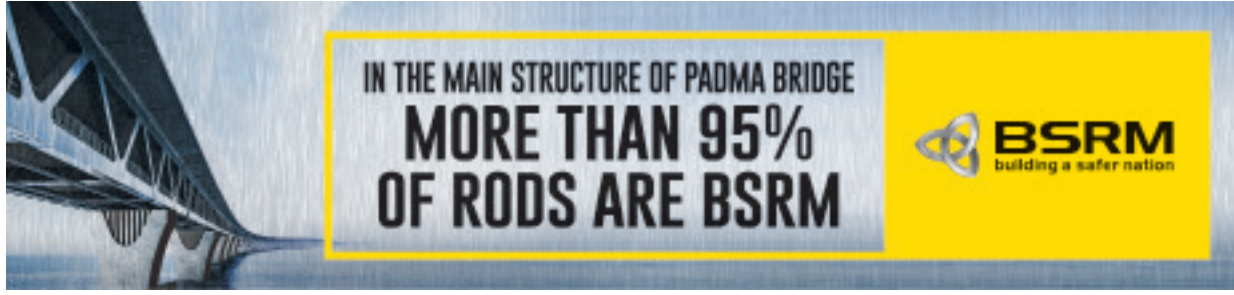
Bangladesh went into the break with a 4-0 lead after Sabina squared the ball to Swapna when the duo was one-on-one with the goalkeeper.

After resumption, Bangladesh continued to press and the sixth goal came in the 67th minute from Monica Chakma, who struck from inside the box, before Krishna Rani completed the route with a header from a Ritu Parna Chakma cross in the 74th minute.



Bangladesh women's team players celebrate one of their six goals against Malaysia in a FIFA friendly at the Birshreshtha Shaheed Mostafa Kamal Stadium in Kamalapur on Thursday. (L) Through this match, Joya Chakma became the first Bangladeshi female referee to officiate an international match.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED



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A village submerged in Char Teligari of Bogura's Sariakandi upazila yesterday. Local union parishad Chairman Shawkat Ali said 22 families of the char in the Jamuna have taken shelter elsewhere after the flooding began a week ago. At Mathurapara point in the upazila, the river was flowing 46cm above the danger level around 6:00pm yesterday.

PHOTO: MOSTAFA SHABUJ

'TK 132CR EMBEZZLEMENT'
Court returns case against Wasa MD

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday recorded a case against Dhaka Wasa MD and eight others for embezzling Tk 132 crore and then hours later said it did not have jurisdiction over the matter and "restored the complaint to the complainant".

Shahab Uddin Sarkar, secretary of Wasa Karmachari Bahumukhi Samabay Samity Ltd, a cooperative of Wasa employees, filed the fraud case against Wasa MD Taqsem A Khan and the others with the Court of Metropolitan Magistrate Ashek Imam yesterday.

Shahab accused Taqsem and the others of embezzling the money of the cooperative.

The court, hours after recording the case, said it had no jurisdiction to take the matter into cognizance or even order an enquiry as it was a corruption case.

The Anti-Corruption Commission has the jurisdiction to register and

SEE PAGE 6 COL 4



Taqsem A Khan

Ukraine gets EU candidate status

Europe sends signal the bloc intends to go deep into former Soviet Union

REUTERS, Brussels

European leaders formally accepted Ukraine as a candidate to join the EU yesterday, a bold geopolitical move triggered by Russia's invasion of Ukraine but a reminder that the 27-nation bloc will need a major overhaul as it looks to enlarge again.

Although it could take Ukraine and neighbouring Moldova more than a decade to qualify for membership, the decision at a two-day EU summit is symbolic step that signals the bloc's intention to reach deep into the former Soviet Union.

"A historic moment," European Council chief Charles Michel tweeted. "Today marks a crucial step on your path towards the EU," he said, adding: "Our future is together." The move, which also sees Moldova being granted candidate status, kick-starts the EU's most ambitious expansion since it welcomed Eastern European states after the Cold War.

"All the people in Ukraine are watching and waiting for this decision," said Ivan Zichenko, a 34-year-old Ukrainian from the devastated city of Kharkiv, who now lives in Brussels.

"It's very, very important to raise their morale," he said as a few dozen people chanted "Ukraine is Europe" at a rally outside the Brussels building where EU leaders were meeting.

Behind the triumphant rhetoric, however, there is concern within the EU about how the bloc can remain coherent as it continues to enlarge.

After starting in 1951 as an organisation of six countries to regulate industrial production, the EU now has 27 members that face complex challenges from climate change and the rise of China to a war on their own doorstep.

Russian President Vladimir Putin says his "special military operation" launched in Ukraine in late February was partly necessitated by Western encroachment into what Russia characterises as its rightful geographical sphere of influence.

SEE PAGE 6 COL 8



অবাক বিশ্ব তাকিয়ে রয়
শেখ হাসিনার নেতৃত্বে বাঙালির পদ্মা সেতু জয়

মাননীয় প্রধানমন্ত্রী
জননেত্রী শেখ হাসিনাকে
প্রাণঢালা অভিনন্দনে



এ.এইচ.এম খায়রুজ্জামান (লিটন)

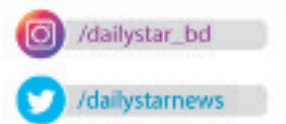
সভাপতিমণ্ডলীর সদস্য, বাংলাদেশ আওয়ামী লীগ
মেম্বর, রাজশাহী সিটি কর্পোরেশন



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